CHAPTER-III

RESEARCH METHODS

1.1 Introduction

The right to information serves as a means of challenging government secrecy and abuse of power by addressing information asymmetries between government and citizens. The world has witnessed strong mass movement for right to information during the last four decades. The adoption of laws establishing the right to information has been extremely active in the new millennium, with such laws having been enacted in the previous fifteen years across the globe. Practically, the right to information is an effective means of the institutionalization of information access, whereby administrative procedural transparency makes information available to the public about government operations that are relevant to good governance. The right to information is also embedded in the administration operations of the public sector, compelling all public officials to consider their roles as caretakers of information, rather than owners. The present investigation was carried out in Karnataka to understand the use of right to information by the media professionals who have the social responsibility of promoting good governance. This chapter enumerates the salient methodological details of the present study.

1.2 Hypotheses of the Study

The objectives of the present study and the analysis of the findings of the past studies have led to generating the following set of null hypotheses.

\( H1. \) The media professionals have not gained absolute awareness about Right to Information Act, 2005.

\( H2. \) The media professionals have not gained adequate advantages from the use of Right to Information Act, 2005.

\( H3. \) The media professionals have not gained adequate satisfaction from the use of Right to Information Act, 2005.
3.3. Study Variables

Keeping the above hypotheses in view, the following variables were selected for the study on the basis of review of literature and discussion with subject experts.

3.3.1 Independent Variables
a. Gender,  
b. Age,  
c. Education,  
d. Profession and  
e. Revenue Division

3.3.2 Dependent Variables
a. Attitude of respondents towards right to information.  
b. Uses of right to information.  
c. Gratifications of right to information.

3.4. Research Design

The present study was carried out on the basis of systematic survey research method. A structured and pre-tested interview schedule was administered to the media professionals of Karnataka state.

3.5. Selection of Study Areas

The respondents were selected from all the four revenue divisions of Karnataka state namely-Bengaluru Division, Mysuru Division, Kalburgi Division and Belgaum. The primary data were gathered from 414 respondents consisting of reporters, correspondents, freelancers and columnists of Karnataka state. The interview schedule was designed to explore the understanding of the respondents have about the use of right to information for day to day media management in the age of right to information.
Table 3.1. Distribution of Study Area and Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Revenue Divisions</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Bangalore</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>32.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Mysore</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>26.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Gulbarga</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>11.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Belgaum</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>30.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>414</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 414

Figure 3.1. Distribution of Study Area and Sample

3.6. Selection of Sample

Several qualitative factors were taken into consideration when determining the sample size. These include the importance of decision, the nature of research, the number of variables, the nature of analysis, sample sizes used in similar studies, incidence rate (the occurrence of behavior or characteristics in population), completion rates and resource constraints. In communication and journalism research, limits on time, money and other resources can exert an overriding
influence on sampling size determination. The researcher followed the incidental sampling technique, purposive sampling technique and stratified sampling techniques to select the respondents for primary data collection.

3.7. Tools of Data Collection

The researcher designed a set of interview schedule for the media professionals of Karnataka state to ascertain their views about the use of Right to Information Act. The questionnaire had four components such as – personal information of the respondents, attitude of the respondents towards RTI Act, use of RTI Act among the respondents and gratification of RTI Act among the respondents. Besides interview schedule and gathering primary data through interview, the researcher also adopted indirect observation and informal consultation methods to understand the use of RTI Act by the media professionals in the study area.

3.8. Primary Data Collection

The primary data were gathered from about 414 respondents who are spread across the four revenue divisions of Karnataka state namely – Bangalore, Mysore, Belgaum and Gulbarga. The study was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, general information regarding family background and personal details were collected from the subjects of the study. The data on the socio-economic status were also collected by administering the interview schedules. In the second phase of the study, the standardized interview schedules scales on the use of RTI Act by the media professionals were administered to the subjects. The responses from about 414 subjects were noted down by the researcher and a team of trained investigators after interacting with the subjects and explaining the aims and objectives of the study.

3.9. Secondary Data Collection

The present study was also systematically carried out on the basis of relevant secondary data such as national and international publications dealing with the right to information movement and right to information laws. The publications dealing with development of the movement of right to information in India, salient features
of Right to Information Act, 2005, right to information and obligations of public authorities, Central Information Commission, State Information Commission, rules and regulations relating to the right to information, implementation of the act, judgments in support of right to information and other aspects of the study were identified and utilized by the researcher. Besides these, professional journal articles, media comments and criticisms, dissertations of various universities and Internet based materials were also utilized appropriately by the researcher to write the foundation chapters such as introduction, review of literature and right to information in India. The scholarly communication produced by the various sources were also systematically analyzed for the purpose of gathering additional authentic information on the scientific study of the use of right to information act by the media professionals in Karnataka state.

3.10. Statistical Analysis

The primary data were analyzed on the basis of certain standardized statistical tests which include – percentage analysis, graphical representation, Chi-square test, and cross tabulation. All the statistical methods were carried out through the SPSS for Windows (version 16.0). A brief discussion of these statistical tests is as follows.

Descriptive Procedure

The descriptive procedure displays uni-variate summary statistics for several variables in a single table and calculates standardized (z-scores). Variables can be ordered by the size of their means (in ascending or descending order), alphabetically, or by the order in which the researcher specifies.

Frequencies and Percentages

The frequencies procedure provides statistics and graphical displays that are useful for describing many types of variables. For a first look at the data, frequencies procedure is a good place to start. Further, percentages provide the values out of hundred for each group or sector selected with frequencies.
Cross-Tabs

The cross-tabs procedure forms two-way and multi-way tables and provides a variety of tests and measures of association for two-way tables. The structure of the table and whether categories are ordered determine what test or measure to use. Contingency coefficient analysis was employed in the present study.

P-value

In statistics, the p-value is a function of the observed sample results (a statistic) that is used for testing a statistical hypothesis. The p-test statistic typically follows a standard normal distribution when large sample sizes are used, and researchers use Z-tests to determine whether a hypothesis passes based on a specific significance level will be rejected. The larger the p-value in the p-test, the more likely the hypothesis is true. In statistics, the p-value is a function of the observed sample results (a statistic) that is used for testing a statistical hypothesis.

3.11. Reliability and Validity of Data

Reliability

This is about the results of the investigation, which has to be reliable. If nothing changes in a population between two investigations in the same purpose, it is reliable. From a deductive point of view if the measure yields the same results on different occasions, or from an inductive point of view if similar observations be made different researches on different occasions. Scholars have identified certain threats to reliability such as subject error, subject bias and observer error and bias. The researcher is responsible for the understanding, documentation and inferences drawn about the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Validity

Validity is concerned with whether the findings are really about what they appear to be true. Scholars have identified certain tests for validity such as construct validity (establishes correct operational measures for the concepts being studied), internal validity (applicable for explanatory and causal studies only) and external validity (establishes the domain to which a study’s findings can be generalized). The
researcher has to collect and interpret data on the basis of absolute clarity and objectivity. Since this study is descriptive no consideration is taken to internal validity. As for external validity, this study could be generalized with a 95 percent level of certainty and a 5 percent margin of error.

3.12. Definitions of the Terms Used in the Study

3.12.1 Right to Information

Information means any material in any form, including records, documents, memos, e-mails, opinions, advices, press releases, circulars, orders, logbooks, contracts, reports, papers, samples, models, data material held in any electronic form and information relating to any private body which can be accessed by a public authority under any other law for the time being in force. The right to information is a fundamental right guaranteed to the citizens in the national constitution. The Right to Information Act extends the right to information to all citizens of the country since they are the participants in the democratic process. The citizens have a right to know everything about the functioning of the government missionary in order to achieve the goal of good governance.

3.12.2 Right to Information Movement

The right to information is implicit in the Constitution of India. The citizens were denied access to official information by abusing the Official Secrets Act, 1923. The citizens groups have long battled for the exercise of the right to information in order to ensure openness, transparency and accountability in matters concerning the governance and development of the country. The movement for the right to information received a fresh impetus from a courageous and powerful grassroots struggle of the rural poor for the right to information under the banner of Mazdoor Kisaan Shakti Sangathan in Rajasthan. Subsequently several progressive individuals and organizations actively organized right to information movement across the country and achieved success in the year 2005.

3.12.3 Right to Information Act, 2005

Right to Information Act 2005 mandates timely response to citizen requests for government information. It is an initiative taken by Department of Personnel and
Training, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions to provide a– RTI Portal Gateway to the citizens for quick search of information on the details of first Appellate Authorities, PIOs etc. amongst others, besides access to RTI related information / disclosures published on the web by various Public Authorities under the government of India as well as the State Governments. The basic object of the Right to Information Act is to empower the citizens, promote transparency and accountability in the working of the Government, contain corruption, and make our democracy work for the people in real sense. It goes without saying that an informed citizen is better equipped to keep necessary vigil on the instruments of governance and make the government more accountable to the governed. The Act is a big step towards making the citizens informed about the activities of the Government.

3.12.4 Central Information Commission

The Central Information Commission was set up under the Right to Information Act, 2005. It acts upon complaints from those individuals who have not been able to submit information requests to a Central Public Information Officer or State Public Information Officer due to either the officer not having been appointed, or because the respective Central Assistant Public Information Officer or State Assistant Public Information Officer refused to receive the application for information under the RTI Act. The commission has several officers and functionaries. It has the powers of civil court. The decisions of the commission are final and binding.

3.12.5 State Information Commission

Every state government shall constitute the State Information Commission according to the RTI Act, 2005. In particular, Section 15 deals with the terms of office and conditions of service. The State Information Commission will be constituted by the State Government through a Gazette notification. It will have one State Chief Information Commissioner (SCIC) and not more than 10 State Information Commissioners (SIC) to be appointed by the Governor. The headquarters of the State Information Commission shall be at such place as the State Government may specify. Other offices may be established in other parts of the State with the approval of the State Government. The Commission will exercise its powers without being subjected to any other authority.
3.12.6 Obligations of Public Authorities

Public authority means any authority or body or institution of self government established by the Constitution. The public authority shall maintain all the records pertaining to the policies and programmes of the central and state governments. A public authority shall provide as much information to the public at regular intervals through various means of communications. All materials shall be disseminated taking into account the cost effectiveness, local language and the most effective method of communication. The courts have clearly stated that no responsibility can be cast on the public authority to provide information if it does not come within the information according to the act.

3.12.7 Rules and Regulations

The Right to Information Act, 2005 and Right to Information Rules, 2012 have specified certain rules and regulations in the interest of national security and welfare of the people. The rules and regulations primarily deal with concept of information, public authorities, procedures of obtaining information, process of appeal, procedure for deciding appeals and other aspects of delivery of goods and services.

3.12.8 Implementation of the Act

The Right to Information Act, 2005 provides for setting out the practical regime of right to information for citizens to secure access to information under the control of public authorities in order to promote transparency and accountability in matters concerning governance and development. The act also gives opportunity to the people to get an insight into the closed world of official decision making. The awareness of the people has increased about the act and the request for the information is also increasing in various government departments. There are certain practical constraints and limitations in obtaining timely and adequate information. The intellectuals and activists have also offered certain suggestions for the improvement of the delivery of goods in the central and state government departments.
3.12.9 Media Professionals

Democracy has four important foundations like legislature, executive, judiciary and media. The media institutions are considered as the fourth estate of a democracy. The media professionals are also considered as the angel guardians of public interest. They are required to bridge the gap between the government and people. The media professionals should obtain information about the functioning of government agencies and collect feedback from the people. The media professionals have a social responsibility of sensitizing the various stakeholders of development about the delivery of goods and services. The Right to Information Act is also useful to the media professionals in facilitating dialogue between the administrators and beneficiaries on various nation building endeavors.

3.12.10 Use of Right to Information Act

The media institutions provide a platform that enables government functionaries to operate efficiently, effectively and transparently and be accountable to the public who are the makers of democracy. Right to information is one of the core values of good governance and the media can make a real difference to the lives of poor and disadvantaged people in a civil society. The functions of media are identified by the scholars in their speeches and writings. The media professionals can make active use of Right to Information Act and enable the people to have access to government policies, programmes, schemes and benefits. The media professionals can do justice to their role if they make use of the provisions of the act to the best of their ability. In the present investigation, the researcher assessed the use of Right to Information Act by the media professionals in Karnataka state.

3.12.11 Gratifications of Right to Information Act

The media institutions and government organizations are required to work together in a democracy to create informed and enlightened citizens. The media professionals are called upon to stimulate debate, educate the public on social, economic and environmental issues and enlist active participation of people in various nation building activities. They are also required to create pressure groups for improved government performance, accountability and quality. In the present
investigation, the researcher analyzed the gratifications of Right to Information Act among the media professionals in Karnataka state.

3.12.12 Survey Research

Survey research is often used to assess thoughts, opinions, and feelings. Survey research can be specific and limited, or it can have more global, widespread goals. Today, survey research is used by a variety of different groups. Social scientists use survey research to analyze behavior, while it is also used to meet the more pragmatic needs of the media in a democratic society. A survey consists of a predetermined set of questions that is given to a sample. A true representative sample of the larger population of interest, one can describe the attitudes of the population from which the sample was drawn. In the field of Journalism and Mass Communication, survey research is used to assess the impact of media services on the people. In the present investigation, the researcher examined the uses and gratifications of RTI Act with reference to media professionals of Karnataka state.

3.13. Summary

In a democracy, the citizens have the right to information which is an effective instrument of good governance. It is also a fundamental right of the people guaranteed by the constitution. In India, progressive individuals and organizations fought for the right to information in the post-independence era. The judicial pronouncements also enlightened the rulers to enact the Right to Information Act which provides for setting out the practical regime of right to information for citizens. The Act applies to all States and Union Territories of India except Jammu and Kashmir. Under the provisions of the Act, any citizen may request information from a public authority and obtain information within thirty days. Scholars have observed that Right to Information Act, 2005 is a progressive legislation which is the master key to open the doors of prosperity in a developing country like India. The primary data were gathered from 414 respondents representing the reporters, correspondents, freelancers and columnists. The present study approached the problem through a systematic survey method. Several tools and techniques like non-participant observation, informal discussion and secondary literature review were
also used for the purpose of data collection. Prominent statistical analysis techniques such as percentage analysis, graphical representation, p-value and cross-tabulation were also employed in the present study. The present investigation was carried out in Karnataka state to understand the uses and gratifications of Right to Information Act among the media professionals.