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Men: a missing factor in SDG 5? A study on gender
equality in Kerala with a focus on men`s attitudes
towards women

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Abstract

Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) seeks to empower all women and girls by 2030; however, the goal only indirectly mentions men. Is it possible to achieve a goal followed by 156 countries if there is no specific focus on men? Through the literature we know much about women's lives and struggles throughout the world. However, it is only recently that scholars have attempted to analyse men's lives and their experiences with gender equality. This thesis attempts to ask the normative question: *To what extent should there be more focus on men in the process of achieving gender equality?* It follows a case-study on one of the front runners in India to achieve SDG 5 by 2030, namely the southern state of Kerala. With data from a nine weeks fieldwork in Kerala; the thesis seeks to provide insight into what is being done in Kerala with SDG 5, whether the state includes a focus on men, and to understand experiences of men's attitudes towards women from a rural village. The findings are discussed with the use of theoretical concepts of 'symbolic violence' and 'hegemonic masculinity'.

Findings show that SDG 5 does not get any particular attention in Kerala other than the already existing women-oriented programmes, where a focus on both genders through SDG 5 is not immediately visible. A possible focus on men can be located in the realms of gender awareness programmes. Furthermore, insight into the experiences of men's attitudes in the Village reveals that patriarchal values are persistent in Kerala. Both men and women maintain these values. By following the answers given by the informants, over half of them (both men and women) wishes there to be more focus on men when it comes to gender equality. As this thesis will discuss, it might be time to include a focus on men and their attitudes to be able to attain sustainable development.

Keywords: Gender Equality, SDG 5, Men, Masculinity, Attitudes, Kerala.

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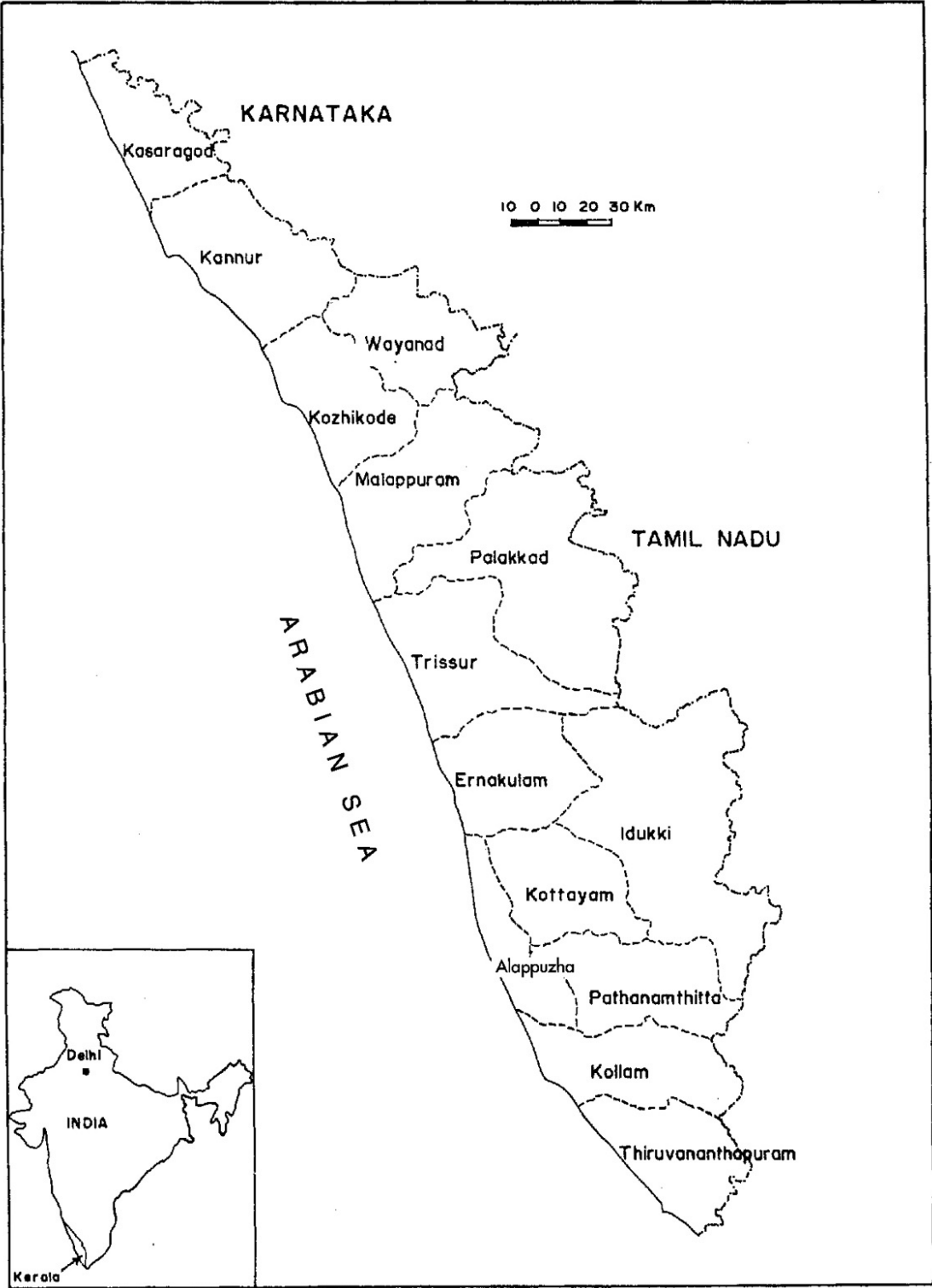
As my time at Oslo Metropolitan University is going to an end, this thesis is my last contribution, and there are many people I am grateful for and who has helped me through these two years. In July 2019, I travelled to South India and settled down in the capital of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, for what became a nine weeks fieldwork. The monsoon weather contributed to unpredicted challenges and made me think outside the box to do sufficient and successful fieldwork. I want to thank all the friends I made in Kerala that fulfilled me with positive energy while conducting the fieldwork. With your smiles, the unpredicted challenges became a laugh.

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Map of Kerala



Source: (Mappery, 2009)

Abbreviations

CDS	– Centre for Development Studies
KSPB	– Kerala State Planning Board
KSWDC	– The Kerala State Women’s Development Corporation Ltd.
GAD	– Gender and Development
MDGs	– Millennium Development Goals
NGO	– Non-Governmental Organisation
NITI Aayog	– National Institution for Transforming India (<i>Government of India</i>)
NSD	– Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS (<i>Norsk senter for forskningsdata</i>)
SDGs	– Sustainable Development Goals
SDG 4	– Sustainable Development Goal 4 - Quality education
SDG 5	– Sustainable Development Goal 5 - Gender equality
UN	– United Nations
UTs	– Union Territories
WID	– Women in Development

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Aim of study

Through the literature we know much about women's lives and struggles throughout the world. However, it is only recently that scholars have attempted to analyse men's lives and their experience with gender equality. This thesis attempts to do the same; however, with a discussion on whether there should be more focus on men in relation to achieving gender equality. Attempts to achieve gender equality have been placed on the global agenda *by* women *for* women, and the reason for this is obvious: in much of the world women lose out by being women, and therefore have the claim for redress. However, as claimed by Connell (2011), "men are necessarily involved" (p.7). In 2015, a new global approach set to achieve gender equality by 2030 was seen through the UN's SDG 5. The goal seeks to "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" (UN, n.d b). An interesting point to highlight after reading through the nine targets given in SDG 5, is that none of them directly mentions men. Is it possible to achieve gender equality without a focus on men?

The aim of the study is to present men and women's opinions and experiences from one of the front runners in India to achieve SDG 5 by 2030, namely Kerala. Utilising SDG 5 as an external framework, this thesis seeks to discuss whether there should be more focus on men in the process of achieving gender equality. It presents a case-study that focuses on men's attitudes towards women in Kerala, and to what extent the state is incorporating men into the process of achieving gender equality. The thesis is based on interviews with development actors from Kerala's capital, Thiruvananthapuram, and men and women from a rural village in the same district. The intentions of the study will be further explained below.

1.2 Research Questions

A research question indicates what the research is about and is critical in forming the direction of the research and fieldwork (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018, p.165). This study comprises of one main research question and two supporting research questions:

To what extent should there be more focus on men in the process of achieving gender equality?

1. What is being done in Kerala concerning SDG 5, and to what extent are men incorporated in the process of achieving gender equality?
2. What are men's attitudes towards women in Kerala, and to what extent are men's attitudes perceived as an obstacle towards achieving gender equality?

These research questions are a reflection of my own interest in exploring the question of 'where are the men' in gender equality discourses. Utilising SDG 5 as an external framework provides an illustrative example of how men often are presented as a background-category in gender equality policies. According to Cornwall and Rivas (2015), within gender equality discourses, men are associated with power and women with powerlessness. By being associated with power, the focus immediately moves towards a focus on those of less status. But, what about the thoughts and ideas of those who are recognised with power?

The main research question explores to what extent there should be more focus on men towards achieving gender equality. The first supporting question seeks to explore what is being done in Kerala with SDG 5. It intends to understand possible constraints for achieving the goal, and to what extent the state is focusing on working with men in the process of achieving gender equality. Then, addressing men's attitudes at the grassroots can help in understanding the prevalent attitudes, reveal areas of resistance and to provide ideas towards advancing gender equality, or in this case, achievements in SDG 5. The second supporting research question is inspired by Connell (2003), who argues that addressing attitudes can be essential to provide useful indicators of broader patterns that perpetuate gender inequality.

Besides, are men`s attitudes perceived as an obstacle by the participants? With insight into the two supporting research question, I attempt to explore the normative question of whether it is time to include a focus on men to achieve gender equality. By the end of this thesis, I hope to shed some light on possibilities and constraints that presents itself by including a focus on men. These research questions are divided into three main chapter (chapter 5, 6 and 7).

1.3 Why Kerala as a case-study?

India is a multicultural country with the second largest population in the world, where you find diverse communities and sharp inequalities. The rates of social development vary widely between states, regions and within social groups – in other words; India is a land of contrasts (Arun, 2018, p.33-34). The decision to conduct fieldwork in Kerala arose from the fascination of the state`s social development. Statistics given by NITI Aayog (2018) shows that Kerala is one of the front runners in India to achieve SDG 5 by 2030. According to Lindberg (2001), Kerala seems to “provide hope for other regions where people live in poverty and deprivation” (p.10).

Women in Kerala are recognised as having a higher status compared to women in other parts of India (e.g. literacy, demographic factors, health). Within the state, attempts to improve gender equity have been made, where Kerala has been labelled as ‘normal’ within ‘abnormal’ India (Alexander, 2000). However, deep-rooted patriarchal values in contemporary Kerala is recognised as reinforcing gender divisions and women`s lack of freedom and capabilities (Planning Commission, 2008, p.403). With patriarchy being in favour of men, a case-study on Kerala is illustrative for further discussions on experiences with men`s attitudes, and whether there can be seen a focus on men in the process of achieving gender equality.

1.4 The significance of the study

A focus on empowering women and girls have had significant impacts throughout the world and has put women on the global agenda. However, according to Chant and Gutmann (2002), without mentioning men, gender interventions can only go so far. With women gaining recognition and empowerment, a focus on men can be an essential approach towards strengthening the processes of achieving gender equality, and for the realisation that gender equality is beneficial in the long term. As Connell (2011) suggest, “men and boys are in significant ways gatekeepers for gender equality” (p.7).

It is essential to acknowledge that a goal like SDG 5 is crucial in the attempt to empower women throughout the world. Women tend to lose out in several societies, and a goal like SDG 5 can help to increase social development and empowerment of women. However, in societies with deeply embedded thoughts and ideas of what is culturally and traditionally expected by both genders, raising awareness of men and their role in achieving gender equality can provide women and girls with more opportunities in their lives. As argued by Cleaver (2002), it may provide us with a more “sophisticated understanding of gender relations and how to impact upon them” (p.24). Excluding a focus on men in the attempt to challenge traditional gender roles, can lead to hostilities between men and women at the grassroots and become a hindrance towards further achievements (Chant & Gutmann, 2002). According to Sweetman (2013), when men are left out from projects that focus on empowering women and thus challenging power relations between men and women, it can lead to more challenges for women in their household (e.g. domestic violence). Encouraging men to see gender equality as beneficial to empower their children or wife’s position can engage men in supporting gender equality (Connell, 2011).

Even though this research focuses on Kerala, I would argue that the research issue is an important issue that should be raised throughout the world.

1.5 Delimitations

I will not go about analysing each of the targets and indicators of SDG 5 but use the goal in general to highlight the aspect of ‘*where are the men*’ in the gender equality discourse. I will attempt to provide an insight into what is being done in Kerala regarding SDG 5 and to see if the participants believe there should be more focus on men. SDG 5 is used as a framework to illustrate how men tend to become a background-category of gender equality.

Since most of the literature about Kerala focuses on female perspectives, the literature utilised in chapter 2 primarily focuses on initiatives aimed at women. In the analytical framework (chapter 4) and the main part of the thesis (chapter 5, 6, 7), the focus will shift towards a male perspective. I acknowledge that some of the literature used, especially in the analytical framework, is from 1990 – early 2000. However, I still believe it is relevant to contemporary

issues about gender since it is a part of classical debates which also are referred to by contemporary literature.

1.6 How the thesis is structured

As *Chapter 1* has provided an introduction of the overall aim of the study, *Chapter 2* will provide a brief introduction to the SDGs and a historical overview of Kerala to put the thesis into context.

Chapter 3 is the methodology chapter which presents and discusses the methods used.

Chapter 4 presents the analytical framework of the thesis. The chapter provides insight into concepts related to gender and gender equality, and with a discussion on how these concepts are perceived differently throughout the world. The chapter present theories and concepts to explain the notion of patriarchal structure, and how it may reproduce itself within societies.

Then, in *Chapter 5, 6 and 7*, the findings will be presented, analysed and discussed to answer the research questions.

Chapter 5 goes more closely into what work is being done by development actors and how men are included in the process of achieving SDG 5 in Kerala.

Chapter 6 reflects on how men and women at the grassroots experience men`s attitudes towards women and possible constraint with these attitudes to achieving gender equality.

Chapter 7 discusses the normative question if it is important to include men into gender equality policies. The chapter seeks to explore this issue by connecting chapter 5 and 6 together, with inputs from both participants and literature to provide an adequate discussion.

Chapter 8 will present a summary of the thesis and highlight concluding remarks, limitations of the study, and the way forward.

Chapter 2 – Contextual background

This chapter will first present a brief introduction to the SDGs and its progress in India, with an insight into SDG 5. Then it will present a historical overview of Kerala to understand why the state is one of the front runners in India to achieve SDG 5. I will frequently draw on the contextual background in chapter 5, 6 and 7.

2.1 A brief introduction of the Sustainable Development Goals and its progress in India

With 17 goals and 169 targets, the SDGs are a commitment by the world leaders to ensure a more sustainable world. The goals are built on the comprehensive principles of inclusiveness, equity and sustainability (Khemka & Kumar, 2020). According to Khemka and Kumar (2020), SDGs have the “potential to fundamentally change human outcomes across the planet. The goals call for systematically reducing inequality, forging multi-stakeholder partnerships and leaving no one behind on the path to sustainable development” (Khemka & Kumar, 2020, p.xvii). The SDGs evolved from the MDGs for 2015. They came into being to address the challenges that the MDGs faced with a more universal approach, which embraces economic, environmental and social aspects of the wellbeing of societies (NITI Aayog, 2018). The SDGs are supposed to be met by 2030. According to Rao (2017), global goals such as the SDGs

(...) are helpful in identifying key elements for developing our sense of self and humanity and leading lives that we value. They are also crucial for creating an enabling environment within which resource claims, but also social relations, can be negotiated at different institutional levels and scales (Rao, 2017, p.51).

The goals can be seen with a transformative agenda and emphasise each government to decide how the SDGs will be incorporated into national planning processes. This provides each government with a significant amount of agency, and the framework of the SDGs appears as participatory (Brisset & Mitter, 2017). To ensure the statement of ‘*Leaving no one behind*’ (Khemka & Kumar, 2020, p.xvii), each SDG includes a set of targets which are operational objectives to achieve the goals. Furthermore, each target consists of indicators which enables the tracking of progress and the ability to see changes at local, national and global levels. The SDGs are seen as a positive action towards a sustainable world (Khemka & Kumar, 2020).

Despite the positive views on the SDGs, Brisset and Mitter (2017) highlight arguments that the process of developing the SDGs have been reflecting the interest of a handful major groups and that the SDGs reproduce deeply unequal power dynamics in the society. Furthermore, the goals are critiqued for being westernised and by following a utilitarian perspective as a social investment to increase economical aspects, instead of following a transformative perspective that seeks to focus on the social and individual change. On the surface, the SDGs appear highly participatory as it encourages each government to incorporate SDGs to meet each nation own contexts and realities (Brisset & Mitter, 2017). However, referring to what Rao (2017) mentioned above, the SDGs are helpful in identifying key elements that are important for sustainable development, for example, gender equality. The SDGs can be seen in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS 2030

Goals	Description
Goal 1: No Poverty	End poverty in all its forms everywhere
Goal 2: Zero Hunger	End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being	Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
Goal 4: Quality Education	Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
Goal 5: Gender Equality	Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation	Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy	Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth	Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation
Goal 10: Reduced Inequality	Reduce inequality within and among countries
Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities	Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
Goal 12: Sustainable Consumption and Production	Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
Goal 13: Climate Action	Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
Goal 14: Life Below Water	Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
Goal 15: Life on Land	Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals	Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development

Table made by Ingunn Håberg. Information retrieved from UN (n.d a)

Every country is responsible for the attainment of the SDGs. One of the countries that play a leading role in determining the relative success or failure of these goals is India (NITI Aayog, 2018). According to NITI Aayog in the *SDG India Index: Baseline report 2018*, the country is taking on a significant stride towards the attainment of the SDGs and the goals are seen as a positive step towards development (NITI Aayog, 2018, p.3). NITI Aayog is a policy ‘think tank’ of the Government of India, providing directional and policy inputs (NITI Aayog, 2020, p.8). India has shown a considerable enthusiasm with the SDGs, and the Prime Minister has several times pointed out the importance of these goals for the nation (NITI Aayog, n.d). However, measures given by the *SDG Index and Dashboards Report 2018*, highlights that India ranks 112 out of 156 countries in the progress with the SDGs in 2018 (Sachs,Schmidt-Traub,Kroll,Lafortune&Fuller, 2018, p.17). By the Human Development Index, India is ranked 129 among 189 countries in 2018, whereas some of the indicators are related to certain SDGs (UNDP, 2019). These rankings indicate that India is experiencing challenges with the progression of SDGs, which will be discussed below.

India is a federal union comprising 29 states and 7 union territories, where all of them has various progression with the SDGs (NITI Aayog, 2018). On a national level, NITI Aayog is responsible for the organisation and coordination of the SDGs, in cooperation with Central Government Ministries and State/Union territories (NITI Aayog, 2018, p.5). They do the overall national planning of the action to reach the goals, where each of the states and union territories have the responsibility for implementing programmes and distributing financial support given for the progression of the SDGs (NITI Aayog, 2018). In NITI Aayog’s Annual report (2019-2020), statistics given for each state and union territories highlights the diversity with performance in SDGs within the country; where Kerala is the best-performing state and with Chandigarh as the best-performing union territory (NITI Aayog, 2020, p.37). When presenting the diversity between the states and union territories, the Vice Chairman Rajiv Kumar in NITI Aayog (2018), writes that

It is hoped that this will foster a healthy competition among States and Union Territories at sub-national level to view their progress vis-à-vis national as well as other states in true spirit of cooperative and competitive federalism (NITI Aayog, 2018, p. iV).

There exist some uncertainties when it comes to measurements of India’s SDGs. According to NITI Aayog’s baseline report (2018), each state and union territories utilise different data

systems to monitor the SDGs, which implies a lack of coordination between existing data (NITI Aayog, 2018). However, NITI Aayog have designed the SDG India Index by prioritising targets and indicators which already have state-wise data (Mishra, 2020, p.115).

Thampi (2020) argues that India's strive towards progress in SDGs has its challenges on several dimensions. India face a major challenge in the context of an unemployment crisis, where *The Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy* published a report in 2018 writing about a loss of 11 million jobs in the country (in Thampi, 2020, p. 62-69). The unemployment crisis has led to less employment opportunities for women, which implies lack of achievement in reducing gender inequalities (Gosh, 2020, p.21). Another aspect is the growing inequality between the wealthy and the poor, where the deprived social groups are harmed most (Thampi, 2020, p. 62-69). The rapid growth of the economy has placed India as the fastest growing economy in the world, where the country has experienced progress in reducing poverty and improving certain educational indicators. However, Thampi argue that "there are serious vertical and horizontal inequalities in all of these dimensions, which will require concerted action to reverse" (Thampi, 2020, p.69). To have a successful outcome of the SDGs, Gosh (2020, p.21) proposes that India needs a more comprehensive and transformative approach to policies. Without an approach like this, the inequalities in the country will continue to persist and grow. NITI Aayog (2018) on the other hand, highlights that despite challenges linked to possible achievements of the SDGs, the country is putting significant action on the agenda to achieve progress. The Chief Executive Officer Amitabh Kant in NITI Aayog (2018, p.v), argue that the only way for India to succeed with the SDGs is through visionary long-term strategic planning and with cooperative federalism, where all states play a vital role in implementing programmes and influencing social and economic parameters that is essential for achieving the SDGs.

Among all states in India, Kerala is one of the front runners to achieve several of the SDGs by 2030. Kerala performs well in providing good health, reducing hunger, providing quality education and the process of achieving gender equality despite its low socio-economic position (NITI Aayog, 2018). In section 2.2, I will give a brief overview of Kerala's historical context, which will provide greater insight into reasons for why Kerala is one of the front runners in India to achieve several of the SDGs.

2.1.1 Sustainable Development Goal 5 – Gender Equality

One of the 17 SDGs is goal 5 which aims “to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” (UN, n.d b). The goal aims to “empower all women to live dignified lives, contributing as equal partners in the growth and development of the country, in an environment free from violence and discrimination” (NITI Aayog, 2018, p.63). According to Razavi, SDG 5’s targets “reflect commitments that seek to transform the underlying norms, structures and practices that hold women and girls back from enjoying their rights” (Razavi, 2019, p.149). The goal consists of 9 targets and 14 indicators, which are connected to the overall goal in achieving gender equality and to empower all women and girls (UN, n.d b). The goal in itself is multidimensional and can develop progress for other SDGs when achieving success in its own targets. For example, by following target 5.A which includes aspects of women’s access to ownership and control over land (see Table 2.2), progress in SDGs on poverty, health, climate action, hunger, as well as other targets in SDG 5, can be made (Mishra, 2020, p.115). Each of the targets featured in Table 2.2, can be categorised within three dimensions; First, *freedom from violence against women and girls* (5.1, 5.2, 5.3). Second, *gender equality in capabilities and resources* (5.4, 5.6, 5.a, 5.b). Lastly, *gender equality in decision-making power in public and private institutions* (5.5, 5.c) (Mishra, 2020, p.112).

Table 2.2

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 5 - <i>Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</i>	
Targets	Indicators
5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere	5.1.1 Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex
5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation	5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age <hr/> 5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence
5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation	5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18 <hr/> 5.3.2 Proportion of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age
5.4 Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate	5.4.1 Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location
5.5	5.5.1

Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life	Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments 5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions
5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences	5.6.1 Proportion of women aged 15-49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care 5.6.2 Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee women aged 15-49 years access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education
5.A Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws	5.A.1 (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure 5.A.2 Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control
5.B Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women	5.B.1 Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex
5.C Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels	5.C.1 Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment

Table made by Ingunn Håberg. Information retrieved from UN (n.d b).

In India, gender inequality is seen as a major constraint for social development. Khemka and Kumar (2020), capture the challenges of achieving SDG 5 with a focus on India and South Asia in general.

Gender equality is a fundamental structural transformation of gender relations, and its diverse dimensions and vectors cannot be fully captured in a technical development framework. Hence, even with the enormous progress regarding gender issues made under the rubric of SDGs, the ending of patriarchy is still a long way off. (...) Gender, in the context of SDGs, is perhaps best addressed at the level of planning, budgeting, and implementation. (Khemka & Kumar, 2020, p.9).

In a country like India, where deeply embedded inequalities exist, SDG 5 can, according to Khemka and Kumar (2020, p.9), best be managed if there is a well-funded action plan at local, subnational and national levels. As mentioned in chapter 2.1, the different states and union territories performs differently when it comes to the SDGs. In Kerala the status for

achieving SDG 5 in 2030 is promising and the state is also one of the best performers in this particular goal compared to other states (NITI Aayog, 2018). However, as statistics show in *SDG India Index: Baseline report 2018* (see Figure 2.1), Kerala still has a long way ahead before gender equality is fully achieved (NITI Aayog, 2018, p.66-67).

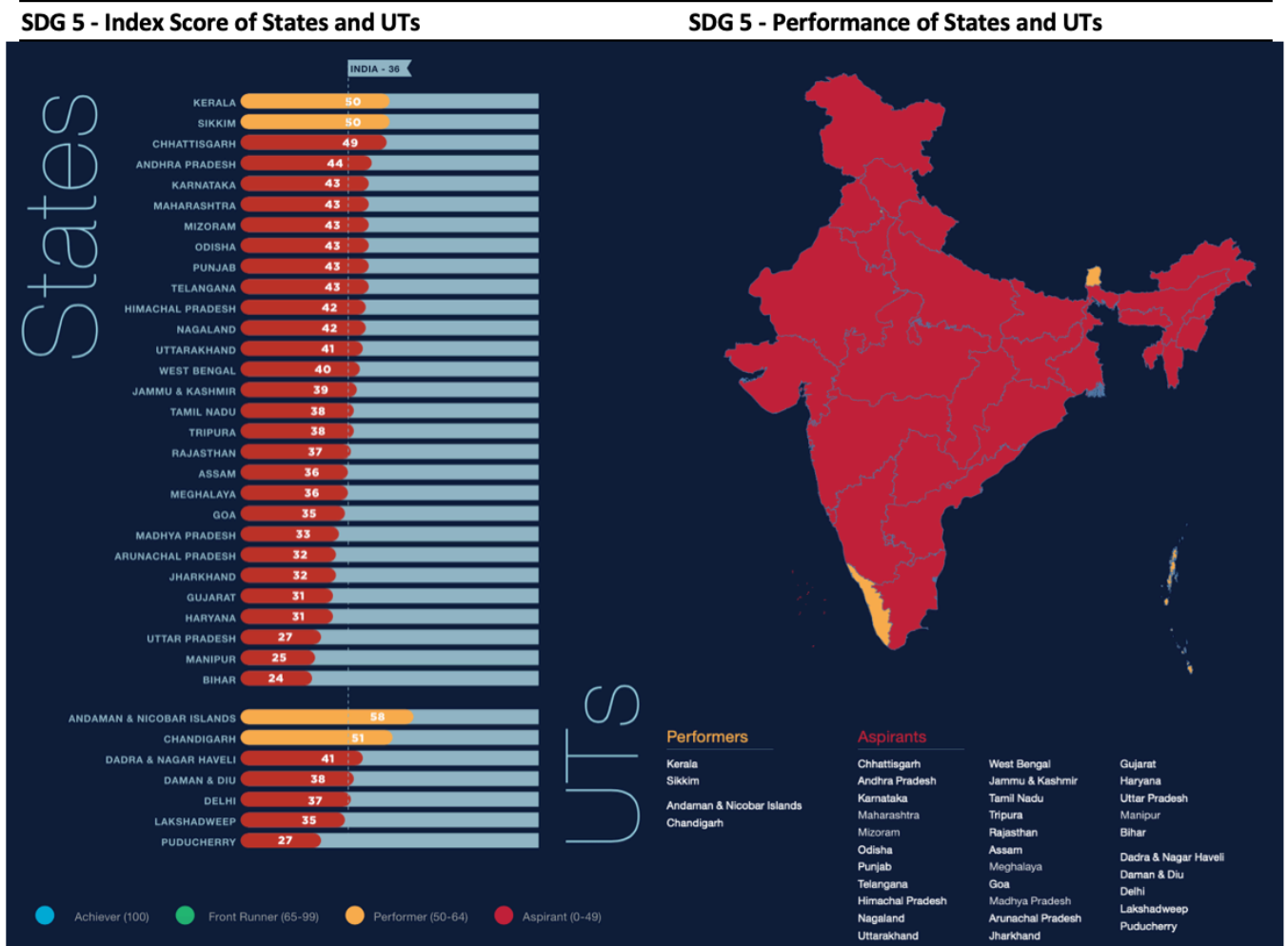


Figure 2.1 – States and UTs performance

Figure made by Ingunn Håberg, Illustrations and information retrieved from NITI Aayog (2018, p.66-67)

To understand why Kerala is one of the front runners in India to achieve several of the SDGs, and SDG 5 in particular, the next section will provide a historical overview of Kerala's development.

2.2 A brief historical overview of Kerala

In the south-western tip of India, lies the state Kerala with a population of approximately 34,700,000 people (Census Population, 2020). Compared to other states in India, Kerala is defined as a small state in terms of its geographic size and population (Parayil, 2000).

However, the state is greater than several countries in the world in terms of its population (e.g Norway, Australia, Sri Lanka, Malaysia) (UN, 2019). The state is divided into 14 districts, where Thiruvananthapuram is the capital (Government of Kerala, n.d a). The Government of Kerala consist of three branches with different functions – the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. Furthermore, the state follows a ‘three-tier panchayat Raj system’. This system is comprising ‘District Panchayat’, ‘Block Panchayat’ and ‘Village Panchayat’. Each of these ‘panchayats’ govern local affairs, where there is a new election every five years (Government of Kerala, n.d b).

In recent years, Kerala has attained much outside attention due to its transformation in terms of economic and social development despite its low socio-economic position. The state developed from being extremely poor, with class and caste conflicts, into a social-democratic state with a literate population, increased life expectancy and low mortality rates. The transformation of the state has taken place peacefully, within a democratic framework (Parayil, 2000; Ramanathaiyer & MacPherson, 2018). As mentioned in chapter 2.1 the state is one of the front runners to achieve several of the SDGs. Whether the SDGs has a further impact on the social development that is happening in the state is questionable, but it provides Kerala with a great starting point in the process of achieving the SDGs. In what follows, I will attempt to highlight factors that might have contributed to Kerala`s development.

2.2.1 ‘Kerala Model of Development’

The modern state of Kerala became a political entity in 1956. Kerala came into being by integrating the former ‘princely’ state of Travancore and Cochin, and the former British colonial province of Madras (Lindberg, 2001, p.12-13). In 1957, the first democratic election was held, and a combination of public action and popular mobilisation led to the election of a Communist government to govern the state. This change in government attracted attention from outside, as well as inside the country. During its two years of power the government tried to reduce social and economic inequalities by land and educational reforms which has led the state towards a unique pattern of social development. The Communist government was

dismissed by the Congress-led central government two years later due to ideological reasons, but came into power again later on (Parayil, 2000, p.vii-ix; Ramachandran, 2000, p.106-107). Kerala is known as a progressive state, where the government have changed between a Communist-led and Congress-led central government since the first election in 1957 (Parayil, 2000).

The unique pattern of social and economic development has led to the so-called '*Kerala Model of Development*'. This model has emerged as a result of initiatives, both governmental and non-governmental, based on public actions (Parayil, 2000, p.Viii). Further, the initiatives and adaption of several practices has led the model to be viewed as a set of quality-of-life indicators which put the state closer to high-income developed countries than the rest of India (Franke & Chasin, 2000, p.17). Instead of focusing on wealth and income per-capita, these indicators focus on elements to increase the quality of the human life (Sen, 1999, p.24).

Franke and Chasin (2000), defines the Kerala Model within a framework comprising of three components. The first component is connected to a set of quality-of-life indicators as mentioned above. Kerala has been able to develop high quality-of-life indicators even though the income per-capita has continued being low (Franke & Chasin, 2000, p.17-19). The second component is connected to Kerala's implementation of a set of wealth and resource redistribution programmes. For instance, by programmes which is connected to certain land reforms, a village in Kerala named Nadur experienced reduction in caste inequality, where the upper caste's hold on land and high incomes was broken (Franke & Chasin, 2000, p.20-21). Before these implementations of wealth and resource programmes took place, Franke and Chasin highlights a century of struggles for the "redistribution of wealth and expansion of public services to benefit most people rather than a small elite" (Franke & Chasin, 2000, p.19). The third component is connected to the political participation and activism by ordinary people along with dedicated leaders in Kerala. Throughout the years popular movements in Kerala has gone through many stages to improve the social situation. These movements have contained large numbers of members, and together the movements have been powerful and enduring. The activists have also demonstrated the ability to mobilise large numbers of people to participate in a variety of causes to improve their life situation. One famous movement is *Kerala People's Science Movement*. This movement has focused on making political struggles more interesting by having, for example, street theatre, songs etc. to make the communication more effective (Franke & Chasin, 2000).

In early 1990's, a new approach to the 'Kerala model' started to emerge. The 'new' approach promised to integrate a more sustainable development for environmental reasons, which would go beyond mere state regulation and to include more community-based strategies for a sustainable development opposed to having a market-based or state regulated development (Véron, 2000, p.212-214). Véron (2000), claims that the new focus was an attempt towards a more sustainable economic development which also included environmental goals to achieve the same level of success as experienced within aspects of social development.

The state's progress and its achievements has been examined by many scholars. Amartya Sen is one of them, and in *Kerala: The Development experience* edited by Parayil (2000), it is highlighted that Sen in 1997 praised the fact that Kerala despite its economic weakness and (in some respect) has been able to achieve more than countries with high-growth economies, such as South Korea. Sen also acknowledges that India, in general, can learn to some extent from Kerala's experience with social development. John Ratcliffe is another scholar that has examined Kerala's achievements and has shown that social justice is a causative factor underlying Kerala's social achievements (Franke & Chasin, 2000). The 'Kerala model' has been criticised for whether it can be called a 'model' in general. Parameswaran (2000) argue that this critique is misunderstood by several critical analysts and highlights that "the term 'Kerala model' may be inappropriate because it is not the product of any explicit modelling. 'Kerala's development experience' is a more appropriate term" (Parameswaran, 2000, p.232). Furthermore, Parameswaran claims that the state's experience can serve as a useful lesson for both developing and developed countries (Parameswaran, 2000).

Kerala's development has been criticised for whether it can be sustainable if the state is not able to provide higher economically growth rates (Ramanathaiyer&MacPherson, 2018). Ramanathaiyer and MacPherson (2018), provides several examples of what they highlight as an illusion of Kerala's development. When it comes to women and education, more women are educated than before. However, the state's lack of economic development prevents women from getting jobs. When they are able to get jobs, several work sectors provide lower wages for women than for men (Ramanathaiyer & MacPherson, 2018, p.189). Another example is about the increased life expectancy in Kerala, indicating that people live longer than before. However, as Ramanathaiyer and MacPherson (2018) argue "longer life need not be a better one" (p.186). Rates of communicable diseases have grown, and for the elderly

there is insecurity in whether shelter and healthcare are available if needed (Ramanathaiyer & MacPherson, 2018). Despite Kerala's achievements and the ambition to have a 'model for all', there are still groups of people that are marginalised. Kerala has been criticised for not including the whole society such as the fishing people, Adivasi groups (i.e. tribal groups), female stone cutters, female domestic servants etc. (Franke & Chasin, 2000, p.27-28). Most of these people go under socio-economic disadvantaged groups of the society, where, as Erwér (2003, p.128) argue, there exist a gender bias. These disadvantaged groups are often referred to as Scheduled Castes or 'Dalits' in Kerala, as will be presented below.

The caste hierarchy

Within Kerala, there exists larger groups of Hindus, Muslims and Christians (Lindberg, 2001). A well-known concept associated with Indian society is the hierarchical structure known as the caste system; it is, therefore, necessary to explain it shortly. The caste system is distinguished between two systems: *varna* and *jati*. *Varna* refers to four hierarchical arranged subdivisions. These are *Brahmins* (traditional priest and religious teachers), *Kshatriyas* (warriors), *Vaishyas* (merchants) and *shudras* (peasants and servants). These hierarchical arrangements are based on ritual purity and pollution, whereby Brahmins are recognised as the purest. In short, Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas are recognised as the Forward castes, whereas Sudras are recognised as Backward castes. Then, there exist Scheduled Castes or 'Dalits' which are outside the four varnas and are recognised as especially polluted since they tended to carry out the dirtiest work (Lindberg, 2001; Corbridge, Harriss & Jeffrey, 2013). The notion of the varna system is widespread in India, and each subdivision comprises of thousands of *jatis*. *Jatis* are originally linked to specialist occupations (Corbridge, Harriss & Jeffrey, 2013), and in contrast to the varna system, the Scheduled castes or 'Dalits' are organised within the system. The system of *jatis* are different in every region in India, and the hierarchical structure is more disputed and hidden than of the varna system (Lindberg, 2001, p.17).

For a long time, Kerala was constrained by a caste hierarchy which to some extent was more rigid than in the rest of India. There are arguments that the varnas did not exist in Kerala. Still, four major groups with a strict hierarchal structure were visible. These are *Brahmins*, *Nairs*, *Ezhavas*, and the former slave castes (*Pulayans*, *Parayans* and *Kuravans*). However, Kerala can best be described within the *jati* system, where there existed an average of seventeen groupings in each village (Lindberg, 2001). In contemporary Kerala, there still

exists much religious practice (in Hinduism, Christianity and Islam), though the notion of the caste system is more obscured. In what follows, I will give insight into gender aspects in Kerala.

2.2.2 Gender and Kerala

Compared to the rest of India, women in Kerala have a high status in society, and by following NITI Aayog's (2018) statistics shown in Figure 2.1 in section 2.1, Kerala is one of the front runners in India concerning the process of achieving gender equality. By following Erwér (2003), women's high status can be traced back to when Kerala was practising a matrilineal kinship system, where inheritance followed the woman's family lineage (Erwér, 2003, p.106), a system that “distinguished Kerala from the rest of India” (Jeffrey, 1992, p.24). This system gave women unique importance in society, though it cannot be measured in terms of equality with men. Even though women were given more freedom and respect, they did not govern the households and men still dominated decision-making (Jeffrey, 1992; Erwér, 2003). It is, however, argued that women's contemporary high status has to some extent, been influenced by the matrilineal system. One example is how widows in Kerala are better off than in other Indian states (Erwér, 2003, p.107).

With modernisation and colonialization, Kerala's matrilineal system changed into a patrilineal system in the 20th century, where the inheritance structure now followed the male line as it does today (Erwér, 2003). With the shift to a patrilineal system, there was a reorganisation of the family structure (from joint families to nuclear families) where the influence of the patriarchy became evident in everyday life (Aaberg, 2018; Planning Commission, 2008). George (2011), writes

Among the changes brought about was the shift in ideology to emphasize men's right to assert power over women. Currently, traditions are dictated and interpreted through male dominance with the support of colonial-postcolonial patriarchal norms. The influence of men is evident in all aspects of life in Kerala, from the home base to professional and social spheres (George, 2011, p.304-305).

The patriarchy, as it is today, has been recognised for reinforcing gender divisions which have resulted in lack of women's freedom and capabilities (Planning Commission, 2008, p.403). As the Government of India's Planning Commission (2008) writes, “today patriarchy is reflected in general form of social commitment to women's domesticity in the state, implicit in their poor visibility in the public sphere” (Planning Commission, 2008, p.403). In general,

women and men's position in society arguably are socially constructed by social norms, which affects the cultural codes and designated roles (Geetha, 2015). By following Erwér (2003), the cultural codes for women are strict and conservative in terms of how women are supposed to dress and with the expectations of being a 'good wife' (Erwér, 2003, p.15). Men, on the other hand, are expected to take care of the financial situation of the household. As a result of Kerala's socio-economic weakness and increasing unemployment rates, there are high proportions of male migration to foreign countries who send or bring remittance back to their households (Aaberg, 2018; Planning Commission, 2008, p.381). It is worth mentioning that Kerala's sex ratio is favourable to women, which means the proportions of females are higher compared to males (Census Population, 2020).

In recent studies, there has been brought attention to what appears to be a 'gender paradox' in Kerala. Statistics have revealed that women in Kerala are the most literate in India, however as indicated above, there lies an illusion over the idea that women are less oppressed by the patriarchy (George, 2011, p.305). Even with the unique access to education for both women and men, Mitra and Singh (2007) argue that unless there is a promotion for gender equality within social and cultural norms, education alone does not make room for empowering women's positions at different levels in the society (i.e. labour market, in social and domestic spheres) (Mitra & Singh, 2007, p.1228). As Jeffrey portrays it "a woman who goes outside the regulated routine of home and office becomes the target of gossip" (Jeffrey, 1992, p.215). As women have high social status compared to other Indian states, the paradox lies in their lack of political empowerment, which Erwér (2003) argue, reflect towards women's position in the state, within political parties and in the civil society. This statement was, however, claimed before Kerala implemented 50% reserved seats for women in Panchayats, which will be mentioned below. Contemporary discussions about the paradox lie in how many of these women have a saying in the decision-making processes (Jafar, 2013).

With a glance over Kerala, it seems like the government is making an effort towards promoting gender equality. Several programmes and schemes focus on creating a safe environment for women and providing gender awareness to society (Government of Kerala, n.d c). Also, there are both governmental and non-governmental organisations in Kerala that work with women's issues in an effort to empower women. According to Sen (2019), women's organisations can be key actors and crucial to pushing gender equality agenda forward. Within political structures, Kerala is one of the first states in India that has increased

the percentage of reserved seats in Panchayats. Today, approximately 50 % of the seats are reserved for women at all three levels of the Panchayats (Jafar, 2013). However, in the national parliament and state legislation, there are only 3-6 % of seats held by women (see Appendix G). In recent years there seems to be more ‘gender awareness’ on the political agenda, but whether there is sufficient gender awareness amongst the population is however questionable, as will be discussed further in the main section of this thesis on the basis of data gathered in the field.

I will now move onto the methodology chapter to describe how I have gone forward to gather data in the field.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

In July 2019, I travelled to Kerala to conduct a nine weeks fieldwork. The first stage of the fieldwork was a mapping of Kerala's involvement in SDG 5 and gender equality. This was followed by having interviews with people with knowledge on gender issues and SDGs in the state. The next stage was to conduct interviews with both men and women from a village to address their experiences and perceptions of gender issues in Kerala. The study follows a methodology close to a case-study. A case-study provides unique examples of the reality that people live in, recognising context as a determinant of cause and effect. It enables the researcher to understand ideas, opinions and experiences more clearly, than simply presenting them with abstract theories and principles. To catch the essence of a study, case-studies often require more than one method as a source of evidence. A case-study can be a powerful tool to provide human-scale data on macro-political decision making combining theory and practice (Cohen et al., 2018).

This chapter deals with the methodological approach of the study and present the methods used to collect and analyse the data gathered in field. It presents the sampling of participants, challenges experienced, ethical considerations and a discussion of trustworthiness. In what follows, I will account for the choice of utilising a qualitative research approach.

3.1 Qualitative research approach

To find suitable methods to collect data for the research issue, I chose to use a qualitative research approach. There is no right answer to which method or approach that serves the best, it is rather about which of these that suits your research issue better (Jacobsen, 2015, p.24). A qualitative research approach is suited if the starting point of the research is about gathering information in the form of words. This approach provides a set of tools that allows the researcher to go deeper into and reveal aspects of the complex reality people live in (Jacobsen, 2015). The reason for choosing this approach is related to the study's aim of getting insights into the various participant's experiences, opinions and perceptions related to the research issue.

There are both strengths and weaknesses by utilising a qualitative research approach. According to Patton (2002), a central activity in qualitative research is fieldwork. For Patton, this means “having direct and personal contact with people under study in their own

environments” (Patton, 2002, p.48). This direct and personal contact with people is one of the strengths of a qualitative research approach. In a sense, it is the people who are being researched who can provide the researcher with the truth of a phenomenon or situation. The close interactions reflect towards a high relevance of conducting qualitative research since it is with words the people being researched can explain their perceptions and meanings of the research issue (Jacobsen, 2015, p.129-130). Furthermore, in terms of the research questions, qualitative research can be seen as being flexible in the sense that the research questions can be changed throughout the research process. This flexibility can also be seen as a weakness in research. When being in the field and being flexible in collecting as much data as possible, the researcher can risk the research becoming a never-ending project. Another weakness of utilising a qualitative research approach is, according to Jacobsen (2015), the possible research effect that might develop between the researcher and the one being researched. This reflects how the researcher can create special results by his or her presence (Jacobsen, 2015, p.173). The research effect will be further explained in section 3.5.3 and 3.6. By utilising a qualitative research approach, I believe it has strengthened the trustworthiness of the thesis (see section 3.6).

This research follows an abductive approach, which refers to “an interaction between theory, hypothesis and questions” (Jacobsen, 2015, p.42, my translation). In scientific research, there is often distinguished between using either an inductive- or a deductive approach depending on the intention of the research. These two stands on each side of the table with opposite methods on how to go about the research. Inductive follows ‘empiricism – hypothesis – theory’, while deductive follows ‘theory – hypothesis – empiricism’. Utilising either inductive or deductive is however challenging, which is the reason for the rise of a third approach, namely an abductive approach. This approach is a continuous interaction between empiricism, hypothesis and theory (Jacobsen, 2015, p.34-36).

One point to acknowledge, which is an essential point to remember independent of which approach and methods used, is the concept of reflexivity. It highlights the importance of the researcher’s awareness of possible biases which can arise in research. Reflexivity is a central component and a crucial strategy to address participants views on the research issue (Cohen et al., 2018). Reflexivity in qualitative research is a “way of emphasising the importance of self-awareness, political and cultural consciousness, and ownership of one’s perspective” (Patton, 2002, p.64). Reflexivity will be discussed more closely in section 3.5.3.

3.2 Sample

According to Cohen et al. (2018), a sample is a smaller group or subset of the total population studied. There exist several types of sampling for the researcher to choose between and in qualitative research, the most common sampling approach is a purposive sample, also known as a non-probability sample. In my research, the main sampling approach used has been purposive sampling combined with the use of snowball sampling. A characteristic of purposive sampling is that the sample has been chosen purposefully. Cohen et al. (2018) describe it as “the researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristic(s) being sought” (p.218). For example, purposive sampling can be used to get access to people with knowledge about the particular phenomenon to be investigated. Within a purposive sampling approach, the use of snowball sampling can be valuable. In the snowball sampling, the people being interviewed can suggest or put the researcher in contact with other people who can be valuable for the research. In other words, it is based on a social network with the use of personal contacts to gain access to people of interest. A weakness by utilising snowball sampling is the possibility of biases, where the initial participant may contact participants with the same values and ideas and lead to an over-sampling of cooperative groups or individuals (Cohen et al., 2018, p.221).

3.2.1 Key informants and informants

There is a difference between the use of key informants and informants in this thesis. A key informant reflects towards a person who has specific knowledge in the research issue and is not selected only as representatives of the study. An informant is a person who responds to the questions being asked by the researcher, where the researcher may only meet the informant once to hear his or her opinion on the research issue. I chose to use both terms to distinguish the interviews conducted within and outside the Village. The key informants answer questions as representatives for a development agency (where some of their opinions colours the answers given), whereas the informants answered in terms of their own experiences. In this study, the professors, representatives from the NGO, and the Government have been categorised as the key informants. The people interviewed in the Village at the grassroots have been categorised as informants.

The key informants

The study implies having interviews with people who have knowledge about what is being done in the area of study. In the field, I managed to have seven interviews all together in Thiruvananthapuram with people that I have categorised as key informants. Six of these are people with competence in gender issues (four development actors and two professors), and one key informant has competence with the SDGs in Kerala (development actor).

In the weeks before travelling to Kerala, I attempted to contact relevant key informants by email. I had some ideas about which development actors could be beneficial to contact for the research issue, hence the use of purposeful sampling. However, only two development actors replied back by email. Through the network I built in the field, I got several phone numbers of relevant development actors whom I could attempt to contact, hence the use of snowball sampling. The use of snowball sampling was beneficial to get in contact with the key informants. When contacting them, I could refer to how I got their numbers in the first place. I kept in contact with most of the key informants throughout the fieldwork, where some of them provided me with relevant reading materials, reports and statistics. A short introduction of the key informants is given below.

Key informant 1 - KSPB

Key informant 1 is a development actor who is a member of KSPB. The key informant is a woman who has a long history in research on gender issues and represent aspects of gender issues in KSPB. KSPB is an advisory board under the Government of Kerala and is responsible for organising gender budgeting for all gender equality activities in Kerala. This board is providing funding to both Kudumbashree programme and KSWDC (KSPB, 2015).

Key informant 2 – Kudumbashree Programme

Key informant 2 is another development actor who was a female representative for the Kudumbashree programme. Kudumbashree is a programme for poverty eradication and women empowerment, implemented by State Poverty Eradication Mission of the Government of Kerala. The programme's aim has been to empower women through grassroot organisations, with a focus on the household. The word Kudumbashree means 'Prosperity of the family' in Malayalam (Kudumbashree, 2020).

Key informant 3 – Centre Plan Monitory Unite

Key informant 3 is the third development actor, a male research assistant working with the economical aspect of the SDGs in *Centre Plan Monitory Unite*. With knowledge in the SDGs, key informant 3 provided me with statistics and relevant reports about SDGs and its performance in Kerala.

Key informant 4 – KSWDC

I managed to have a fourth interview with a development actor, key informant 4, who is a female representant from KSWDC, a corporation within the Department of Social Justice in the Government of Kerala. This corporation focus on helping women in Kerala expanding their social and economic opportunities (KSWDC, 2017).

Key informant 5 – Sakhi

I conducted an interview with a female representative from Sakhi, key informant 5. Sakhi is an NGO that focuses on empowering women and providing gender awareness in Kerala. The NGO started in 1996 and has been the first major resource centre for women in Kerala. The name Sakhi means ‘Friend of Women’ in Malayalam (Sakhi, n.d).

Key informants 6 and 7 – CDS

Key informants 6 and 7 are two female professors working at CDS, who both have a long history of research on gender issues in Kerala. Key informant 6 has done a somewhat similar study with the perspective on men some years back and could give me some ideas on how to further develop my research. While key informant 7 could provide insight into historical perspectives compared to contemporary issues related to aspects of gender in Kerala.

The informants

To be able to understand if there should be more focus on men and their attitudes towards women, it was necessary to speak with both men and women at the grassroots to get insight into their experiences of the issue. The informants consist of both males and females above 20 years old, from a village in the Thiruvananthapuram district. I have decided to anonymise the name of the village for reasons discussed in section 3.5.2. To be able to get a broader insight into men`s attitudes towards women, I decided to have a wide range of people age wise to get

different generation`s view on the topic. However, a limitation in the sample is that most of the men interviewed are below 35 years old.

Through the help of my interpreter, I decided to conduct interviews in this particular village, due to an easier access to informants. It was my interpreter that contacted and arranged most of the interviews at the grassroots. We had a meeting about the intention of the research and whom I wanted to interview, and then my interpreter contacted both men and women who could be interested in being interviewed. The interpreter contacted the informants who fitted the purpose of the study, hence purposive sample. I will account for utilising an interpreter in section 3.4.1 When interviewing the informants, some of them also contacted their friends after the interview was finished to ‘recruit’ them to be a part of the research (i.e. snowball sampling).

I managed to conduct 27 interviews with both men and women in the village, 14 with men and 13 with women. I tried to get a balanced proportion of female and male informants to get an insight into each side of the research issue. I experienced that it was difficult to get male informants above the age of 35 to speak with me, which will be discussed in section 3.4. The age, gender, marital status, occupational status and assigned number can be seen in Appendix A.

3.3 Data collection methods and Data analysis

A research is about providing valid and reliable knowledge of the reality we are part of. For a researcher to be able to provide this knowledge, the researcher needs to use different strategies in order to know how to go about it. These different strategies can be referred to as methods (Jacobsen, 2015, p.15-16). According to Cohen et al., methods are about “how data are collected and analysed” (Cohen et al., 2018, p.186). In this sense, it is a way to go about gathering empirical data, or data about the reality (Jacobsen, 2015, p.21). In this research, the main methods used to collect data have been semi-structured interviews and participant observations. In addition, I have been using an agree/disagree form, and informal conversations to get insight into the research issue. In what follows, I will attempt to explain how these methods were used in the fieldwork, their strengths and weaknesses. I have included a section on data analysis, which explains the methods used to analyse the data gathered.

3.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

A qualitative research interview seeks to understand how the world is seen and experienced by the person being interviewed. It produces knowledge through the interaction between the researcher and the participants, and it provides the researcher with an opportunity to better understand the participants way of viewing the phenomena being researched (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2017). In the field, interviewing became one of my main methods used to collect data. I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews, which Cohen et al. (2018) defines as “the topics and questions are given, but the questions are open-ended and the wording and sequence may be tailored to each individual interviewee and the responses given, with prompts and probes” (Cohen et al., 2018, p.511). By having semi-structured interviews, the questions were more open and new ideas on the research issue was brought up during the interviews. This resulted in collecting valuable data which allowed me to get hold of information I would not have considered relevant beforehand.

While conducting semi-structured interviews I used what Patton (in Cohen et al., 2018, p.509) describes as a general interview-guide approach, which is a type of interview where the use of an interview-guide is present. An interview-guide consist of the main questions to be covered within the research topic, with room for revision. It serves as a checklist to ensure that the topics are covered during the interviews, where the researcher has the opportunity to decide the sequence of the questions (Cohen et al., 2018, p.509).

Strengths and Weaknesses

In an interview session, a strength of using semi-structured interviews is that it enables the researcher to give more guidance and to repeat or rephrase questions asked for further clarification (Cohen et al., 2018, p.513). During the first interviews with people at the grassroots, having the opportunity to repeat and/or rephrase questions, helped me in developing a better interview guide which had more specified questions that were easier to understand for the informants.

Another strength of utilising semi-structured interviews is that the interview session becomes more conversational and situational. It enabled me as a researcher to have follow-up questions and to ask for more details or examples during the interviews. In this way, the answers given might have provided me with more details and a better understanding of the participants thoughts and viewpoints. However, one weakness with this approach is that the researcher’s flexibility in how and when the questions are being asked can result in different responses or

answers given and reducing the comparability of the answers given by the different participants (Cohen et al., 2018, p.509-514). In the field, by using semi-structured interviews, I believe the interviews opened up for the participants to focus and dwell more on aspects that they found important and interesting in my search for knowledge on the research issue. I experienced that the interviews conducted with the key informants benefited from having more open-ended questions with the flexibility to ask questions in the sequence that I felt was suitable depending on whom I interviewed. However, since the timeframe for the interviews was limited and the risk of being too flexible in how and when the questions were being asked, there was a need for keeping some structure to collect relevant data.

By having an interpreter present in most of the interviews at the grassroots, I believe it was easier for me to keep on track with the interview guide since I had the time to reflect over what was being asked when the interpreter translated my questions to the informants. The interviews with the key informants, on the other hand, were more difficult in keeping the structure. These interviews became more conversational, where I started asking a general question and then most of the times the key informants started explaining and answering several questions at the same time. In these interviews it was important to have follow-up questions which did not move away from the main research issue.

Interview setting - Informants

The interviews conducted with men and women at the grassroots took place in my interpreter's office in the Village. The main interview sessions lasted for minimum 30 minutes up to 1 hour, with an additional 5-10 minutes for an Agree/disagree form that will be written about in the next section. It varied how many interviews I conducted on the same day, but mostly 2 – 4 interviews.

When interviewing, I decided not to use a recorder. After giving it much thought, I did not feel comfortable using a recorder since the aspect of gender equality may touch upon sensitive feelings for the informants, and valuable data may get lost. I acknowledge that this may affect the direct quotations given by the informants, but I believe that my notes during the interview session got accurate in the end. During the interviews, I often asked the informants if I had understood his or her answer right. In this way, I made room for the informants to correct and rephrase the answers given. After the interview was finished, I transcribed the interview when

it was fresh in mind, and I was given permission to contact the specific informant if some of the answers were unclear.

In these semi-structured interviews with the informants, I used the same interview-guide (see Appendix B) for both men and women with the sequence starting with more general questions and then moving along to more in-depth questions about the informant's experiences and opinions. Tuckman (in Cohen et al., 2018) highlights that "the interviewer must be careful in being too specific too soon, as such direct questions could make the respondent cautious, reticent and avoid an honest answer" (Cohen et al., 2018, p.515). During the fieldwork, the interview-guide got changed with a few questions added, rephrased or deleted. I ended each interview session handing out a form with 12 statements written about in section 3.3.2.

Interview setting - Key informants

The interviews conducted with the key informants took place in a space chosen by the specific key informant, which often was at their workplace. By letting the key informants choose the place, it was easier to get hold of them in their otherwise busy workday. When interviewing the different key informants, it is possible to say that I operated with several interview-guides in the sense that I 'adjusted' the questions for the specific person being interviewed, though with the general research issue in mind. An example of an adjusted interview-guide is included in Appendix C. I used the interviews with the key informants to dig into what is being done in Kerala with gender equality and to see if men are included in the process of achieving equality. By conducting these interviews, I was able to get more insight into gender-related issues and to ask for reports and other documents that could be beneficial for my study. The interview sessions lasted for about 1 hour up to 1,5 hours if the key informants had a lot to discuss.

Nor in these interviews did I choose to use a recorder. I did not feel comfortable using a recorder, and I experienced that most of the actors interviewed opened up for topics that they might not have talked about if they were recorded. In one case, the development actor asked to conduct the interview outside the key informant's workplace so the key informant could speak more freely and honestly about the topic. With the use of a recorder in that setting, it might have limited the key informant's answers even though it took place outside the key informant's workplace. Since I did not use a recorder, I consistently asked the key informants if I had understood his or her answer right and got the permission to contact the key

informants again if I needed to double-check the answers given or if something were unclear. I experienced that I had to contact one of the key informants again to confirm the given answer. I kept in contact with most of the key informants throughout the fieldwork.

All the interviews, both with the informants and key informants, were conducted face-to-face, which I believe created more trust and openness. For me, as a researcher, this also enabled me to have better control over the interview session as being able to observe the whole situation.

3.3.2 Agree/Disagree Form

At the end of each interview in the Village, I handed out a form with 12 statements about aspects of gender equality. Both men and women could then tick off if they agreed or disagreed with the statement. At the bottom of the form, there was a box where the informants could comment with a few words on what gender equality meant for them. This was only filled out by nine informants. The statements were written both in English and Malayalam. The intention of utilising a form with statements was to get a broader insight into how the informants approached gender equality. The statements were based on topics concerning the research questions, and to give an understanding of the statements asked are of general perception or not. The form is included in Appendix D. The form opened up to look systematically for differences and similarities between the answers given by men and women. In total, 32 forms were filled out; 19 by men and 13 by women. 27 of these were filled out by the informants who were interviewed. Additional five forms were handed out to random men in the Village because of a lack of male informants at that time of research. I have chosen to leave these out since I ended up with a fairly equal selection of interviews with men and women. I will take the answers into account when analysing and discussing the research questions.

3.3.3 Observation

During my stay in Kerala, I attempted, as much as I could, to take part in the local culture and observe people in their natural settings. I attended cultural and festive events, participated in a local environmental NGO, drank Indian chai (tea) in local tea shops, ate spicy Indian food with local people both in their homes and outside, overnight stays in the Village, and in general tried to participate in the cultural atmosphere. By engaging in these activities, I will argue for utilising the method participant observation, which reflects towards collecting

observational data in naturalistic settings (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011, p.13). The intention of participant observation is to observe people in their natural settings (e.g. take part in daily activities and traditions, interacting with people in everyday social settings, cultural events), to learn about the culture and sub-cultures of the people studied (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011, p.12-13; Cohen et al., 2018, p.551-552). Cohen et al. (2018) argue that observational data “may be useful for recording non-verbal behaviour and behaviour in natural or contrived settings” (p.543). Data gathered in natural settings refer to the observational data gathered from the activities I engage in, while the data gathered from the contrived settings refer to observations made while conducting interviews. I have used the observational data gathered throughout this thesis.

By utilising participant observation, DeWalt and DeWalt (2011) argue for the method to provide several advantages to the research.

First, it enhances the quality of the data obtained during fieldwork. Second, it enhances the quality of the interpretation of data, whether those data are collected through participant observation or by other methods. Participant observation is thus both a data collection and an analytic tool. Third, it encourages the formulation of new research questions and hypotheses grounded in on-the-scene observation (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011, p.19).

With other words, participant observation can help in gaining a more holistic notion of the research issue and create more trustworthiness. However, I cannot claim full competence in the Malayalam culture, but by engaging in cultural activities and having discussions about aspects of what I have observed, can be helpful. Also, I have had a previous stay of six months in India, so I will argue for being familiar with aspects of Indian culture.

3.3.4 Informal Data

While being in the field, I followed what Hansen (2018) recommended in the article *Doing Urban Development Fieldwork: Motorbike Ethnography in Hanoi*. In this article, Hansen highlights how he collected as much information as possible while conducting fieldwork in Vietnam. This consisted of talking to people, reading reports as well as local newspapers, watching local films etc. Hansen writes,

Although much of it will not be directly useful in the written work, it helps the researcher get a better understanding of the society and culture within which the research is conducted, something that in turn provides a crucial contextual backdrop for later analyses (Hansen, 2018, p.9)

I would argue that one of the most important sources I got more knowledge about the Malayalam culture, was through the experiences, conversations and discussions about the research issue outside formal data collection settings. I have decided to call it *informal data*, which in this context refers to the information gathered outside the interviewing sessions. In this sense, the dividing line between informal data and participant observation is hard to distinguish. The informal data gathered has helped me both while conducting the fieldwork and when analysing the findings, by putting the interviews and observations more into context. For this reason, I see it as a necessary part of the methodology chapter.

To gain more knowledge about the research issue, I have attended two seminars and one academic festival, which I have included in the aspect of informal data gathered. These seminars and festival have provided me with great insight into the issues and challenges of gender equality from the Malayalam perspective. It also gave me an opportunity to get in contact and discuss the research issue with people who work with and have knowledge about gender issues, who I then could ask for interviews later on. Conversations with people in different settings have also provided me with contextual information and experiences regarding the research issue. These conversations were of great help to get ideas of what to add and change in the interview-guide written about in section 3.3.1. It is important to be aware of the fact that the local people I had conversations with, do not necessarily know that the observations I made during our conversation are presented in this thesis.

Keeping some structure is crucial when being on longer fieldwork, and to have a field diary is one way of doing this (Hansen, 2018, p.9). While staying in Kerala, I decided to have a notebook where I would take notes of observations, thoughts, new ideas and interesting conversations that I had. This helped me in better remembering my experiences and challenges from the field, which was beneficial while conducting fieldwork as well as in the writing process. With these aspects in mind, the following part presents how I have gone forward to analyse the data gathered.

3.3.5 Data analysis

To gather data in the field is one thing; another is how to deal with the data gathered (Hansen, 2018, p.9). In the process of analysing data, I have followed what Jacobsen (2015) have categorised as four phases in analysing qualitative data: (1) Document the data, (2) explore the data, (3) categorise the data, and (4) draw connections.

(1) The first phase indicates the need to describe the data material when it is gathered. This involves transcribing the interviews, write down what has been observed and organise the field notes when it is still fresh in mind. In this sense, the first phase is a way to start systematising the data gathered. (2) The second phase is to explore the data. This refers to a somewhat unsystematic overview of the transcribed interviews, observations, and fieldnotes to look for words or general topics that have been mentioned several times. By taking the agree/disagree form into account, I counted the answers given to be able to look more systematically for differences and similarities in how the informants approached the research issue. The second phase can be a useful step before the third phase, which refers to the categorisation of the data (3). The third phase can be seen as the part where the data gathered are systematised into categories to reduce and organise the complex data. I have utilised a coding procedure to find categories systematically and to see patterns in the data gathered (Jacobsen, 2015). In this research, I have utilised open- and axial- coding. First, in the open coding, I categorised the data gathered into themes. Then, by using axial coding, I integrated these themes from open coding into a broader category, such as ‘alcoholism’ and ‘negative attitudes’ within the category of ‘household’ (Cohen et al., 2018, p.671-672). (4) The last phase of the analysis is to draw connections between the different categories and to see if the categories can be connected to an overall theme or phenomenon. Then, these categories can be expanded on by existing theories and other literature (Jacobsen, 2015). The fourth phase can reflect toward the use of *selective coding*, which identifies the core categories of the data and “integrates them to form a theory” (Cohen et al., 2018, p.672). Literature from chapter 2 and 4 have been used to analyse the findings more in detail.

3.4 Challenges faced by the researcher during the fieldwork

Doing fieldwork in foreign countries and cultures requires patience, respect, and flexibility (Hansen, 2018, p.10).

The Kerala monsoon weather consists of two periods, the first one from June-September, and the second one from October-November (Government of Kerala, n.d d). I travelled to Kerala in the first period of the monsoon weather, which I, to some extent, experienced as a challenge. Due to the heavy monsoon weather, my original plan had to change due to security issues, which led me to ‘think outside the box’ and to be more flexible to do sufficient fieldwork. Hansen (2018), acknowledges that the reality of doing a research is messy, which involves that it is necessary to have a framework and an approach that can be developed and changed over time for the research to be able to overcome and adapt to the challenges and opportunities that fieldwork inevitably brings along (Hansen, 2018, p.3). Due to an unpredicted challenge with the weather, I chose to stay in Thiruvananthapuram for the whole stay. However, the monsoon weather challenged me in Thiruvananthapuram as well, with interviews being postponed or cancelled and development actors being busy assisting people affected by the flood damages in other parts of Kerala.

The monsoon weather started as a challenge, but it made me think in more flexible terms, and in that sense, I experienced getting better access to reports and other literature that gave me a broader picture of gender issues in Kerala. The challenges I faced with the monsoon weather, encouraged me to ask the key informants for more reading materials and other sources to be able to get data and have sufficient fieldwork in the end. I was able to get access to a library with books, articles and reports with a gender perspective. In this library, I experienced having informal conversations about gender issues in Kerala with people working with these issues, which turned out to be a unique way to gain more relevant information.

Due to the weather, it was a bit problematic to get grassroots interviews, since I had to re-evaluate my sample and then find people willing to be interviewed in the area of Thiruvananthapuram. Luckily, my interpreter was of great help to find people who were willing to be interviewed. In the first period of the monsoon weather, I had to be flexible and have in mind that the interviews could be postponed if there was heavy rain on the day that was first planned. If there were heavy rain, I would not get any interviews, and the road

towards the village would not be the safest at that moment. After some time, the monsoon weather calmed down, and I was able to get grassroots interviews.

Even though the monsoon weather was a challenge, I experienced another difficulty while trying to get more grassroots interviews. I experienced that it was challenging to get male informants telling their views on the research issue. For instance, one younger man said he was scared of what I might ask about since gender inequality tended to blame men, whereas another man explained that an interview would take up too much of his time. Still, I ended up having more interviews with men than women in the Village. However, only 2 out of 14 informants were men above 35 years old, which can be seen as a limitation in this thesis. This can be a coincidence, as Hansen (2018) highlights fieldwork to be messy and unpredictable. However, it might be worth mentioning that for me being a relatively young female researcher might have provided a lack of credibility. Momsen (2006) highlights that “age differences, as between a young researcher and an elder in the society under study, (...) may cause problems not immediately apparent to the investigator” (p.47). I will discuss the issue of the researcher’s role in section 3.5.3.

3.4.1 Interpreter and Research assistant

To do fieldwork in Kerala, where the official language is Malayalam, the need for an interpreter is obvious. The language barrier made it impossible to do interviews at the grassroots by myself. A lot of the population in Kerala are taught English in school and speaks it well, but I experienced that most of the informants were far more comfortable in speaking Malayalam. For this reason, I decided to have an interpreter helping me with most of the interviews in the Village. The informants who were comfortable in speaking English, I interviewed on my own. All of the interviews with the key informants, I arranged and proceeded without an interpreter.

Before travelling to Kerala, I got in contact with my interpreter who in a way also became my research assistant. My interpreter helped me in finding accommodation and in arranging interviews with relevant people at the grassroots. Having a local person as my research assistant and interpreter, was of great help and allowed me to get a better insight into the Malayalam culture while conducting my fieldwork. According to Bujra (2006),

A local interpreter is far more than a translator of language. They can and often do become “informant[s] in an ethnographic sense”. They can become intermediaries who will open doors; they can also help to unravel why people behave as they do, who is related to whom or why the next village is different (Bujra, 2006, p.174).

During my fieldwork, I experienced that my interpreter became an informant in an ethnographic sense, who helped me to unravel the society and culture, and also discussed why some of the informants might have answered in the way they did. Having such conversations and discussions on the research issue and topic became beneficial in the interview settings and the writing process. The knowledge gained from my interpreter is used in this thesis with consent from the interpreter.

The choice of using an interpreter is not always without complications, and it raises some ethical questions. According to Bujra (2006), it is important to remember that interpreters also are people with views on their own on political or social issues. Bujra writes that the interpreters,

[...] may find it hard not to betray this in their translations, presenting one side`s position with more conviction and elaboration than the other, or even contradicting the accounts that are given in order to present their own opinions. More generally, it is common for the translators to “filter out” what they consider unimportant, even though this might be precisely what the researcher needs and wishes to know (Bujra, 2006, p.176).

However, my own experience was that the translation was reliable and that the interpreter did not intentionally ‘filter out’ what seemed unimportant for the research. My interpreter has a long history of being a reliable interpreter and has been working with several researchers within the same field. On the other hand, an aspect of being aware of is that the answers given by the informants may have been affected by the presence of the interpreter. Are the informants comfortable with having a ‘third person’ in the room translating their answers? This question could also be vice versa, since the informants may feel a comfort having a local person as the interpreter. To answer this question, I explained the situation for the informants and asked for their consent to proceed with the interviews. This consent will be elaborated on in section 3.5.1.

3.5 Ethics

Ethics are integrated and present at every turn in the research process, from the beginning to the end (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2017). The choice of research topic, methodologies, methods, and writing styles, are all touching upon the aspect of ethics (Cohen et al., 2018, p.111). In what follows, I will focus on ethical considerations.

Cohen et al. (2018) argue that “ethics are situated, i.e. they have to be interpreted in specific, local situations” (p.111). Furthermore, Cohen et al. discuss that ethics are something that concerns what is right and wrong, good and bad. It concerns the researcher’s behaviour and what the researcher ought and ought not to do in their research. It is a matter of maintaining the rights of others (Cohen et al., 2018). In qualitative research, a tension between the wish to gain knowledge and the importance of maintaining ethical considerations may occur. In an interview session, the researcher wants the interviews to be as deep and penetrating as possible, a factor which entails a risk of the participants being violated and offended. At the same time, the researcher wishes to be as respectful as possible, which entails the danger of obtaining an empirical material that only scratches on the surface. The researcher then must carefully plan for ethical issues that may occur (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2017). Throughout the research, ethical decisions have to be made. It is not simply decisions with a straight-forward answer; it is contextually situated and depends on the norms and culture of the country where the research will take place (Cohen et al., 2018).

In Kerala, as elsewhere in India, norms and culture regarding gender are complex issues. Since my research topic profoundly touches upon the aspect of gender issues, there are some ethical questions to be aware of; how to ensure privacy and confidentiality to the participants? How to respectfully ask questions in a non-intimidating way? In what way can the presence of the researcher affect the interviews? And how can the researcher avoid being affected by others in the risk of losing the critical perspective? The following sections will deal with ethical consideration concerning *informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity*, and the *role of the researcher*.

3.5.1 Informed consent

Informed consent is defined as “those procedures for individuals to choose whether or not to participate in the research, once they have been told what it is about and what it requires”

(Cohen et al., 2018, p.122). With informed consent, the participants are informed about the intentions and purposes with the research, as well as the possible risk of participating and how the data will be protected. Before travelling to Kerala, I wrote a consent form that was approved by NSD in Norway. The form is included in appendix E. The form emphasised both the main purpose of the study and the privacy of the participants. While conducting the interviews in Kerala, I spent some time at the beginning of every interview explaining the intentions and purpose of the research. I explained that all information gathered will be treated confidentially and ensured the participants anonymity. After the participants were aware of the purpose and agreed to the conditions, I asked them to sign the consent form as a requirement given by NSD.

3.5.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Ethics also brings up questions of confidentiality and anonymity. As the informants and key informants signed the consent form, they were aware of the confidentiality and anonymity connected to their participation. Confidentiality is a way to protect the participants right to privacy. It entails that the data collected from the interviews that could identify the participants, will not be revealed and secured on a computer approved by Oslo Metropolitan University. Confidentiality refers to the agreement between the participant and the researcher on how the data can be used as a result of his or her participation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2017, p.106). With confidentiality, the aspect of anonymity is important. Anonymity refers to that the information gathered from one individual will not in any way reveal that person's identity. According to Cohen et al., the participants of the research are considered anonymous when "the researcher or another person cannot identify the participant from the information gathered" (Cohen et al., 2018, p.129-130). Before each of my interviews started, the participants were informed that no names would be attached to any direct quotations or information written about in the thesis. Instead of using their names, the research will anonymise the participants by giving them a number (e.g. Male informant 1, Female informant 2, Key informant 1, Key informant 2). Since the aspect of gender is important in this study, I asked for consent to use their gender in the written thesis. To ensure further anonymity, I have chosen to anonymise the village where the grassroots interviews have been conducted. This place will only be referred to as '*The Village*'. For the interviews with the key informants, I asked for consent to use the names of the organisations and programmes, and their gender. However, I ensured anonymity and that no names will be used for the individual key informants interviewed.

3.5.3 Role of the researcher

Reflexivity highlights the importance of acknowledging our own influence in research. It encourages the researcher to recognise possible biases which can be a key issue for the quality of the data gathered. Being an outsider in the field is both a privilege and a constraint, where the researcher influences every stage of the research (Cohen et al., 2018; Patton, 2002). Before going into the field, a way to raise awareness is to engage in self-reflection about the value of the phenomenon to be investigated. Self-reflection can provide the researcher with the awareness of biases that may occur in the field (Cohen et al., 2018). But is it possible to set aside one's own values, assumptions and culture, no matter how reflexive one might be?

The quality of the interview depends on the researcher's integrity (Kvale&Brinkmann, 2017, p.108). Within an interview session, the relationship between the researcher and the one being researched are rarely symmetrical in terms of power (Cohen et al., 2018, p.306). With a literature review in academic writings, there are many attempts to explain the researcher's role and how to overcome power relations in the field. Momsen (2006), claims that it requires an effort of constant reflexivity to recognise the researcher's role in the field, as well as a continual reassessment of the position and our assumptions as a researcher. However, as Momsen highlights, reflexivity is not always adequate, but bringing awareness about the issue helps (Momsen, 2006, p.44). Within an interview setting ethical issues such as how the researcher dress, behave, his or her age and gender, may cause problems which are not immediately apparent for the researcher which will be discussed below (Momsen, 2006). Scheyvens and Storey (2003), suggest that a way to minimise the discomfort felt by participants in the research is for the researcher to recognise the power dimensions that exist between the researcher and the participants (Scheyvens & Storey, 2003, p.151). Furthermore, Scheyvens and Storey define levels of these asymmetrical power dimensions as 'real' or 'perceived' differences (Scheyvens & Storey, 2003, p.149). The 'real' differences assigned to the researcher are positions that the researcher cannot change. These positions are in terms of the researcher's gender, nationality, age and economic status, which may influence the data gathered in the field (Momsen, 2006; Scheyvens & Storey, 2003). For me being a relatively young female master student with a background in a western country does have its impacts when conducting research in a society different from my own. These 'fixed' positions are something we as researchers cannot control. However, the perceived differences which can be connected to our general appearance and the way we dress is something that can be managed.

How we dress and our appearance can cause difficulties within the interview setting, with eliminating trust between the researcher and the person being researched. It is essential to dress in a culturally respectful manner to minimise the discomfort that the participants may experience (Momsen, 2006; Scheyvens & Storey, 2003). While being in the field, I consistently covered up my shoulders and knees with cultural clothes, which can help in being taken more seriously while conducting the interviews. As written in section 2.2.2, cultural codes for women in Kerala are strict and conservative in terms of how women are supposed to dress.

When approaching men and women in Kerala while attempting to research the experiences of men's attitudes towards women and gender equality, it has been important to engage in some self-reflection and acknowledge that my own cultural norms differ. For example, in an interview setting, it was essential to listen to what the informants and key informants said, instead of only listening for what I wanted to hear or assumed was the situation. Another example is in terms of how I perceive gender equality compared to how it may be perceived in Kerala. Since this research relies on the participants own experiences and opinions, it was essential not to let my own assumptions about equality or inequality colour the answers given. One of the main criticisms of being an outsider in the field is that there can be a danger of interpreting societies or assume the location of power and privilege without any sufficient input from the local people researched (Apentiik & Parpart, 2006, p.34).

With these aspects in mind, it is important to acknowledge that it is not only during the fieldwork the role of the researcher matters. It is also important for the researcher to reproduce the data collected in an accurate way and the right context while analysing and writing the thesis. To reproduce the exact results are, however, impossible, but the researchers should try to do it in the best manner. This is important for the maintenance of the integrity and value of the people being researched (Jacobsen, 2015, p.51-52). My position as a female researcher with a western background may have affected the quality of the data collected. However, as aspects of reflexivity suggests it is about acknowledging my own position, influence on, and part in, the research, rather than trying to eliminate researcher effect, which Cohen et al., describes as impossible due to that "researchers are part of the world that they are investigating" (Cohen et al., 2018, p.303). The quality of the data collected will be discussed in the next section. This section will draw on previous sections to explain how the research can be trustworthy.

3.6 Trustworthiness

Kvale and Brinkmann (2017), argue that human interaction in the interviews will affect the participants being interviewed. The knowledge being produced within the interviews, affect our view of the human situation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2017, p.95). As the researcher has a role in the creation of knowledge (Cohen et al., 2018, p.26), how can the research ensure the quality of the data gathered?

Utilising a combination of qualitative methods, I believe it has strengthened the credibility of the thesis. According to Jacobsen (2015), each of the methods used provides insight into the research issue and when combining the data gathered it enables the researcher to cross-check information and augmentation of the data, which again can create a holistic and trustworthy picture of the research issue (Jacobsen, 2015, p.174). When analysing the data gathered, I have been following a four-phase analysis approach. By following it step by step, I believe the data gathered was analysed and used respectfully. To reproduce exact data is impossible as highlighted in the previous section. However, by using a combination of methods and having discussions about the topic, I believe it has contributed to the trustworthiness of the study. In addition, peer reviews have been an essential aspect of the writing process. With peer reviews, it was possible to discuss, get inspiration and defend what was written in the draft of the thesis. I have used primary and secondary sources in this research, with the use of 'University Library at OsloMet' and 'Google Scholar'. In addition, I have received recommended literature from credible professors who have knowledge about the topic. To form a trustworthy presentation of the thesis, I have used researchers who have often referred to each other in various academic works. This can help to reinforce arguments and analysis in the thesis.

A qualitative research approach has been critiqued for being too flexible in what and who is being researched, and the researcher for being unable to provide a neutral distance to the phenomenon being researched (Jacobsen, 2015). However, this can also be seen as a strength of utilising qualitative research approach. The plurality of perspectives and interpretations is unique in terms of providing insight into cultural traditions, norms and how research issue is perceived differently, both by the researcher and the ones being researched (Jacobsen, 2015). It is worth mentioning that due to the relatively short time I was in Kerala, it is not possible to

provide any generalisations; however, this was not the intention with the thesis in the first place. It intends to provide insight into the research issue, which may change in time and space. By following a methodology close to case-study, Cohen et al. (2018) highlights advantages and disadvantages regarding trustworthiness. A case-study, as Cohen et al. (2018) argue, “are ‘strong in reality’ but difficult to organise” (p.379). A case-study provides the researcher with data which digs into the reality of human action. Gender equality, and especially men`s attitudes, requires a ‘thick description’ to fully understand the intricacies of the said topic (Cohen et al., 2018).

However, there are aspects of the fieldwork that should be acknowledged. Particular problems occur in an attempt to measure men`s attitudes; for instance, how can we go about researching attitudes with few participants in nine weeks? Utilising a combination of methods, including conversations with various people, can give useful indicators of broader patterns. However, there is a danger of cultural bias, despite the attempts to address reflexivity. The research is based on the participants opinions and experiences.

Furthermore, as written in section 3.3.1, interviews conducted with the informants took place in my interpreter`s office in the Village. This may contribute to both a ‘researcher effect’ and a ‘context effect’. The first reflects towards what is discussed in section 3.5.3; how the researcher`s presence creates special results, which can be connected to the way the researcher dress, physical appearance and interest in the research issue. It is difficult controlling the researcher`s effect; however, it is essential to discuss the data gathered and acknowledge the role of the researcher in the field. The second reflects on the context where the interviews are conducted (Jacobsen, 2015). By having interviews with the informants in my interpreter`s village, may place some limits upon the data gathered. It is important to reflect over what I might have missed out on by having an interpreter who knew some of the informants. For instance, personal experiences about men`s attitudes may be simplified or neglected. However, by conducting the interviews in a space familiar for the informants can also make the interview more reliable in the sense that the interview session seems less intimidating. In addition, the office was shielded from the public, which contributed to a calm environment. As the interview with the key informants took place in a space chosen by the specific key informant, I would argue that it creates more trust over the interview situation which may have resulted in more honest answers. However, one of the interviews took place

in the informant's reception with many interferences, which may place some limits upon the interview.

The next chapter will present the analytical framework for the thesis. The analytical framework can be one way of creating more trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter 4 – Analytical Framework

In this chapter, the analytical framework will be presented. It includes concepts, theories and literature reviews, which will frequently be used in chapter 5, 6 and 7.

4.1 How to conceptualise Gender and Gender equality?

When gathering and analysing data from the field, perspectives on how gender and gender equality is perceived varies between the informants, key informants and in contradictions between male and female. Some see the issue of gender inequality as a critical obstacle and as an issue that must change in near future, while others acknowledge the inequality but does not feel the need for a change. Variety can also be seen in responses on how the term gender is perceived; a distinction between something biological and natural, or something cultural and constructed. To adequately discuss gender equality with a focus on men`s attitudes towards women, it is critical to conceptualise gender and gender equality, and how it is perceived differently throughout the world and in an Indian context. I have included a section about global development approaches to gender to put SDG 5 into context.

4.1.1 Approaching gender

Gender is constantly created and re-created out of human interaction, out of social life, and is the texture and order of that social life. Yet gender, like culture, is a human production that depends on everyone constantly "doing gender" (Lorber, 1994, p.13).

The term *gender* varies from the concept of *sex* which emphasises the biological differences between men and women (Erwér, 2003, p.50-51). Gender, on the other hand, is associated with the cultural and social construction of male and female, where thoughts and behaviour are learned through socialisation processes. In other words, it is concerned with the learned behavioural norms which are not fixed and may vary in time and space (Momsen, 2006, p.45; Schech&Haggis, 2000, p.85). Learned behaviour and cultural norms draw attention to the social classification of ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’, and what is seen as masculine and feminine is not designated by nature itself, but by society and cultural norms (Vaidya, 2019, p.2). As Simone de Beauvoir once wrote “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (in Lorber, 1994); a quote that also can be said about men. This social construction is highlighted by Butler (1988), who explains that gender, instead of being a contingent production of

history, becomes intertwined as a part of the reality (Butler, 1988). In this sense, the term gender can be seen as a part of a broader cultural context in society (UN Women, 2001a). Throughout the world, gender is perceived differently, and, in many societies, there exists deeply embedded inequalities between men and women. One important aspect of being aware of is that gender is not interchangeable with women; it refers to both men and women and the relations between them (UN Women, 2001b).

Gender roles

Since gender is a social construct, certain expectations towards men and women occur. It is commonplace in our everyday lives to think about men and women in different ways, with stereotyping the idea of men and women's capabilities and opportunities in society (Geetha, 2015). These expectations can be referred to as *gender roles*, where the roles are based on certain stereotypical assumptions about the characteristics and nature of men and women, which again is defined by culture and society (Vaidya, 2019).

Being a man is often associated with power, privilege and masculinity, even though some men are not endowed with resources to claim masculine power (Geetha, 2015). The concept of masculinity describes various sets of social practices, which is associated with performance and status, and the production of the 'ideal man' as someone with strength, intelligence, and breadwinners (Sweetman, 2013). With masculinity, men are often expected to be the protector and decision-maker of the household, while women are expected to play the stereotypical 'feminine role' by taking care of children and kitchen duties (Geetha, 2015). The concepts of masculinity and femininity are not two opposite and equal categories. Instead, they stand in a hierarchical relationship with each other where masculinity "is the process of producing superior men" (Srivastava, 2018, p.35). According to Nussbaum (2000), "women in much of the world lose out by being women" (p.298). Women's freedom and agency are being thwarted by society, which, according to Nussbaum, "reproduces the assumption of women being oppressed by the hierarchy" (2000, p.298). Within a society with embedded patriarchal structures, the social system in itself provides the expectation of men being masculine and having power (patriarchy will be described in section 4.3). The experience and perceptions of masculinity may, however, be different depending on how strong the patriarchal structures perceive itself in a given society (Sweetman, 2013). According to Sweetman (2013), the majority of men live with the anxiety of the struggle to live up to be the 'ideal man', when dimensions of social identities, such as class, sexuality and identity, can lead them to 'fail' as

men. Furthermore, Sweetman argues that gender roles and the norms that emphasises what is expected, constrain how each individual behave in society, despite the capacity and desire to behave otherwise (Sweetman, 2013). These expectations can be a part of reproducing gender inequality within a society. However, ideas and expectations of gender can also be reproduced by women. For instance, women`s adherence to social norms and practices can lead them to discriminate other women. When aspects of traditions and culture become internalised in everyday practices, women`s secondary status can be seen as natural and accepted (Kabeer, 1999). Within an Indian context, Narayan (1997) highlights how mothers treat sons and daughters differently despite being a feminist or not; this is recognised as mother-culture. The mother-culture also acknowledge that fathers have the power over the household and impose different demands and expectations to their daughters compared to their sons (Narayan, 1997, p.9). According to UN Women (2001b), gender roles and the expectations that come with it, are learned through socialisation processes, which entails that they can be changed in time and space.

4.1.2 Global development approaches to gender

For many years, women were seen as being of a lower status than men, with the simple explanation of biological determinism (Scech & Haggis, 2000). However, this view was challenged in the 1970s by feminist scholars with a change into the understanding that women`s status was culturally defined. In terms of global development processes, feminist engagement in development discourses challenged the concept of development with the result of putting women on the development agenda in 1975 (Scech & Haggis, 2000). Several approaches have emerged as components of feminist development theories since this decade, notably WID, GAD and more recently, gender mainstreaming. These can be seen as approaches to promote gender equality (Hopper, 2012). An insight into these development approaches can help to identify how global goals and policies, such as SDG 5, tend to emerge as a component of strategies within global approaches. I will provide a short introduction of these development theories in chronological order of their emergence.

The first approach is WID, where the primary goal was to include and integrate women into existing initiatives with a focus on strengthening women`s position. This approach can be seen within a stand of liberal feminism and emerged in the 1970s. Ester Boserup is a central economist influencing the development discourse to focus on women, with arguments for how modernisation affected men and women differently (Scech & Haggis, 2000; Hopper,

2012). The second approach is GAD, an approach that highlights the need for focusing on gender relations, rather than simply focusing on women's lives. The approach emerged in the mid-1970s (Hopper, 2012). However, how far GAD is from WID in practice will be discussed in section 4.2. The third approach is gender mainstreaming, an approach that was adopted as a worldwide strategy by the UN in 1995. As Hopper (2012) explains it, gender mainstreaming “entails transforming existing policy agendas by integrating a gender perspective into all policies and programmes” (p.112). Gender mainstreaming can be seen as an approach that changed from a focus on specific projects for women to a focus on implementing gender into policies and programmes (Hopper, 2012). Still, as UN Women (2001b) argue “gender mainstreaming must be carried out in a manner which is empowering for women” (UN Women, 2001b). SDG 5 can arguably be seen within the realms of gender mainstreaming with its transformative agenda. As SDG 5 being a part of the global gender agenda, the explicit goal is to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” (UN, n.d b). Contemporary discussions about where the world stands on the aspect of gender and development, are seen in the discussions of whether men should be incorporated into the process of achieving gender equality (see section 4.2) (Hopper, 2012).

In terms of global development approaches to gender, the Government of Kerala (2015) notes that the state has taken significant efforts to implement aspects of gender into development strategies. The state has been following efforts promoted globally, such as the MDGs and now the SDGs. According to the Government of Kerala (2015, p.3), the state is adapting to gender mainstreaming as a key approach to achieve gender equality within the state. However, the focus remains on the importance of achieving levels of women's empowerment (Government of Kerala, 2015). The next section will explain the concept of gender equality.

4.1.3 What is gender equality?

Gender equality is a term with several definitions, but the overall intention is that of equality between men and women in terms of equal rights within the social, political and economic sphere (Maheshwari, 2019). Within the Indian national context, gender equality refers to “empower all women to live dignified lives, contributing as equal partners in the growth and development of the country, in an environment free from violence and discrimination” (NITI Aayog, 2018, p.65). With SDG 5 in mind, India aims to achieve gender equality by “ending all forms of discrimination, violence and harmful practices, including trafficking and sexual exploitation against women and girls” (NITI Aayog, 2018, p.63). In *Gender equality and*

women`s empowerment policy for Kerala 2014-2020, provided by the Government of Kerala (2015), it is highlighted that gender equality is a ‘constitutional promise’ in India, where the Indian constitution provides several articles that argue for the protection of both men and women by the law (e.g. Article 14, 15(3), 16) (Government of Kerala, 2015). In other words, gender equality refers to men and women`s opportunity to live dignified lives.

Another definition is given by UN Women (2001a), which describes gender equality as

the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women`s and men`s rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration – recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men (UN Women, 2001a, p.1).

UN Women`s (2001a) definition of gender equality suggests that both men and women`s needs are taken into consideration and that there exists equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for all. However, it does not necessarily mean that men and women have to become the same, but that there should not be any restrictions or discrimination based on gender (Maheshwari, 2019). By following UN (n.d c), gender equality “is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world” (UN, n.d c). Gender inequality today, continues to hold women back and deprives them of basic human rights and opportunities. For a transformative change, UN (2018) highlights that structural issues must be addressed to empower women, as well as developing progressive legal frameworks. The former refers to such matters as unfair social norms and attitudes towards women, and the latter relates to frameworks that will promote equality between women and men.

Gender equality is a concept which provides both a qualitative and a quantitative aspect. The qualitative aspect highlights the influence of establishing development priorities which will provide positive outcomes for men and women. Where the quantitative refers to the numerical aspect of a desire to achieve equitable representation of women. A means to increase a balance, as well as parity (UN Women, 2001b). With a glance over the definitions of gender and gender equality, are the terms perceived as the same in all societies? How can we talk

about a universal approach to gender equality, when our life situations are different? The next section provides insight into how gender and gender equality are perceived differently.

4.1.4 How is gender and gender equality perceived?

Schech and Haggis (2000), has provided an interesting example which highlights how feminist approaches to gender equality varies in concept and meaning throughout the world. The example follows a female leader, who was a miner's wife from a small community in Bolivia, who participated in UN's International Women's Year Conference in Mexico in 1975. After expressing her struggles with lack of income, many work hours and political struggles, she got criticised face to face by a northern feminist for not realising 'how she had been manipulated by men who ignored women's problems when in the end it was all about the same inequality all women faced throughout the world'. The Bolivian woman raised her voice and argued for how class differences also matter in this issue. She said:

Is your situation at all similar to mine? Is my situation at all similar to yours? So what equality are we going to speak of between the two of us? If you and I aren't alike, if you are so different? We can't at this moment be equal, even as women, don't you think? (Schech & Haggis, 2000, p.89).

The conference brought women together from different parts of the world, however, the outcome was mixed. On the one hand, women were for the first time put on a global development agenda. On the other hand, the conference highlighted profound differences amongst women across the world concerning class and political issues. For the Bolivian woman, political oppression and economic exploitation were higher on her agenda than gender oppression which was the main motivation for northern middle-class women to act on an international basis (Schech & Haggis, 2000). With insight into this example, it can be understood that aspects of gender equality are valued and perceived differently throughout the world. This example reflects the concept of intersectionality which explain how gender and gender equality is a matter of diversity. Intersectionality is the matter of how elements of social identity intersect with other structures, and how it affects experiences and opportunities (Misra, 2018, p.112-113). For instance, the example given above shows that the northern feminist experienced the situation differently compared to how the woman from Bolivia experienced it. With the theory of intersectionality, the aspect of class, sexuality, gender identity and other statuses, are taken into account to understand how gender equality and

gender may be perceived differently. As Mishra (2018) highlights, “intersectional theory gives us the tools to analyse how privilege and disadvantage are connected and intertwined” (p.115).

As gender and gender equality are perceived differently throughout the world, the Indian postcolonial feminist Narayan (1997), attempts to dislocate the representation of third world cultures and feminism by using related notions of nation, identity and traditions. In connection to the above-mentioned example, Narayan argues that women throughout the world can be familiar with the overall inequality that women face, but it is necessary to put it into a cultural context to understand why and how these issues occur. Narayan argues for the importance of recognising our own culture, and that our culture forms the way we look at issues of inequality (Narayan, 1997, p.12-14). I reflect on her first essay ‘*Contesting culture*’ in her book ‘*Dislocating cultures – identities, traditions and third world feminism*’ (1997). This essay attempts to draw critical attention towards how third-world feminism is perceived and to the agenda that distributes these perceptions in that women are constituted by the same concerns and interests throughout the world (Narayan, 1997). As Narayan highlights, “my intention is to caution against taking terms like ‘westernisation’ and ‘cultural preservation’ as innocuous descriptive terms, and to urge critical attention to the agendas that are served by the deployment of these terms” (Narayan, 1997, ix). To put it simply, the arguments throughout the essay is an attempt to highlight how feminist writings about third world women tend to misunderstand and cover up the constructed nature of traditions, with a result of falling into the pit of cultural essentialism (Schech & Haggis, 2000, p.103). With examples from the Indian culture, Narayan highlights the importance of recognising cultural diversity within a nation and to understand that ‘Indian women’ may both be reluctant to change or eager to change the existing structure. To illustrate it, Narayan presents a discussion of how her mother explains women’s inequality or suffering as ‘unfortunate accidents’ with root in human propensities for greed, cruelty, and evil. Narayan views these ‘unfortunate accidents’ as something that cannot only be rooted in human propensities for evil but that it also is connected to the mistreatment of particular practices and institutional arrangements which is embedded in material reality, that constitute traditions and culture (Narayan, 1997). Furthermore, Narayan highlights how her mother’s generation grew up to see how dowry-practices and mistreatment by family in-laws were fairly common in everyday life, while Narayan grew up to see it becoming a growing problem and something that should not be as common as her mother told her. With this example, Narayan continues explaining how

women themselves can reproduce how inequality persists with traditions, identity and what is common in the nation. Even though women may complain about traditions, it continues because of how historical and traditional structures produces assumptions of the importance of being ‘a good Indian wife’ (Narayan, 1997). As gender and gender equality can be perceived differently throughout the world, the following part will present a discussion of men and gender equality.

4.2 Men and Gender equality

As SDG 5 seeks to empower all women and girls by 2030, the targets and indicators are only indirectly mentioning men. Where are the men in the gender equality discourse? In this section, there will be a short discussion that highlights arguments for why scholars recognise the importance of participating *with men for* gender equality to be achieved. The section will start by identifying critical discussions on how global development approaches to gender tends to dismiss reflections on men in practice. Then, it will move on to provide insight into academic literature that seeks to highlight men as an essential factor to achieve gender equality. It is worth mentioning that in relation to *intersectionality*, men can also be the ‘losers’ in society; however, this thesis will highlight the importance of focusing on men and their attitudes.

In global development agendas, there was a shift in terminology from a focus on women (WID) to a focus on gender (GAD) (see section 4.1.2). It represented a shift which also includes awareness of social dynamics such as class, age and personal agency (Clever, 2002). GAD became a field reliant “on the gender binary for its frameworks and tools” (Cornwall & Rivas, 2015, p.402). In theory, GAD is argued to be an approach which is concerned with gender relations, but in practice, most gender programmes are established *by women for women* (Chant & Gutmann, 2002). According to Chant and Gutmann (2002), men have rarely been drawn into gender programmes in any substantial way, which indicate that little has changed with the move from WID to GAD. Despite more emphasis on gender in GAD, the approach has been criticised for lack of recognitions of understanding men’s lives as well as women’s lives (Clever, 2002). The same discussion exists about the approach of gender mainstreaming with critiques about to what extent ‘gender’ is being transformed into existing policy agendas. For instance, Pearson (in Hopper, 2012) argues for a new tendency that it is believed that gender has successfully been

mainstreamed, which has resulted in that resources and staff members have been withdrawn from specific gender programmes (p.112). On the other hand, global development approaches to gender have had a significant impact on the fact that women have become engaged in global gender discussions (Schech & Haggis, 2000). For which reasons are the focus on men perceived as essential to achieving gender equality?

Since the universal declaration of human rights established in 1948, gender equality has been seen as a legal principle. However, it is only recently the idea that *men* have a specific role in this principle has emerged (Connell, 2011, p.7). As Connell (2011) puts it, “men and boys are in significant ways gatekeepers for gender equality. Whether they are willing to open the gates for major reforms is a strategic question.” (p.7). Connell (2011) claims that to attain gender equality, changes in both the institutional systems and everyday lives needs widespread social support. For instance, in patriarchal societies, Connell critically addresses that all men receive a patriarchal dividend by only being men. In this sense, men have more to lose in the process of achieving gender equality. According to Connell, gender equality is more likely to be accepted if men perceive it as beneficial for themselves and people in their lives, which requires reconsidering perceptions of traditional masculinity and identity (Connell, 2003). Connell’s work on men and masculinities have been recognised as an important contribution to the field of gender studies (Clever, 2002). Furthermore, as will be put forward in section 4.3.2, Connell’s concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ has been fruitful in understanding the social reproduction of gender structures (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Another scholar who critically addresses the need to focus on men is Cleaver (2002). By following the views of Cleaver (2002), men appear to be missing from initiatives and policies that seek to attain gender equality. For women to benefit in society, men need to change. For instance, men need to participate more in domestic work, as well as give up some of their control over household finances and decision-making (Clever, 2002, p.1). There exist several suggestions for how to include a focus on men without harming existing women initiatives; where Cleaver (2002) address and discuss the case for explicitly considering men in gender analysis and planning. By reflecting on previous programmes, Cleaver presents and discuss ideas of how to include a focus on men without reinforcing men with more privileges and power. For instance, Cleaver recognises skill-development programmes to be a tool to include a focus on men without harming already existing women policies (Clever, 2002, p.19-20).

Two other scholars who have contributed in the discussion for including a focus on men, are Chant and Gutmann (2002). Chant and Gutmann introduced the concept of *men-streaming* as a critique towards GAD policies which, according to Chant and Gutmann, are neglecting a focus on men even though the approach is an attempt to include 'gender' into development. In their discussion of why it is beneficial to incorporate men into achieving gender equality, are highlighted with two important reasons. First, without including a focus on men, gender interventions can only go so far. Second, in recent times gender roles, identities and relations have been undergoing in significant upheaval. With globalisation processes, men might experience 'masculinity in crisis' as gender equality policies seek to challenge the traditional way of living. In this sense, by having women-only interventions could develop a more hostile relationship between men and women, where men easily could sabotage a better life for women (Chant & Gutmann, 2002).

However, according to Cleaver (2002), including men are for some perceived as problematic. There exists a general fear that by incorporating men into gender initiatives could lead to resources being taken away from women-specific programmes (p.18). Furthermore, Sweetman (2013) acknowledge issues that can develop when including men into gender equality processes. By challenging the power relation between women and men, it can leave women with negative impacts, at least in the short-term. In some contexts, if men see their traditional positions challenged, new problems may occur, such as increasing violence in the household (Sweetman, 2013). Cornwall and Rivas (2015) highlight that there exists little understanding of how men themselves can be harmed by the patriarchal structure, especially those who embodied with subordinated masculinities (p.402). In the case of incorporating men into initiatives to achieve gender equality; these issues may present an increasing need to focus on men in an understanding of how men`s lives are affected by gender norms, and why men continue to hold on to oppressive attitudes (Sweetmann, 2013). As Chant and Gutmann (2002) claim, gender equality cannot be entirely achieved without mentioning men (p.271).

The scholars presented in this section are all of the perceptions that there is a need for including a focus on men and masculinities to be able to achieve gender equality. Throughout this thesis, I will highlight arguments given by these scholars to have an adequate discussion of the research questions. In the following, I will present theoretical concepts that seek to explain how ideas of male dominance and patriarchal thoughts become reproduced.

4.3 Reproduction of patriarchal thoughts

By introducing the concept of *masculinity* in section 4.1.1, it is essential to differentiate it with the concept of *patriarchy*. Masculinity refers to embodied ways of being male, which is socially constructed by culture and norms, where patriarchy, on the other hand, refers to “a system of social organisation that is organised around the idea of the superiority of all men to women” (Srivastava, 2018, p.35). In other words, patriarchy reproduces the notion of men being superior, while masculinity produces superior men (Srivastava, 2018). The concept of patriarchy within gender theories has, at times, been criticised for being too broad and ahistorical. With the rise of ‘intersectionality’ other structures within the society started to provide dominant concepts to understand gender, however, as argued by Ozyegin (2018),

I propose that it would constitute a vital omission to our building of gender theory and politics to leave out of our research and theory the experiences of those individuals who intrinsically link domains of gender to patriarchy and who see themselves, their gender arrangements, and their struggles through a prism of patriarchy (Ozyegin, 2018, p.234)

Concerning this argument, the data gathered from the field, and the fact that India comprises of deeply rooted patriarchal structures; I see it as fruitful to build on theories that may provide insight into possible ways of how patriarchal structures may reproduce and continue to exist within the Keralan society. I will reflect on two theoretical views; first, Bourdieu’s notion of ‘masculine dominance’, then, I will reflect on the views of Connell and Messerschmidt’s theory of ‘hegemonic masculinity’.

4.3.1 A Bourdieusian framework

Although gender was never central to Bourdieu in his earliest work, his conceptualisations have been influencing feminist theorisations and writings with insight in class and culture for a long time. In his later work, however, Bourdieu attempts to address gender and explore the nature of patriarchal values in his work *Masculine dominance* (2001). For Bourdieu, the notion of masculine dominance becomes deeply integrated into our unconsciousness. In essence, male dominance becomes an act of common values or meanings, rather than by the use of force (Bourdieu, 2001).

There are certain conditions for the full exercise of male dominance, which refer to ‘the social construction of bodies’ and ‘the embodiment of domination’ (Bourdieu, 2001). The former concentrates around the social constructions of ‘body’ dispenses with justification in favour of men. The biological differences (e.g. anatomical difference in particular) construct the male body to be associated with strength and dominance, whereas women are at the basic level, described with its deficiencies. The body in such legitimises male dominance and thus appear “as the natural justification of the socially constructed differences between genders, and in particular of the social division of labour” (Bourdieu, 2001, p.11). The latter condition concentrates on the embodiment of domination, where the biological differences appear to be the basis of social differences. As Bourdieu claims, “The particular strength of the masculine sociodicy comes from the fact that it combines and condenses two operations: *it legitimates a relationship of domination by embedding it in a biological nature that is itself a naturalised social construction*” (2001, p.23). With other words, how the biological body becomes associated with strength or weakness is legitimised with the social construction itself and through the schemes immanent in the individual’s habitus.

These conditions, Bourdieu argues, reflects the full exercise of male dominance and can further be explained by the concept of *symbolic violence* (Bourdieu, 2001, p.33). Symbolic violence is as Bourdieu describes it, “gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, exerted for the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition (more precisely, misrecognition), recognition, or even feeling” (Bourdieu, 2001, p.1-2). For Bourdieu, symbolic violence is an example of how male dominance is justified in a patriarchal society. Symbolic violence is the imposition of dominant ideas and values that shapes *habitus*. Habitus is a socialised norm or tendency that guides behaviour and thinking. It is embodied dispositions or tendencies that organise the way individuals perceive and responds to the social world around them (Khanal, 2017). For Bourdieu, habitus is socially constructed and thus acquired through people’s lived experiences within the social world (Arun, 2018, p.15). With symbolic violence, the incorporation of unconscious structures tends to maintain and continue the structures of action of the dominant groups (Bourdieu, 2001). For the dominated, it results in misrecognition and ‘consent and complicity’ attitude, as the dominance appears as naturalised (Khanal, 2007; Bourdieu, 2001, p.35). Bourdieu argues,

The only way to understand this particular form of domination is to move beyond the forced choice between constraint (by forces) and consent (to reasons), between mechanical coercion and voluntary, free, deliberate, even calculated submission. The effect of symbolic domination is exerted not in the pure logic of knowing consciousnesses but through the schemes of perception, appreciation and action that are constitutive of habitus and which, below the level of the decisions of consciousness and the controls of the will, set up a cognitive relationship that is profoundly obscure to itself (Bourdieu, 2001, p.37).

Masculine dominance, in accordance to patriarchal values, is being maintained through being naturalised and embodied into the individual's habitus. This again, is maintained by different agents such as the family, the state, the educational system, the church and other social institutions within society (Bourdieu, 2001, p.34). Most importantly, the symbolic power that comes with male dominance, cannot be exercised without contribution from those who are being dominated, and "only undergo it because they construct it as such" (Bourdieu, 2001, p.40). With the naturalisation of male dominance, Bourdieu argues for women accepting their position as dominated, and understand it as natural. To desire our own social destiny, is as Bourdieu argues, a way to accept one's own destiny (i.e. *amor fati*) (Bourdieu, 2001, p.37). In this sense, women can be their own worst enemy in reproducing patriarchal values as something natural (Bourdieu, 2001, p.39-40).

Bourdieu acknowledges that the patriarchy today needs more recognition as it no longer imposes itself with the transparency of something taken for granted (Bourdieu, 2001, p.88). Societies are being more aware of patriarchal structures, whereby with the influence of gender equality policies and the increased educational access for women can be factors of change. However, Bourdieu's notion of masculine dominance is still valuable (Bugge, 2000), and as Bourdieu (2001) claims,

Because the foundation of symbolic violence lies not in mystified consciousness that only need to be enlightened but in dispositions attuned to the structure of domination of which they are the product, the relation of complicity that the victims of symbolic domination grant to the dominant can only be broken through a radical transformation of the social condition of production of the dispositions that lead the dominated to take the point of view of the dominant on the dominant and on themselves (Bourdieu, 2001, p.41-42).

Field, doxa and capital

For Bourdieu, the concept of power is culturally and symbolically created. Through the interplay between agency and habitus, the power is constantly re-legitimised (Akram, Emerson, & Marsh, 2015, p.351). To understand Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence, it becomes essential to recognise Bourdieu's conceptualisation of power relations. This conceptualisation draws on *habitus*, *fields*, *doxa* and *capital* to explain how society reproduces itself (Arun, 2018, p.14). As habitus has been defined previously, in what follows, there will be accounted for fields, doxa and capitals.

With habitus being embodied dispositions, it is connected to Bourdieu's concept of fields. It is through "habitus that power is played out differently in fields" (Akram et al., 2015, p.351). The concept of fields refers to the various social and institutional arenas in which people express and reproduce their dispositions, as well as gain and compete for the distribution of capital. A field should be viewed as systems involving dominant and subordinated positions, whereby some forms of capital is considered superior to others. In this sense, fields can be sites of struggle for classification. The experience of power may differ from one field to another, meaning that people can accept power and domination in one field, and resist it in another. There exist different types of field, such as formal institutions of education or household (Akram et al., 2015, p.351).

Within fields, there can exist a 'hidden power' which concerns the concept of *doxa*. Doxa refers to taken-for-granted assumptions or common sense, as explained by Akram, Emerson and Marsh (2015), "of which people may be unaware and which may limit choices and affect preferences. (...) and are a part of the universe of undiscussed" (p.351). Doxa becomes unquestioned beliefs which exist beyond discourse or argumentation (Arun, 2018; Kabeer, 1999).

Finally, the third aspect of Bourdieu's theory relates to capital. There are three forms of capital; economic-, social-, and cultural capital. First, economic capital refers to the possession of money or institutionalised into a property. Second, social capital refers to the social connections in terms of a durable network. Third, cultural capital can exist in three forms, (1) embodied into habitus, (2) objectified state in terms of cultural goods, and (3) institutionalised state which can refer to educational gains (Bourdieu, 2006). Cultural capital refers to the individual's characteristics in terms of non-financial assets (Khanal, 2017).

Economic-, social- and cultural- capital can, to some extent, be converted with each other (Bourdieu, 2006). With insight into Bourdieu`s theoretical views on power and how it can be reproduced within the society, I will turn to Connell and Messerschmidt`s concept of *hegemonic masculinity*.

4.3.2 Hegemonic Masculinity

Hegemonic masculinity was initially conceptualised by Connell as “the form of masculinity in a given historical and society-wide setting that structures and legitimates hierarchical gender relations between men and women, between masculinity and femininity, and among masculinities” (in Messerschmidt, 2016, p.10). The concept derives from Gramsci`s characterisation of cultural hegemony, where the domination is based on common values and perceptions that are perceived to benefit everyone (Stølen, 1996, p.387).

After receiving criticism for being too vague, Connell and Messerschmidt reformulated the concept of hegemonic masculinity to highlight its importance and relevance when talking of gender and gender relations. This reconceptualisation constitutes of reformulating hegemonic masculinity within four main areas: (1) The nature of gender hierarchy, (2) the geography of masculine configurations, (3) the process of social embodiment, (4) and the dynamics of masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.847). It is this reconceptualisation of this concept that I will use in this thesis, and as argued by Connell (2016), the concept of hegemonic masculinity might provide a better insight into the processes of naturalising inequality. Before explaining these four areas, there are some ideas that is retained from the initial conceptualisation that needs to be mentioned. The fundamental feature of the initial conceptualisation remains “the combination of the plurality of masculinities and the hierarchy of masculinities” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.846). This refers to how there exists multiple masculinities that vary between societies, cultures and in different institutional settings throughout the world. Some of these masculinities again, are socially central and becomes associated with social power and authority. Furthermore, the idea that hegemonic masculinity is reproduced by cultural consent is still accurate, where it is important to acknowledge that it is not simply domination rooted in the act of force, but a pattern of hegemony. When adapting the term to analyse masculinity within a society, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) highlight that hegemonic masculinity

does not need to be the commonest pattern in everyday lives of boys and men. Rather, hegemony works in part through the production of exemplars of masculinity, symbols that have authority despite the fact that most men and boys do not fully live up to them (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.846).

Referring to the reconceptualisation, the first area reformulates the nature of gender hierarchy (1). The reformulation seeks to grasp the importance of incorporating a more holistic grasp of gender hierarchy. With other words, it seeks to explain how not only men hold a superior position, but also how other agency of subordinated groups influence the other. For instance, how women can play a salient factor in cultivating hegemonic masculinities. In this sense, the nature of gendered hierarchy has given more attention to the historical interplay of masculinities and femininities. This concept emphasises the importance of *intersectionality* to acknowledge gender in terms of social dynamics such as class, age, and nation (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Messerschmidt, 2016).

The second area reflects the geography of masculine configurations (2), which highlights that hegemonic masculinities can be analysed at local, regional and global level. Adapting to this framework allows one to recognise the importance of place without falling into a generalisation of independent cultures and discourses (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.850). At local level masculinities are constructed in face-to-face interactions where for instance the family or the immediate community play an important part. At regional level masculinities are constructed at society-wide level in relation to culture or national ideas. Finally, at global level hegemonic masculinity is constructed in transnational areas. For instance, hegemonic masculinity is connected to globalisation processes and is constructed through global politics, transnational business and media (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Messerschmidt, 2016). These three levels interplay with each other and as Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argue,

Not only do links between these levels exist; they can be important in gender politics. Global institutions pressure regional and local gender orders; while regional gender orders provide cultural materials adopted or reworked in global arenas and provide models of masculinity that may be important in local gender dynamics (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.849).

The third area is connected to the process of social embodiment (3). This area was formulated in the initial conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity but called for theoretical attention. When discussing transgender practices for instance, it becomes difficult to utilise a simple model of social construction. As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) highlights,

the importance of masculine embodiment for identity and behaviour emerges in many contexts. (...) the body is a participant in generating social practice. It is important not only that masculinities be understood as embodied but also that the interweaving of embodiment and social context be addressed (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.851).

With other words, the process of social embodiment is both objects of- and agents in- social practices (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Finally, the last area is the dynamics of masculinities (4), which refer to how conceptualisations of hegemonic masculinity may change, be contested or even challenged through time. With other words, the conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity, as Connell and Messerschmidt argue, “should explicitly acknowledge the possibility of democratising gender relations, of abolishing power differentials, not just of reproducing hierarchy. (...) A positive hegemony remains, nevertheless, a key strategy for contemporary efforts at reform” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.853).

Contemporary hegemonic masculinities then can provide an empirical analysis of hegemonic masculinities at local, regional and global levels. Hegemonic masculinities are formed and affected by an unequal relationship between femininities and masculinities in society. Gender inequality then becomes legitimised through the hierarchical relationship which justifies the cultural discourse that circulates in society (Messerschmidt, 2016). The concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ arose from a western perspective to explain social reproduction of gender structures. However, as argued by Connell (2016) in light of post-colonial critique, the concept should not be abandoned because of its western origins, rather, the term hegemonic masculinities must be understood historically, as concepts of gender alters through time (Connell, 2016).

As this chapter has presented the analytical framework of the thesis, in what follows, the main section will be presented. To recap briefly, chapter 5 seeks to understand what is being done in Kerala with SDG 5, and to what extent men are incorporated into gender equality initiatives. The chapter focuses on the experiences, opinions and practices of the key informants. Chapter 6 present findings from the Village and explore the informants experiences and opinions with men`s attitudes towards women. Then, chapter 7 seeks to connect these two chapters for a more profound discussion of the normative question of whether it is time to include a focus on men in processes towards achieving gender equality.

Chapter 5 – Including men in gender equality: practice, experiences, and perspectives from development actors

In this chapter, the first supporting research question will be discussed: *What is being done in Kerala concerning SDG 5, and to what extent are men incorporated in the process of achieving gender equality?* The chapter will focus on the key informants practices, experiences, and perspectives on the research issue. I will, to some extent, include answers given by the informants from the Village. Through analysing the data gathered, the key informants have highlighted two main obstacles towards achieving gender equality. Firstly, the patriarchal structure which emphasis traditional and cultural norms in favour of men (e.g. stereotypes). Secondly, resistance in terms of resisting the idea of gender equality. These two obstacles can be seen in favour of men in Kerala. They will be mentioned throughout this thesis to discuss the main research question: *To what extent should there be more focus on men in the process of achieving gender equality?* This chapter will start by discussing what is being done with SDG 5 in Kerala (*section 5.1*). Then, it will discuss possible programs that may include a focus on men (*section 5.2*). Finally, the chapter will end with a discussion on the key informants experiences of possible constraints for SDG 5 to be achieved (*section 5.3*).

5.1 SDG 5 in Kerala

SDG 5 seeks to empower all women and girls by 2030 (UN, n.d). With India's significant enthusiasm to achieve progress in SDG 5, Kerala performs well despite its low socio-economic position (NITI Aayog, 2018). As India is following the strategy of cooperative and competitive federalism, each Indian state plays a vital role in implementing programmes and influencing social and economic parameters for achievements in SDG 5 (Khemka & Kumar, 2020). Kerala is seen as a hopeful state which can contribute to the country's relative success or failure in terms of the SDGs (NITI Aayog, 2018). The goal in itself is principally focusing on women, and rightly so, for women have for a long time been marginalised within the society. On the other hand, recalling discussions from section 4.2, it becomes clear that SDG 5 fail to recognise gender relations in terms of the role of men and masculinities in women's lives. According to Connell (2011), men are an important factor and contributor to achieve gender equality and transform patriarchal structures that perpetuate gender inequality (Connell, 2011).

As written in chapter 1, there are no targets or indicators that directly mentions men in SDG 5. One target that might indirectly mention men is target 5.4 and indicator 5.4.1 (see Table 2.2 in section 2.1.1). This target approaches aspects of promoting shared responsibilities in the household, and the recognition of valuing unpaid care and domestic work; while the indicator enables tracking of the progress highlighting the proportion of time spent in the household by sex, age and location. The target only indirectly mentions men, which reflect to Connell (2011) who argues that men often become the background category in policy discourses about women. In a document received from Key informant 3, that consisted of Kerala's progress with SDG 5; there is no available data for this particular target (attached in Appendix G). Does this mean that there is no focus on incorporating men in gender equality processes in Kerala?

As written in 3.2 *Sample*, I was able to have an interview with Key informant 3 who works with the SDGs in Kerala. The work consists of gathering data from a variety of departments and then to evaluate the status of each SDG. I received documents and unpublished reports from Key informant 3 which indicates that the indicators of SDG 5 have been adjusted to fit the Keralan society. However, men are not mentioned in the adjusted goal (attached in Appendix F). And as Key informant 3 claims, "getting clear data is the first priority, then maybe we can include new indicators. We need money, and this is difficult. (...) For time being the structure is the thing, then maybe in the future, we can proceed with other issues regarding gender". When interviewing Key informant 3 one of the first facts pointed out was that Kerala does not focus on SDG 5 per se as the quote below suggests.

Well, the state does not do anything for this goal. There is no coordination for this goal at this time. However, there are a lot of schemes and programmes where women are within and included. To focus on SDG5, we need information to figure out which programme works with women. For example, education is helping. Education helps to address child related issues. So, I would say that SDG5 is blending in with the already existing women programmes. Gender is addressed by different programmes and how they work. Then with institutions they are addressing different issues with gender equality. For example, social justice, education, health department, police and so on. (...) With SDG5 there is no directly work, but SDG5 consist of some work done by different departments.

This quote elucidates that SDG 5 does not get any particular attention in Kerala other than the already existing women-oriented programmes. As Key informant 3 suggests, "the vision and

aims are good. It makes discussion about development in Kerala. (...) Without doing anything, we are doing something new through the SDGs”. As SDG 5 can relate to the approach of gender mainstreaming, a focus on both gender through SDG 5 is not immediately visible in Kerala. If there is to be seen a focus on men, the focus is located into the realms of gender awareness programmes which will be further explained in section 5.2.

By following the statistics given by NITI Aayog (2018), Kerala is seen as one of the front runners in India to achieve SDG 5, however, “the ending of patriarchy is still a long way off” (Khemka & Kumar, 2020, p.9). Khemka and Kumar (2020), claims that “gender in the context of SDG 5” (p.9) is most likely best addressed by budgeting, planning and implementation. If there is a well-funded action plan at local, subnational and national levels, SDG5 can be successful by 2030 (Khemka & Kumar, 2020). An action plan can be seen in KSPB’s role in planning a Gender budget which includes all work on gender issues in Kerala. This budget can be argued for being in relation to SDG 5, as confirmed by Key informant 3 as the quote suggests: “KSPB works with policymaking and budgeting for the state. These policies and budgeting can relate to SDG 5”. Gender budgeting refers to budgeting that examines the responsibilities and commitments towards gender equality by the government (Government of Kerala, 2019). Still, with the positive development in statistics of SDG 5 in Kerala, the representative from KSPB, Key informant 1, claims that gender equality is not as good as the statistics given by NITI Aayog claims. The key informant highlights that the practice of patriarchal structures within the society is a major constraint for social development, with an increased rate of violence against women, problems with dowry which can be seen in favour of men, and the fact that men and women do not interact with each other in the public space. All these aspects are connected to the paradox that has been discussed in recent years by scholars, as mentioned in 2.2.1. As Ramanathaiyer and MacPherson (2018) claim, the development in Kerala can be seen as an illusion with hiding the paradox of excluding a focus on all people in Kerala. They continue arguing that the equality claimed by the government hide the fact that the state’s lack of economic development prevents educated women from getting jobs (Ramanathaiyer & MacPherson, 2018, p.189). In this sense, as George (2011) claims, even though statistics reveal that women are the most literate in India, there lies an illusion over the idea that women are less oppressed by the patriarchy (p.305). Key informant 1 argued that

NITI Aayog mentions only a few points accounted in their statistics. Kerala is catching up in a way, but gender equality as we in KSPB understand it still has a long way to go. This is why gender budgeting is so important. Women need economic back support.

A suggestion by the representative from KSPB, Key informant 1, led me to read through the annual gender budgeting plan that provides a status report on the ongoing gender issues accounted in Kerala, to seek information regarding men. According to the annual Gender Budget Plan for 2018-2019, it is claimed that patriarchal structures are apparent in contemporary Kerala, both in public and private spheres. For example, despite the 50 percent reserved seats in the panchayats, women's role in decision-making processes remain low. Another example is the idea of men being the 'head of households' and women taking care of the children and kitchen duties, remains strongly entrenched, and as the Annual Budget Plan 2018-2019 suggest, women themselves internalise patriarchal values within the household (Government of Kerala, 2019). Within this Annual Budget Plan, there are, however, close to no points associated with a focus on men and their attitudes towards women. As argued by Cleaver (2002), focusing on men and masculinity within a state embedded with patriarchal ideas can be challenging, however, it may provide us with a more "sophisticated understanding of gender relations and how to impact upon them" (p.24). Although with no direct focus on men, KSPB's gender budget is, on the other hand, distributing a high amount of money towards schemes and programmes that seek to empower women and to recognise and value the unpaid work in the households. As claimed in the report, the basic foundation of gender budgeting is that it recognises the unequal gender roles and challenges the notion that policy is gender-neutral (Government of Kerala, 2019). With other words, gender budgeting focuses on increasing women's freedoms, but as suggested by all key informants interviewed, the patriarchal structures within the state continue to deprive women which may indicate the need to focus on men 'as gatekeepers' for gender equality.

The work in Kerala for gender equality then has for the most part been focusing directly on supporting women and opening up for equal opportunities and rights. By taking SDG 5 into account, the primary focus is to empower and end discrimination of women and girls. This is an important focus since women tend to bear the brunt of gender inequities and have for a long time been exposed to fewer opportunities within societies. Despite this, as argued by Chant and Gutmann (2000), if gender equality policies continue to not recognise the role of men and masculinities and how it plays out in women's lives, then gender equality can only

go so far. As Figure 2.1 in section 2.1.1 suggests, Kerala still has a long way ahead before gender equality is achieved. With insight into what is being done with SDG 5 in Kerala, does there exist anything connected to involving men in the process of achieving gender equality? I will now turn to a section that presents possible programmes that may include a focus on men.

5.2 Gender awareness to dismiss stereotypes

“Men need gender awareness. What does it all matter if you don’t focus on men?” (Key informant 1)

As mentioned above, by focusing on men and masculinities in a society, it may provide a more “sophisticated understanding of gender relations and how to impact upon them” (Cleaver, 2002, p.24). The development actors featured in this study have focused on providing programmes to raise gender awareness throughout society. Gender awareness reflects towards recognising relations between men and women and recognise that needs of women and men are different (Geetha, 2015). According to Key informant 1, “fast track gender awareness is important since there is a patriarchal structure within the society”. The core idea for all key informants, however, has been the importance of empowering the lives of women in particular before attempting to analyse the lives of men, since it is the women who tend to lose out in the society. Key informant 1 highlights: “they (men) already have the dominance in the society. It is easier for them. They already have it all ... It is a patriarchal society”. When attempting to figure out if there is a focus on men in the process of achieving gender equality, some ideas and programmes were brought up. These were connected to *skill-development programmes* and *gender-responsive training for police officers* that seeks to raise gender awareness. In what follows, these programmes will be accounted for (section 5.2.1 and 5.2.2), with a section in the end discussing to what extent there can be seen a focus on men in Kerala (section 5.2.3).

5.2.1 Skill-development programmes

Discussions on the topic of men’s attitudes, the key informants highlighted the embedded stereotypes that exist between men and women as constraints for gender equality. These stereotypes reflect the idea of women and men having different roles or responsibilities in Kerala, which arguably defines what is culturally and traditionally right and wrong. According to the professor from CDS, Key informant 6, these “conservative mindsets and attitudes change very slowly”. Four of the key informants interviewed expressed the need for promoting gender awareness and argued for having skill-development within some of their

programmes. It is worth mentioning that the two professors interviewed also expressed the need for raising gender awareness in Kerala. Even though each development actor works with different agendas, I got to know that most of the skill-development programmes are applied within the field of education. Referring to the views of Harber (2014), education can both be a tool to promote gender equality “and a place where gender inequality can occur in practice as a part of daily ‘normality’ within schools” (Harber, 2014, p.160). According to Key informant 1, 2, 4 and 5, skill-development programmes are a primary means of providing awareness to both genders about gender violence, to break down stereotypes, and to teach about rights and basic needs. In what follows, I will highlight some of the answers given in the interviews.

With the responsibilities of Annual Gender Budgeting (see section 5.1), KSPB touches upon the answers given by representatives from Kudumbashree programme and KSWDC. These gender awareness programmes are mentioned in the Annual Gender Budgeting report 2018-2019 where it underlines the collective impact as significant in creating appropriate gender consciousness in Kerala (Government of Kerala, 2019). By following the interview with Key informant 1, it was highlighted that KSPB has been focusing on implementing skill-development programmes at some selected schools in Kerala. With these programmes, the focus has been on providing schoolbooks that break down existing stereotypes about men and women. These books have been important in teaching women their rights and certain life-skills, such as women understanding that their monthly menstruation is not something connected to impurity, which is also important for the boys to understand. With skill-development programmes to dismiss stereotypes, Key informant 1 highlighted that it is hoped that it encourages boys and girls to mingle with each other. As the Key informant said “Boys ask themselves, how to behave towards other girls? Hard question, since girls often stay at home. A problem in Kerala is actually that boys and men do not know how to behave towards the opposite gender”.

The focus on teaching children their basic rights and needs has also been a focus area for Sakhi. The NGO has had skill-development programmes for about 15-20 years, with programmes to raise awareness about gender in schools and to train local functionaries in the Panchayats. This programme was originally meant for girls in school, but the Key informant says the focus has moved on to also including boys. At this moment, these programmes are taken over by the local Panchayats. The Key informant highlights that Sakhi has been working with gender issues since the middle of the 1990s and is recognised as one of Kerala’s

first NGO with a gender perspective. The NGO, as can be seen with KSPB, has a primary focus on empowering women and the issues they are facing in a patriarchal society.

The representative for Kudumbashree, Key informant 2, highlighted that their skill-development programme also strives to break down stereotypes between men and women, however, with a focus on women in particular. For instance, there has been a focus to encourage more women to drive cars and motorbikes, which for long has been seen as something only men can do. The word Kudumbashree means 'prosperity of the family', where the programme highlights the importance of empowering women within the household. For this to happen, Kudumbashree arranges certain skill-development programmes to teach women their rights, discuss challenges women face, and now the focus on breaking down stereotypes. These skill-development programmes have been arranged in schools and smaller focus-groups. An important aspect, according to the key informant, has been to address gender violence, where Kudumbashree has implemented shelter homes for both men and women who have experienced violence.

Finally, the representative from the corporation KSWDC focus on skill-development for women in terms of self-employment and economic empowerment. The corporation organises workshops, seminars and conferences at colleges to raise gender awareness about self-employment for women. In KSWDC's skill-development programme there was no focus on men. However, out of all the key informants interviewed KSWDC was the only development agency that had a programme directly directed towards men and their attitudes. Following is an explanation of that programme.

5.2.2 Gender-responsive training to police

According to Key informant 4, KSWDC has started a helpline service for women in Kerala. The intention with this is for women to call about emergencies and non-emergency purposes (e.g. consult). Other people, women and men, can also call on behalf of other women. It is the police who then go out in the field, with the help from certain NGO's if needed. However, one issue that has occurred when contacting the police has been the police officers' attitudes. Key informant 4 provided one example:

It is night-time, and the woman informs that there is a man who is stalking her and following her around, she calls 181, and the police will come and take her to the police station to keep her safe.

But ... when she gets to the police station, often the officers will start asking “Why did you go out alone in night-time in the first place?”. They might ask questions based on their own attitude and assumption that women should not go out in the dark alone. KSWDC needs the support by the police, but if they have this biased approach it is hard.

With this in mind, KSWDC has started a programme to train police officers in gender issues to provide gender awareness. As Key informant 4 claims, almost all police officers are men and expressed that “if we change the mindset of one person, then more people can change”. The programme consists of classes on gender, sex, transgender, communication skills and on laws. The intention is to teach the police officers how they behave in front of women, what they ask about, how to deal and handle situations differently. Key informant 4 highlights that

Any marginal people have an equal voice, equal before laws – But the implementation is coloured by the patriarchal practices and culture. The civil police officers have learned these thoughts and mindset from their family. Maybe they saw how the family treated their sisters, or saw the sister got abused, then they might have thought that this was ok and that they deserved what they got. So KSWDC has then tried to educate them in changing their mindset and how they approach the different genders and issues.

How the family may contribute in reproducing thoughts and attitudes will be examined in chapter 6. In what follows, I will discuss whether there can be seen a focus on men in the process of achieving gender equality in Kerala.

5.2.3 Men, gender equality and Kerala

With insight into both *skill-development programmes* and *gender-responsive training for police officers*, a focus on men may be seen in the realms of how to overcome stereotypes with gender awareness programmes. By following Cleaver (2002), skill-development programmes can be seen as a tool for how men can be included in gender equality policies without harming already existing women policies. Moreover, such programmes can help both men and women to engage in critical reflections about gender identities and in promoting self-awareness to improve communication between men and women in public and private spheres (Cleaver, 2002, p.19-20). This is in line with how Key informant 1 expressed a hope that skill-development programmes will encourage both genders to mingle with each other. On an overall basis, the programmes introduced by the development actors are targeting women as their main focus, and as Key informant 4 highlights, “when looking at programmes, it is

important to ask; how does this benefit women?”. There is one programme however, the gender-responsive training for police officers by KSWDC, that focuses on men in the sense of providing gender awareness to police officers, where the majority of them are men. With other words, the programme is directed towards police officers, not men per se. The key informant highlights

As we work close to the police, they need to ensure KSWDC equality, since they are our partners. Men have to understand that there is discrimination going on. Right now, we are focusing on the civil police and their attitudes. Interventions are truly through the police, so this is an important focus.

By following the answers given by the key informants, we have discovered that the main focus in the contribution to gender equality in Kerala, is focusing on empowering and creating opportunities that are beneficial for women. Moreover, it is stated by the Government of Kerala (2015) that “the Government has formulated and implemented many recognised programmes to support women`s empowerment” (p.6). In terms of the programmes introduced above, most of them can be seen within the field of education or as training programmes. Concerning the field of education, educational opportunities in Kerala has resulted in mass literacy for both genders (Ramachandran, 2000). This has, to some extent, contributed to Kerala becoming one of the front runners in India to achieve SDG 5. In terms of targets and indicators given in SDG 5 (see Table 2.2 in section 2.1.1), the goal in itself does not focus on education due to it being addressed in another SDG, namely *SDG 4 – Quality education* (see Table 2.1 in section 2.1). However, recalling that the SDGs are multidimensional, the two goals influence each other and may develop progress in each other`s targets (Mishra, 2020). To put it simply, Kerala`s significant achievements in SDG 4, by creating educational access and equal opportunities for both genders, there can be seen progress in the measurements of SDG 5. For example, target 4.7 in SDG 4 (“*By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture`s contribution to sustainable development*” (NITI Aayog, 2018, p.51)), addresses the importance of adequate education about gender equality (Mishra, 2020). This again can contribute to an understanding of what it means to have a gender equal society and actively

develop progress with gender equality. In this sense, a focus on men can be seen in that SDG 4 addresses equal opportunities for both men and women in terms of equal access to education. Furthermore, by following the opinions given by all seven key informants, education is recognised as a possible field where gender issues are addressed properly, and may, therefore, appear as an important field contributing to Kerala's performance with SDG 5. However, the field of education can also contribute in reproducing existing patriarchal values and traditions as recognised by several of the participants in this study. To discuss this more in depth, it is fruitful to recall Bourdieu's notion of 'fields' and 'cultural capital'. By following Bourdieu (2006), formal institutions of education is a field where social hierarchical structures may reproduce and continue to exist. In the sense of a gendered hierarchy within formal institutions of education, thoughts and values can be reproduced depending on the cultural capital brought from the home environment. As Bourdieu's concept of fields being sites of both subordinated and dominating positions, the cultural capital inherited from the home environment is deposited into the habitus where patriarchal values may continue to exist (Khanal, 2017; Bourdieu, 2006). An opinion expressed by Key informant 6, touches upon Bourdieu's notion of how educational fields and cultural capital may reproduce gender inequality.

The classroom may teach you aspects of gender equality, but it depends on the attitudes given by the teacher, course, syllabus, structure and so on. The same can be seen within the family. Your family teaches you how you perceive and look at people. (...) It is the family that teach you your whole value system, which you also bring to the classroom. Then you might go out and meet people and learn some other behaviours and experience how people treat other people differently depending on for example their gender.

Each of the development actors featured above (Key informant 1, 2, 4 and 5) argues for involving men within the realms of gender awareness programmes, where the programmes seek to dismiss stereotypes between men and women. Based on these arguments it is reasonable to assume that these awareness programmes can be an attempt to engage both men and women to take a part in gender equality processes by framing the rights and values of both genders. Illustrative quotes given by informants from the Village, on the other hand, highlights that this might not always be the case in practice. For Male informant 19, gender awareness programmes organised by development actors were not always seen as having the right focus: "Men should have the same level of awareness as women have. In school, there

are more awareness classes for girls. It should be equal much given to boys”. This was further expanded on by Male informant 4,

There is not enough focus on men`s attitudes. The government are not doing anything directly themselves, but through different agencies. It is only through newspapers that we can know about what is happening. But even though different agencies give awareness, they often only include women and girls.

In an attempt to ask whether Male informant 4 thought the agencies should include more men in raising awareness, he immediately responded: “Yes, most definitely”. In light of these quotes, the experience of gender awareness does not necessarily easily adapt to men and women at grassroot level. Still, the development agencies featured and other women`s organisations have contributed in changing policies and laws, which to some extent can relate to targets in SDG 5 and other SDGs. For instance, the national ‘inheritance’ laws from 2005 and reserved seats for women in the Panchayats in Kerala in 2010. National inheritance laws have aimed to enable women to own land despite following a patrilineal system. On a national basis, these laws have intended to address the notion of ‘missing women’. With other words, the legislative changes have had the interest of strengthening the positions of women in Kerala and India in general. Whether these changes contributes to dismiss deeply rooted cultural biases is, on the other hand, questionable (Mishra, 2020, p.114). In the interview with Key informant 5, the development actor argued whether laws and schemes necessarily were the answer in achieving gender equality with questioning the existing structure that persists in Kerala,

Why ... Why are they (men) doing this? Why is it still the same? Why don`t they understand? Acts, laws etc. will not change the situation. It is a need for the implementor and the people with power to change their mindset ... Their attitudes. They need gender awareness. (...) In 2013 there came a new law on ‘Preventions on sexual harassment in workplace’. This does not work as wanted. The men don`t reflect on the issue, since it is not their problem, it is not happening to them. They only think *‘we don`t need to reflect on it if things are not happening’*. This is different for women, and many women do not want to tell or talk about harassment they experience.

As indicated, even though policies, schemes and ideas about the recognition of gender issues have gained importance, there remains little attention towards the role of men in the process of achieving gender equality in Kerala and also by the development actors. In contradiction,

the programmes introduced above from key informant 1, 2, 4 and 5, can challenge the patriarchal structures in Kerala with the existing programmes that seek to empower women. To discuss this sufficiently, it will be fruitful to reflect on arguments given by Cornwall and Rivas (2015). Cornwall and Rivas (2015) argue that “empowerment is fundamentally about changing power relations” (p.405). The processes of empowering women can be understood as not only being about improving women’s capacities and opportunities, it also seeks to enable women to question the existing structures of what appears to be ‘normal’ (Cornwall & Rivas, 2015, p.405). Adapting these arguments to Kerala, the skill-development programmes as an attempt to dismiss the embedded stereotypes can challenge the existing gender hierarchy by enabling women to question the patriarchal values. However, as will be put forwards in section 6.4.2, women themselves can maintain norms and values within the society. It is to be mentioned that the discussion given by Cornwall and Rivas (2015), highlights that programmes seeking to promote ‘empowerment’ often tend to leave out the importance of gender relations. By leaving out recognitions of gender relations, the idea of empowerment becomes insufficient (p.407). As the key informants highlight several positive development strategies, the next section will highlight key informants experiences of possible constraint for SDG 5 to be achieved.

5.3 Masculinity and the state: Patriarchy and resistance

In previous sections in chapter five, there is given an insight into what is being done with SDG 5, suggestions for why it can be beneficial to include men, and possible programmes that in a sense focus on men with the attempt to dismiss stereotypes to increase the chances of achieving gender equality. With the implementation of SDG 5, there can be seen no new initiatives yet to achieve gender equality, even with India’s strategy of cooperative and competitive federalism. And as Key informant 3 highlights: “without doing anything, we are doing something new through the SDGs”. This section will expand on possible constraints for SDG 5 by focusing on what the key informants have highlighted as constraints, namely, patriarchal structures and resistance. First, there is a need to recall some facts from chapter 2 to emphasise the key informants answers to a larger extent.

To recap briefly, the contextual background chapter highlights arguments that women in Kerala to some extent are better off than women in other Indian states. Kerala’s social development has brought about opportunities for both genders in terms of educational access

and basic capabilities, which has resulted in Kerala becoming one of the front runners in India to achieve SDG 5 by 2030. In addition, the inheritance from following matrilineal system has arguably provided women with higher status, however, not in terms of equality with men (Erwér, 2003). According to Parayil (2000), the ‘Kerala Model of Development’ has gained national and international attention for being able to establish elements to increase the quality of human life despite its low socio-economic position. However, the social development in Kerala has been criticised for bringing about a gender paradox (George, 2011). By following George (2011), a gender paradox is developed in terms of how women in Kerala experiences “a unique circumstance of both empowerment and oppression” (p.305). This critique stems from the image of women in Kerala being less oppressed by the patriarchy, while George (2011) express that this thought creates an obscured image of reality. This complex picture of Kerala was also expressed by key informants when asked to provide insight into how they experienced the statements of Kerala being one of the front runners in India to achieve SDG 5. Key informant 6 claims:

Gender equality has other meanings in other states. Cultural norms and expressions of it are different everywhere. I cannot say that there is less inequality here, because we express the norms differently. Here it is positive in terms of educational opportunities, but also there a much more violence here than in for example Bihar. But this does not make Bihar equal. (...) Cannot say more or less equality, but I can definitely say that women have more access to education, and this is something we need to build on. Gender equality cannot happen automatically.

The field of education in Kerala have put women on a more equal basis with men in terms of opportunities (Ramachandran, 2000), which Key informant 6 believe is important to continue building on. However, as shown in the above quote, gender equality is questioned when compared to other Indian states. An interesting aspect about this quote is how the key informant equalises Kerala with the state Bihar in terms of violence. According to NITI Aayog (2018), Bihar is on the bottom of the list in terms of achieving SDG 5 and reveal that women are much more subordinated than women in Kerala (NITI Aayog, 2018; see Figure 2.1 in section 2.1.1). In terms of the gender awareness programmes feature in the previous section, there exist public focus on gender violence, which may indicate that women in Kerala have more agency in terms of using their rights and laws to report violence compared to Bihar.

This notion of Kerala is further criticised by Key informant 5, who questions the development in Kerala by saying:

We cannot compare to other states, since each state is different. In Kerala there has been a big focus on education, maybe this is the reason for the good statistics. But again, it is too complex. I tend to ask; where is the Kerala Model? It is a glories picture, but how far are we willing to face the real issue? With gender equality, the government say that it is good here, or at least the men say it is ok. I mean, there is hardly any women in decision-making processes, so how do we know? (...) All we claim to achieve is still a paradox, women have not achieved any power.

Taking SDG 5 into account, the statistics given by NITI Aayog may show that women are better off in terms of equal opportunities to men, however according to the key informants the way male dominance expresses itself is not always experienced as positive in practice. As highlighted by Key informant 6, “there are so many uncertainties when it comes to such measurements”. By following Arun (2018), even though it is argued that women in Kerala have a higher status compared to other states in India, the influence of patriarchal structure have “relegated women to secondary status within the private and public sphere, which has hindered and still hinders progress towards gender equality and female empowerment, particularly in relation to India’s Sustainable Development Goals” (p.35). This is in line with arguments given by Key informant 1, “the roles assigned to men and women is socially constructed, where women have lower status. (...) The inequalities are created by the society itself, which follows a patriarchal structure”. With these uncertainties about measurements and patriarchal structures; how is patriarchy experienced by the key informants, and to what extent is it experienced as an obstacle towards achieving SDG 5?

5.3.1 Experience of patriarchy and resistance

A general debate articulating the interviews with key informants points towards patriarchal structure and resistance as main constraints towards SDG 5 being achieved. Patriarchy in terms of reproducing the idea of the superior man, and resistance in terms of resisting the idea of a gender equal society. I will start by taking a quote given by Key informant 1 into account (mentioned in section 5.1.1): “they (men) already have the dominance in the society. It is easier for them. They already have it all ... It is a patriarchal society”. The key informant’s reference reflects to the notion of men being the superior in the society. In addition, it highlights how it is easier being a man in Kerala, and in that sense is illustrative to the extent

of how patriarchy is experienced as a challenge to gender equality. The same illustrative argument can be seen in the answer given by Key informant 2

Kerala is highly patriarchal. There are still a lot of inequality due to customs and traditions. For example, power relations within the family structure. You see, men will be the leader of the family, but there are some changes nowadays. Though, women struggle to get power... Women have many burdens, like taking care of the homes, the elderly and so on. They face a lot of challenges where they need to ask their husbands for approval.

The quote illustrates how male dominance appear as a constrain within the private sphere. As the quote suggest, customs and traditions are seen in favour of men. This reflects towards how Srivastava (2018) explains that patriarchal structures reproduce the notion of men being superior, and in that sense becomes naturalised into customs and traditions (Srivastava, 2018). With Kudumbashree being a governmental programme that seeks to eradicate poverty and empowering women within the household, Key informant 2 provided insight into how patriarchal thoughts may hinder further empowerment of women within the private sphere. The key informant says “it is not always possible for the women to get out of their homes. The structure within the house is structured in the way that they need to get allowance from their husbands to join our programme”. By following the work of Kudumbashree, the programmes seek to get women participating in workshops that initially will result in empowering women within the household to become equalised in terms of power relations with men. For Key informant 2, the experience of male dominance and the ideas and values that exist with the patriarchy, was seen as an obstacle towards further achievements in SDG 5. Does this reflect towards the need of focusing on men and their attitudes for women to face less challenges in their household? The way the ‘field’ of household comprises a gendered hierarchy was also discussed by Key informant 6, “In every house there is some inequality. The system in Kerala is structured this way. We have a lot of arranged marriages here and how can we expect the husband and wife to match?”. As accentuated by both key informant 2 and 6, there exist a gendered hierarchy within the household. With this in mind, it can be useful to return to Bourdieu’s notion of fields. By following Bourdieu (in Akram et al., 2015), a field comprises of both dominant and subordinated positions, where the household is an example of a field. Women may experience the household as a field of subjugation, due to individual’s habitus and how the field is constructed (Akram et al., 2015, p.351). According to the quotes presented by key informant 2 and 6, the husband is in the position of dominance

with the recognition of being the decision-maker. To give another illustration, Hopper (2012, p.98) provide an explanation from state-level in terms of the household. As Hopper suggests, the household is seen as a field where the natural gendered hierarchical structure is constructed of their respective cultures and societies. One factor to be aware of, on the other hand, is how the field of households are sensitive areas and often overlap with other households (e.g. neighbours, extended family, friends). As Hopper argues, the “government do not readily seek to intervene in family life due to the fact that the household is seen as a private sphere” (Hopper, 2012, p.98). As explained by Key informant 2, one obstacle faced by Kudumbashree was the difficulties of reaching out to women in their homes for the reason of male dominance.

On the other hand, the notion of the patriarchal structures in Kerala are for some of the key informants experienced as a structure that is different from other Indian states and to some extent are changing in modern times. The representative from KSWDC, Key informant 4, experienced a positive development within the state in relation to women`s opportunities and the existing patriarchal structures:

In contemporary Kerala, women are finding more space to express themselves. Before it was mainly a patriarchal society, and only those thoughts that existed. Now we are moving on, and women travel more than before. They know about their rights and utilise more skills. Before, if a woman had a job, she had to work closely to her home. Right now, they are starting to travel away, even though they have a family. Women are also moving into different sections of work. Before they could not do the same work as men, they were not allowed to do it at all. For example, women were not allowed to work nightshifts. In recent years the laws have started to change. Women are allowed to do more of what they want to do, so they are exploring more options now. They are finding a balance between their work and their family. They have a choice and a chance to do what they want.

Whether the key informant refer to all women, regardless aspects of class, caste or age, is however unclear. Moreover, Key informant 7 also experienced the situation with patriarchy differently as the quote below suggests:

Patriarchy is different here; life is actually working. Malayalam women are more educated than men actually, but they are limited to marriage. Confined the very space of education to the homes. With more men traveling abroad to earn money, the family needs the women to stay at home only.

Educational opportunities have contributed to more empowerment of women. However, as the key informant experiences, women are constrained to their homes. As accentuated in the introduction of this chapter and this section, resistance in terms of resisting the idea of gender equality is also seen as an obstacle towards further achievements with SDG 5. I will account for this obstacle in the following.

As 'fields' are comprising both dominant and subordinated positions, the dominant positions are embodied with power relations and may be reluctant to change (Bourdieu, 2001). In other words, resisting the idea of having to give up the beneficial position that comes with the gendered hierarchy. In explaining the patriarchal structures, Key informant 6 highlighted an interesting quote in relation to resistance: "patriarchy in Kerala is changing, but there is also resistance to the change, the violence that is happening and all those aspects can be seen as a result". Within a society with embedded patriarchal structures, the social system in itself provide expectations of men being masculine and having power. If these expectations are challenged, men might experience the idea of becoming a 'failed man'. This again, might lead to more difficulties in women`s lives, such as violence (Sweetman, 2013). In terms of achieving gender equality, Connell (2003) argues that the task of gender equality policies in a patriarchal society will be to recognise the reasons for resistance, and then find solutions to the underlying social concerns that become the source of resistance (Connell, 2003, p.10). According to Bourdieu, the notion of resistance may be experienced differently depending upon the field (in Akram et al., 2015). To put it another way, women gaining empowerment can be accepted in the field of for example education, while within the household, empowering women may challenge the traditional structures and therefore seen as unacceptable. According to Bourdieu (in Akram et al., 2015), "Tensions and contradictions in power relations can rise when people encounter and are challenged by different context" (p.351). If men experience a threat to the social definition of their masculine identity, then the men may resist the notion of gender equality because it makes them seem less worthy of respect (Sweetman, 2013). In the interview with Key informant 6, the professor provided an example of a session with male politicians discussing the reserved seats for women in the local governance. This example refers to a man being reluctant to change, Key informant 6 states:

in the session an elder man about 70 years old said that these reservations for women is a revolution. We should all support it. Then a younger man questioned the older man's enthusiasm. He said *but what is he to lose? He is in the end of his career? He has nothing to lose if women take over our positions.*

A similar argument arose from a male informant from the Village, he said: "there is a fear of women taking over. I don't want to have them with me in the political system" (Male informant 18). In the example provided by Key informant 6, an elder man supported the idea of bringing women into the local governance. On the contrary, Male informant 18, which is an elder man from the Village, neglecting the idea of women participating in politics. These examples reveal that age does not necessarily matter in the sense of having critical opinions or attitudes towards women. It is important to acknowledge that women may also play an active part in resisting gender equality by practicing and reproducing patriarchal values and traditions. As Key informant 7 argues: "also, elderly women push patriarchal ideas forward".

With the experiences and opinions of patriarchy and resistance being main constraints for achieving gender equality, the state itself can be part of reproducing existing ideas and in creating the 'ideal' man (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Sweetman, 2013). The state can be a field that contributes to the reproduction of patriarchal thoughts and attitudes which favour male dominance. As highlighted by Bourdieu, masculine dominance cannot be understood merely as a result of men's individual and conscious oppression of women. It has to be understood that it is the cause of our actions, perceptions and assessments in society. Patriarchal structures within a society, Bourdieu suggests, is a typical example of symbolic violence where dominance becomes an act of cognition (Bourdieu, 2001). In terms of gender equality policies in Kerala, both men and women have been recognised as important factors to achieve gender equality. Government of Kerala highlights that by following gender mainstreaming it requires that "gender perspectives are an integral part of all development activities and interventions" (Government of Kerala, 2015, p.10). However, with an insight into the development agency featured, where KSPB has an overview of gender equality programmes in Kerala, the focus remains on empowering women and girls.

Summary

With patriarchal structures and resistance experienced as a hindrance towards gender equality, there can be seen a positive development in terms of educational opportunities and women programmes that seek to empower women. Kerala plays an essential part in India's commitment to achieving SDG 5 by 2030. However, there cannot immediately be seen any focus on incorporating men into the gender equality discourse in Kerala. With this in mind, I will now turn to chapter 6 that seeks to understand the experiences and opinions of men's attitudes in the Village.

Chapter 6 – Stereotyping gender inequality as something ‘normal’? Attitudes in the Village

Chapter 5 sought to understand to what extent men are incorporated into the discourse of gender equality at the state level. Chapter 6 aims to provide insight into the second supporting research question with a focus at the grassroots: *What are men’s attitudes towards women in Kerala, and to what extent are men’s attitudes perceived as an obstacle towards achieving gender equality?* This chapter presents and discusses findings gathered from the Village. SDG 5 seeks to empower all women and girls by 2030; however, the targets and indicators do not highlight how it is experienced by men who, according to both the informants and key informants, clearly are the winners in society concerning power structures. The discussion is based on informants experiences and opinions on men’s attitudes towards women, and to what extent these attitudes are perceived as obstacles towards achieving gender equality. As indicated in the analytical framework, gender is perceived differently throughout the world; thus, the empirical discussion will start by presenting how men and women in this study perceive gender (*section 6.1*). Then, a narrative from the Village will be introduced, with insight into a man reluctant to change the persistent structure (*section 6.2*). This narrative serves as an introduction to the next part which discusses men’s experiences and opinions of the research issue (*section 6.3*). To get a more profound understanding of the research issue; women’s experiences and opinions will be discussed (*section 6.4*). Finally, the chapter will end with possible explanations of where attitudes and identities emerge and maintained (*section 6.5*).

6.1 Dichotomising Gender

During interviews with key informants, the word stereotype was brought up several times and experienced as a problem when approaching gender equality. These stereotypes were framed as a product of patriarchal values in Kerala and sought to be dismissed by gender awareness programmes. In the Village, stereotypes were frequently used by both men and women as a way to explain gender. For a sufficient analysis, I recognise the need to provide a short introduction on how informants perceive gender.

My data shows three main factors that influence the way the informants perceive and explain gender. These structural factors influence each other and can arguably be described in relation

to each other. The main factors were categorised as *stereotypes*, *culture*, and *abilities*. Referring to the first factor, *stereotypes*, some informants described gender with dichotomised labels in terms of roles and expectations. For instance, “women have the role of taking care of the house and children. Men are the ones to make money” (Male informant 6), and “Women should be looking after the house, and men are bringing the money home. Women and men cannot do the same type of work, because of the strength. Women cannot do all” (Male informant 26). These quotes highlight the idea of men taking on the stereotypical masculine role by being the breadwinners embedded with physical strength, while women play a stereotypically feminine role by working in the household. The same answers were seen in interviews with female informants: “There is a difference. Men go to work and earn money. Women stay at home and work. I believe the women have their responsibilities in the home only” (Female informant 13), and “The aspect of economy is meant for the men nowadays, and housewife is the job for women” (Female informant 1). Recalling the discussion on gender roles from section 4.1.1; the idea of men being breadwinners may refer to the social construction of what is culturally and traditionally expected by men and women. Social and cultural norms reproduce the idea of stereotyping men and women’s opportunities and capabilities while strengthening the assumption of the ‘ideal man’ having strength and intelligence at the expense of women (Geetha, 2015; Sweetman, 2013). The way these four informants highlights how they perceive gender, the idea of stereotypes becomes a natural part of the explanation and may be experienced as accepted and not necessarily as an obstacle connected to gender inequality.

The second factor concerns *culture*. For Male informant 2, culture was held responsible for exerting the demands of how women and men are perceived:

Most women are not allowed to do all things, men are taking over things ... Before women were not allowed to do the same as men did. This has continued, it is like culture. Men and women can do the same job, but women are not allowed. Women get controlled by men.

The male informant critically acknowledges the experience of gender inequality in Kerala, providing an example that highlights differences between men and women in terms of men’s opportunities. Furthermore, the informant emphasises culture as an enemy of women and in favour of patriarchal structures. Another illustrative opinion is given by Female informant 9, who experiences the idea of gender as: “Almost always men will be the authorities. (...)

Women can work everywhere, and also nowhere due to their home duties. My husband controls me a bit, so he wants me to stay at home”. As highlighted in section 2.2.2, women and men`s positions in Kerala are arguably socially constructed by social norms that affect the cultural codes and designated roles (Geetha, 2015). Even though women in Kerala are embodied with higher status than women in other Indian states, cultural ideas still recognise men as the decision holders of the household and associated with power, privilege, and masculinity (Erwèr, 2003; Geetha, 2015). The embedded structure of patriarchy, in which men have more power and privileges, are obvious in terms of how Male informant 2 and Female informant 9 experienced women`s freedom.

Finally, the third factor concerns *abilities*. The idea of what women and men are capable of can be seen as reinforced by the idea of what is appropriate or not for both genders. This again, reflect towards how culture is being held responsible for what is seen as ‘right or wrong’. Male informant 27 touches upon the difference between men and women by providing an example: “Women cannot be politicians since they don’t dare to use corruption. Cannot run around as men ... women have to work at home also”. This was further acknowledged by female informants, though concerning strength. For instance, Female informant 3 highlighted: “Men can easily climb a tree due to their physical structure – Me, *she laughs*, cannot! It is a difference”. These quotes categorise gender with dichotomised labels such as strong/weak and courage/cowardice.

With an insight into how informants perceive gender, it is reasonable to assume that stereotyping gender becomes natural due to aspects of physical features, abilities, and culture. The answers given are attached to power relations between men and women where some of the informants perceive these relations as natural, whereas, other informants are more critical towards the current structure. While some of the men and women interviewed did not recognise any differences between men and women, over half of the informants interviewed argued for men and women having different responsibilities, abilities, and what is culturally or traditionally expected by both genders. As will be discussed throughout this chapter, several male informants acknowledged the existence of norms and structures in men`s favour. Still, there remains an idea that women are supposed to be below men where stereotypes become a natural way of explaining genders. By introducing this chapter with a section on how men and women perceive each other, I will turn to an empirical discussion of men`s

attitudes towards women. I will initiate the discussion by presenting one narrative from the Village.

6.2 A story from the Village

As Cohen et al. (2018) argue, “narratives can not only convey information but bring information to life” (p.664). This narrative highlights experiences and opinions given by the oldest man interviewed, Male informant 18, who is reluctant to change and presents a contradiction to what statistics of SDG5 in Kerala may indicate. With the informant’s detailed explanation, it stands out compared to less detailed interviews with other male informants and arguably provides an interesting picture of existing attitudes in the Village.

While interviewing this man, it is clear that there exists traditional, or even oppressive, attitudes towards women with a desire to keep the gendered hierarchy.

My interest in women depends on the time I speak ... As you have probably understood, I speak about gender with a violent voice, but inside I don’t always feel like this. I enjoy the aesthetics sense about it, so reducing interest in that way. I love the feeling of having power. Being recognised as an elder and a father, the society immediately give me an additional respect. You see, respecting elderly is a tradition.

Male informant 18 continues saying that:

Every human need someone to obey them, to be below. Me too... It is a comfort feeling. This is, of course, a hindrance to gender equality. I believe no one else will be as honest as me, am I right? I am selfish. I don’t want to see other people in my position, I want to have it myself. So yes, I am selfish and feeling comfortable with the situation. This is a male way of thinking. I do not want it to change. It gives me some kind of comfort knowing that someone obeys me. I believe it is essential to teach the sons this, I want them to experience this comfort as I do. (...) We are all given freedom by birth, but in reality, we keep the women back. I have all facilities to give the women their rights, but it is not given in reality. From the birth itself, we start separating boys and girls.

Furthermore, his opinions on gender equality were explained through two examples:

Let me give an example of gender equality in relation to democracy. Democracy means equality, but in reality, we don’t know what it is yet. For us, it is only voting. We vote, and then 4 years later

we vote again. This is the same with gender equality. Gender equality is reduced to the level of women's freedom to participate. So, we don't understand it in depth. We don't open our eyes to the realities around us unless we open them to our capacity to understand it – gender equality does not come. Let me give you another example. Let us think about prayers. The prayers people have, are often totally and absolutely meaningless. What can they do for us in reality? They are often about basic needs, but are we really interested in them? We continue to pray even though it is absolutely meaningless. This is the same with gender equality; It is absolutely meaningless to teach.

Gender equality then is considered as a meaningless and diffuse concept. It is quite clear that the man is reluctant to change, where he does not believe there is anything the government can do to contribute towards gender equality:

We have a vision – That is gender equality. We have a vision – Democracy. But – Selfishness will hinder this. It will be difficult to attain. We need to change our selves, both women and men. We are all children of God. All roles to be respected equally. Everyone's equality to enjoy freedom. In writing all this looks good, but you as a person define the own right. It is beyond us. So, there has to be a radical change in our mindset. We hear about inequality, but we don't do it much. It is a good phenomenon, gender equality, but have we any calculated way to provide it? No, we don't. We have different support systems, but nothing happens. If I change, *he laughs*, there is hope.

In an attempt to ask what Male informant 18 experienced as the main challenge to achieve gender equality, his answer exemplified how women and men differ in nature:

Women don't want to share their concerns in life, but they must be protected. Women don't feel that gender equality is there. They have an increasing capacity of understanding things, but they want more limited things. Like some rights to buy clothes, and other small things. They don't think big! They don't think enough about how to get out of their situation. (...) It is a must, but unfortunately, in practice, it (gender equality) is not here. It is far from here. With the human alone, men have the upper hand by his practices and so on. But nature itself give some status to males. Both women and men are different in nature. In nature the male has an upper hand, maybe this is natural? (...) Physical fitness is concurred by men. Women are not fit enough to do all the things that men are doing.

Despite how Male informant 18 perceive women and gender equality, he acknowledges that his 'violent' way of speaking was related to an underlying fear of how other men might behave:

I, myself, doubt that my daughter can handle unpredicted challenges outside the house. So, I have the upper hand. I am afraid of sending her out ... Since I have the upper hand here, I have to think because I want her safe.

The quotes given by Male informant 18, creates an idea of existing attitudes within the Village. The narrative presents a man who sees women as being below men with a simple explanation of how nature itself gives men status, and how selfishness is a hindrance towards further progress in gender equality. The narrative stands in contrast compared to explanations given by other male informants in the sense of being informative and having less politically correct answers. With this narrative in mind, the following will present other male informants experiences and opinions on the research issue.

6.3 Men`s experiences and opinions

Sweetman (2013) recap an important essence of what we should have in mind when researching men`s attitudes and their dominance,

Thinking critically about men and masculinities starts from consideration of the relationship between patriarchy (as a social system which men have power over women), and individual men`s experience of life in different contexts throughout the world. Gender norms within specific cultures constrain both men and women to behave in socially expected ways, despite the desire and capacities of individuals to behave otherwise, and in that sense reinforcing inequality between men and women (Sweetman, 2013, p.4).

Through analysing the answers given by male informants, it is evident that there is a common understanding that gender inequality persists in Kerala despite the opportunities provided by the state. How men have explained what gender equality is and how they perceive it personally, indicates that most of them acknowledge the preferences by being a man in Kerala:

I think of equality in society. Approval and acceptance for both genders. This is equality. (...)
Women often stay behind, they are not so bold to do things. While I can do everything since I am a man. (Male informant 15)

(Gender equality) the issue of everything. In everything there should be equality ... Less equality in my life though. I have more preferences in my family than my sister. Because I am a man!
(Male informant 26)

The influence of men in Kerala is as George (2011) claims, evident in all aspect of life “from the home base to professional and social spheres” (p. 305). To what extent this influence is expressed in the Village varies in relations to those arguing for a male dominant society compared to those who recognise the need for change. Referring to the quotes given above, the idea of having more preferences and opportunities by being a man is obvious. The experiences of these preferences, however, are different in terms of how these two informants continued expressing their attitudes. In addition to the narrative, the interviews given by Male informant 15 and 26 are illustrative concerning the variety of answers in the Village. I will present them briefly.

The first quote is given by a man who explains gender equality in relation to acceptance and approval. By analysing the interview given by Male informant 15, it becomes clear that the informant expresses a need to focus on men`s attitudes:

I have been working for a while in Bangalore, and in Bangalore women are put back. Here in Kerala it is different, since education put women more in front. It needs to be focused more on the attitudes. When it comes to children there is a need to focus on both girls and boys. The earlier the better. When it comes to grownups, it needs to be more focus on men. Men need it more!

Then, the informant argued that “this thought, or issue with bad attitudes should come to the men itself. It should not be necessary to be taught”. Even though the informant recognises the preferences of being a man, the informant continues arguing that women should be more appreciated in Kerala, as he says: “there will be so much pressure on women throughout their whole life”. Furthermore, the informant explained how valuable women are by giving an example of economic responsibilities:

Even men can need help with handling the financial situation within the household. Women can help more in thinking of what to do with the money, and how to use it. In this way, they can help the men. After consulting, the men take actions and handle the money.

The informant expresses the value of women, however, with a recognition that men are considered as an action taker. The informant critically acknowledges that most men in Kerala are putting women down. The informant gave an example:

Most men have a negative opinion of women. If something has happened, or they hear something bad, they will mostly blame the women and say that it is their fault. Another example is if a man and a woman is in love, there will be so much pressure on the female. If she decides or wants to break up, everyone will immediately say that it is her fault, that she cheated or did something horrible. Even though this may not be the truth. The women always get blamed.

The opinions given by the informant indicate an attitude that value women, but critical concerning how gender equality is perceived in Kerala. In contrast, the way gender inequality continues to persist, Male informant 26 perceive inequality as something natural and just the way society is constructed. The quote given by Male informant 26 in the beginning of this section, indicate that gender equality is essential, whereas he acknowledges inequality in his own household in terms of having more freedom. In contrast, the manner in which the informant continues to express himself indicates that social structures within Kerala are arguably perceived as natural, in the sense of accepting traditional gender roles. In the way the informant perceived gender (see section 6.1), he expressed an opinion that women and men are different in terms of having different roles, concluding that “women cannot do all”. As the informant recognises that men and women have different roles, he adds that “I sometimes help my mother buying things to the household, but I would never clean because I am a man. That is no job for a man”. Furthermore, in terms of how the informant interacts with women, he says: “I have been taught to always keep a distance to women and minding my own business”. His attitude is in a sense following cultural norms and values without questioning the existing structure, at least not in the interview. The informant ends the interview by expressing that men do not have oppressive attitudes towards women, as he says: “it is good... nothing needs to change”. How can we go about discussing these attitudes?

By following Bourdieu, symbolic violence may help understand both the ‘visible’ and the ‘invisible’ nature of men’s attitudes towards women; contributing to how attitudes persist and how men’s domination becomes reproduced in interactions between people and structure. Forms of symbolic violence are deeply embedded into people’s everyday lives and perceptions of men and women that shape the behaviour, attitudes, and experience of what

has become naturalised (in Arun, 2018, p.115). With other words, symbolic violence refers to the imposition of dominant ideas and values that shape habitus, and in turn, *attitudes* (Bourdieu, 2001). Relating to how Male informant 15 critically addressed: “If something has happened, or they (*men*) hear something bad, they (*men*) will mostly blame the women and say that it is their fault”; the quote highlight an opinion where men, in general, assume that women are considered as being below men in society. In essence, symbolic violence becomes exerted through purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition (or, as Bourdieu would argue; misrecognition) (Bourdieu, 2001, p.1-2). What appears as dominant values and attitudes, circulate between men and shape each individual’s habitus. The way certain men inhabit oppressive attitudes, different agents (e.g. family or educational system) contributes to forming the habitus of individuals (Bourdieu, 2001, p.34). Attitudes formed and affected by, for instance, the home environment is attitudes that people bring with them outside the household. For example, referring to Male informant 26, the informant always keeps a distance towards women because of what he has been taught.

Taking other male informants into account; an illustrative experience is given by Male informant 22, who highlights how his views derive from his father: “I see women in a respectful way. I see society just like my father”. Both in the case of Male informant 26 and 22, the cultural capital inherited from the family becomes a factor that shapes behaviour and attitudes (The household is explored in section 6.5.1). Remembering Bourdieu’s notion of conditions for the full exercise of male dominance; the social construction of bodies (e.g. how men are perceived with strength: see section 6.1) and the embodiment of domination (e.g. Male informant 15 highlight men as action-takers, Male informant 26 does not clean since he is a man) become factors that reinforce patriarchal values deeply integrated into the unconsciousness in society (Bourdieu, 2001). Concerning the narrative discussed previously, Male informant 18 recognises nature itself as giving men privileges, whereas the ideas of male dominance become reproduced by teaching the next generation the same idea. In this sense, the way male dominance becomes justified; it is reasonable to assume that individual attitudes become a product of social constructions within society.

In an attempt to ask how men themselves perceive men’s attitudes and how men behave towards women, illustrative quotes are given by the male informants:

Not so good. It is different in different people. (...) Not good enough, maybe around 50% men are nice. (Male informant 21).

It is not equal. Gender is different in itself. (Male informant 22)

A general pattern in the interviews reveal that most men acknowledge men's attitudes in Kerala as constraints; however, some informants also recognises that it is better in Kerala than elsewhere in India: "They treat women better here than in other states" (Male informant 19). To get a broader insight into why several of the male informants recognised men as an obstacle, I attempted to ask the informants to consider what they perceived as the main cause of persistent inequality in Kerala. The discussions entailed ideas of traditions and power relations as the main constraint:

People think that women are a bit lower than men ... Even the poor men think so. (Male informant 15)

You know, people do not want to accept gender equality. People are not ready to accept yet. (Male informant 20).

Some people cannot respect women. The men want the power, and I think that at least 10% has not changed this thought yet. (Male informant 25)

Traditions. (Male informant 2)

These implications can further be discussed by recalling discussions from section 4.1.4; where Narayan critically address the need for recognising cultural diversity within a nation to understand that some people may be both reluctant to change or eager to change the existing structure (Narayan, 1997). Narayan's discussion primarily concerns women and feminism; however, the arguments arguably illustrates that diversity also must be seen amongst men. In this sense, men themselves may criticise existing traditions and attitudes, but continue to reproduce them through traditions, identity and what is common in the nation (Narayan, 1997). As Connell (2011) argues, "some men accept change in principle, but in practice still act in ways that sustain gender inequalities" (p.15). Concerning how male informants experience men's attitudes as a constraint, an interesting thought is illustrated by Male informant 17: "As I have seen, men with an educational background will give more respect to women. The people without will treat women as below them". Whether men's attitudes can

change, or not, is further explored in chapter 7. However, does this quote indicate that educated men are more likely to accept initiatives to achieve gender equality?

An interesting observation from the interviews with men was how most of the male informants explained gender equality in a politically correct manner. At the same time, it becomes clear how cultural and traditional expectations becomes a natural way when defining gender (i.e. stereotypes). Remembering Bourdieu's notion of male dominance, dominance becomes an act of common values or meanings, rather than by the use of force (Bourdieu, 2001). Gender as a social construct, becomes naturalised into everyday interactions and is perpetually embedded in social norms and attitudes (Arun, 2018, p.120). In this sense, how some men expose more oppressive attitudes towards women and gender equality are not necessarily connected with being less educated. As introduced in section 2.2.2; the shift from a matrilineal structure to a patrilineal structure in the 20th century, represented a change which emphasised the influence of patriarchy to a greater extent. The shift was marked by the idea of men's right to assert power over women (Aaberg, 2018; George, 2011). As Bourdieu's concept of *symbolic violence* is beneficial to explore modes of domination and how it appears natural, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) use 'hegemonic masculinity' to explain the social reproduction of gender structures and, in turn, *attitudes*. Forms of hegemonic masculinity present itself as the 'ideal man', whereas gender inequality becomes legitimised through the hierarchical relationship between men and women, which justifies the cultural discourse that circulates in society (Messerschmidt, 2016). In terms of attitudes, the idea of genders becomes constructed by the dominant ideology that reinforces the dominant's attitudes as something natural. In other words, masculinities are reproduced by cultural consents, whereas attitudes become a product of the same consent (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity creates an ideal picture of how to 'do gender', and the impacts of how the 'ideal man' is perceived, which reproduces itself through interactions in the community. Hegemonic masculinity, or what may be perceived as the 'ideal man', provides insight into why men continue holding on to oppressive attitudes. Without performing what is expected, it can lead to forms of discrimination which is motivated by social constructs (Messerschmidt, 2016). For instance, Male informant 20 experiences men being of higher status as oppressors, as he says:

There is some discrimination by those with higher qualifications in governments jobs. They discriminate women, and also people like me, because we are not like them. It is how they are

standing together and talk. (...) Maybe some in the high position jobs are friendly, but some only look at their position and their economical income. Nothing more.

When discussing the experiences of men's attitudes, it is necessary to acknowledge how cultural norms constrain men (and women) to behave in socially expected ways (Sweetman, 2013, p.4). In a discussion that seeks to highlight experiences of men's attitudes, it is essential to acknowledge that a conclusion with stereotyping men as the oppressor, and women as the oppressed becomes unhelpful since men benefit differently from the institution of patriarchy (Cleaver, 2002, p.7). As Male informant 20 experiences people being of higher status as those who discriminate, there is a need to consider social dimensions of identity, such as class, age, gender, to understand the diversity of attitudes. A component of Connell and Messerschmidt's reconceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity is an attempt to deal with these relational issues between men themselves. In the following, the idea of social status will be explored.

6.3.1 Social status

With patriarchal structures, men collectively receive what Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) term a patriarchal dividend by only being men. Rewriting Nussbaum's statement (i.e. *"Women in much of the world lose out by being women"* (Nussbaum, 2000, p.298)), it is fair to claim that *'men tend to win by being men'*. However, this dividend can create a false picture that all men experience the same power and status, and in turn, expresses oppressive attitudes. If we look at each of the substructures of gender separately, men experience a linked pattern of both advantages and disadvantages (Connell, 2011). For instance, on the one hand, with the gendered labour division, more men can work according to cultural norms, whereas women are constrained to their homes. On the other hand, men might experience a more substantial pressure on remaining employed and can easier become 'failed men' in terms of not fulfilling what is expected of a man. To put it simply, masculinities must be seen within a perspective that it is perceived and present itself differently between individuals and in terms of the social structures. Masculinities are socially constructed patterns of gender practices, where some men also experience subordinated masculinities (Connell, 2011, p.10). When asking what the informants felt was the biggest challenge of being a man (or woman) in Kerala, one of the male informants highlighted the challenge of coming from a tribal group (i.e. *Adivasi* as mentioned in section 2.2).

In school they look at me differently. I draw really well for example, but school accommodation would not take me in since I am from a tribal group. With this comes the discrimination, especially from the Christian schools (Male informant 19).

The quotation elucidates how the social status differs within the Village and that oppressive attitudes also are expressed towards men and boys. As the concept of hegemonic masculinity emphasises the importance of intersectionality (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), it is fruitful to discuss intersectionality in terms of the above-mentioned quote. The aspect of class and status becomes an element of social identity intertwined so that privileges and disadvantages are connected (Misra, 2018). For instance, as the patriarchal structure provides a dividend to men, other social structures, such as caste identities, can provide disadvantages. As stated in section 2.2.1, Adivasi (i.e. tribal groups) are referred to as Scheduled castes which are still marginalised within Kerala (Franke & Chasin, 2000). This indicates an explanation for why Male informant 19 experience being discriminated.

While interviewing in the Village, several men argued that they were being discriminated for reasons connected to their gender. For one informant, oppressive attitudes were experienced in terms of not fulfilling the expectations of being able to financially support the family. Male informant 25 said: “Because of no job, I get discriminated among the extended family members. Not by my family at home”. When asked to explain the biggest challenge faced by being a man, the informant highlighted in one sentence: “To get a job”. This was further expanded on by Male informant 4, who highlights the social pressure in not being able to find work: “it is hard to get a job, and people expect you to have a job... so now only my father has the responsibility in our home”. Male informant 25 stated on the contrary, he did not feel discrimination in terms of being unemployed. He states: “no, never felt it”. Out of all the Male informants interviewed, six out of fourteen men explained how they had felt discrimination, whereas most of these answers relate to their financial situation. For instance, Male informant 22 explains “discrimination is mostly due to my family’s financial situation since it is not good”. On the other hand, in the narrative presented in section 6.2, the man highlights how the feeling of being respected also comes with the fact of being recognised as an elderly. In this sense, by being recognised as an elderly endows respect. In terms of intersectionality, it becomes clear that social dimensions of class, caste, gender, and generational differences, as Connell (2011) discuss, “cross-cut the category ‘men’, spreading the gains and costs of gender relations very unevenly among men” (p.14). This recognition of

social dimensions can arguably be part of explaining the experiences of men`s attitudes; some men may *expose* oppressive attitudes, while other *experience* oppressive attitudes themselves. As Connell (2011) argues, “it is not surprising that men respond very diversely to gender equality politics” (p.14).

Concerning men`s experiences and opinions of their attitudes; traditional values and ideas are present in the Village. There can be seen both oppressive and positive attitudes towards women, where also the male informants acknowledge the preferences of being a man. Having presented men`s opinions and experiences of the research issue, how do women experience men`s attitudes? In what follows, I will highlight women`s opinions and experiences. How male informants continue to express themselves will be put forward throughout the chapter.

6.4 Women`s experiences and opinions

“If I only was a man ... I could do anything”. (Female informant 5)

To get a fruitful understanding of the research issue, I interviewed several women to get their opinions on men`s attitudes towards women. According to Messerschmidt (2016), it is essential to recognise how women themselves can be a salient factor in “cultivation of hegemonic masculinities” (p.29). When female informants explained how they perceived gender (see section 6.1), gender was described according to stereotypical factors (e.g. men are stronger and breadwinners). When asking about how women experienced men`s attitudes, answers such as oppressive attitudes were highlighted:

Don`t have equal respect for women. Men won`t give same respect. They don`t accept the quality of women they only try to find the faults. Whatever position or status a woman has, there will always be a bad attitude towards her. (Female informant 3)

As the term ‘missing women’ may not be as adequate in Kerala as elsewhere in India due to the high Female ratio, power exercised by men are still evident in terms of how women experience being controlled by men (and their families as will be discussed in section 6.4.2). Female informant 3 experienced it as “men are trying to control some women. Men believe that women are there to take care of the men only”. With patriarchy referring to a system organised around the idea of men being superior to women (Srivastava, 2018, p.35), it might explain why Female informant 3 experienced men as someone who controls women.

Furthermore, women were also recognised for being intellectually strong, as Female informant 10 illustrates: “Men and women should have equal freedom. Physically men are better, they have the power. Intellectually women are strong, and they should have more freedom and equality”. This corresponds with what Male informant 15 explained in section 6.3 in how women can be helpful in organising money. Still, there exist a lack of freedom as experienced by Female informant 10, as well as how Male informant 15 acknowledged that men are the action taker. Female informant 10 gave an example where the freedom is taken away:

The men always want to put the women down, there is no freedom for us. If I talk to a man and I have an opinion, I cannot tell this to the man directly what I mean. I have to go home and discuss it with my husband, then only I can go and tell him.

Even though the informant highlighted how men control women, she also recognised some positive values:

If you share something with men, like a secret, they will not share with others. Women do share, they gossip. If you have a problem to solve you should go to a man, because they do it faster. Women thinks to long before they act. So, it is better to go to a man with problems.

As shown, both female informant 3 and 10 highlights several negative opinions and experiences concerning men`s attitudes. However, not all women interviewed experienced men as an oppressor:

My husband does everything. He helps a lot. Today for example he wanted to clean all the dishes, since I did not have the time. He said that I was free to go. He would take care of it. (...) I believe there is enough gender awareness in Kerala actually. (Female informant 23)

In this case, the stereotypical role of men and women are being negotiated. Through analysing the interview given by Female informant 23, the informant continues to express positive opinions on men in general but acknowledge that some men might have oppressive attitudes: “Both are there, some see women as really good and some not at all”. In an attempt to ask what the informant felt was the primary cause of gender inequality, the informant answered: “Lack of knowledge and the behaviour of greediness. But some women are also like this”.

The quotes presented above highlights both critical and positive opinions of men`s attitudes towards women. Through analysing all the interviews with female informants, a pattern reveals itself in how most of the women see men as someone who oppresses in the sense of reducing women`s freedom. These experiences will be accounted for in the following section.

6.4.1 “Because of men ...”

Whenever I was travelling to conduct interviews with men and women in the Village, I took the local bus for one and a half hour. While taking the bus, I started noticing that there were never any men sitting in the front seats at the right side of the buss. I was also told by my interpreter to find a seat in the front of the bus without any further explanation. When looking into it, I got to know that these seats are reserved for women. If a man was to sit in one of those seats, he was immediately asked to move by the driver or the conductor. My interpreter informed me that this is an implementation by the government to create a safer environment for women in the hope of reducing harassment and violence taking place in Kerala. Male informant 17 illustrated this by saying: “In Kerala women have special seating and facilities, if a woman comes the men should stand up and give their seats. This is a good thing”. A negative experience was highlighted by Female informant 1:

One time this guy sat in my seat and tried to take picture of me and also to show social media that he was sitting in the seats reserved for women. Then the conductor took action. He made him delete all the pictures and then threw him of the bus.

One of the first hurdles accounted for by women I interviewed was the restrictions of travelling alone. Eight out of thirteen women interviewed mentioned that travelling by themselves was difficult, and after 7 pm it was close to impossible. All eight mentioned that this was due to a fear of how men would behave towards them, where the obstacle often was connected to alcohol. Female informant 7 said: “80% of men are alcoholics in ‘the Village’ and in Kerala in general. They don`t drink openly, but there are too many. For women, we don`t know the percentage, but there are some women too”. Women`s freedom was further expanded on by men in this research:

Women cannot go out after 7 pm. This is because men abuse them, both mentally and physically. The men are drunk at this time of the day (Male informant 20)

Women cannot get out at night. There are so many drunk men, and they get badly towards them
(Male informant 24)

These quotes suggest how men themselves acknowledge their gender to be a hindrance for women's freedom. Patriarchal structures in Kerala have been recognised for reinforcing gender divisions with a result in women's lack of freedom and capabilities (Planning Commission, 2008). As indicated above, when asked to discuss what might be the main cause for why women cannot go out after 7 pm, the answer was always '*because of men*'. As Female informant 5 argues:

I have experienced being treated very badly by other men. When travelling alone you always have to be aware of men. You know, some of them have really bad attitudes ... I am always aware and always pay attention to the men around me, because some of them do not have a good intention in their mind.

The quotes presented above presents an idea of how *fear* towards how men might behave, contributes to women's lack of freedom to be outside alone after 7 pm. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), describes the importance of recognising social embodiment concerning masculinities as a possible explanation for how men's identity is a participant in generating social practice. The concept of hegemonic masculinity indicates that there should be talked about several masculinities in a society; however, the negative influence of some men has contributed to fear experienced by both men and women. With oppressive attitudes; husbands and fathers can feel the importance of keeping women at home for safety, while women themselves experience fear that keeps them from going outside alone. The fear of oppressive attitudes is illustrated by Male informant 6: "I feel equality in my own life, still, I don't want to leave my daughter alone. I don't know how other men think. The situation is bad here". Furthermore, the male informant experienced the same fear in women: "There is always a fear in women when I speak to them. Maybe it is their own experiences with other men?". Female informant 3 adds to this supposed fear:

The way I mingle with women, I cannot do with men. I guess it is since I only have 3 sisters, so I am not used to mingle with men. I do not interact a lot with men. Also, I guess it could be since I was not close with my father. There is a fear somewhere.

As suggested by the informants, this supposed fear becomes an obstacle for women's freedom in Kerala. Both in terms of how women themselves experience fear and how respective families keep women at home in fear of men's intentions.

The answers given by male informants highlight how men themselves recognise their gender to be an obstacle towards achieving gender equality. On the other hand, when discussing the experiences with women, findings show that not all men in Kerala necessarily had oppressive attitudes towards women. Even though a general pattern from the interviews reveals that men are recognised as having oppressive attitudes, sometimes the experience of other women's attitudes was worse. Are men the only hindrance to achieve gender equality? Or have men's domination become naturalised as Bourdieu's term symbolic violence may explain?

6.4.2 Women versus Women

Our society tends to be very restricted. Often it is the elderly women that is the problem. They like having control over us young females. (...) Sometimes women are worse than men. The women's behaviour to other women. (Female informant 1)

A general feeling, or thought I was exposed to while interviewing and analysing the data was how most men were aware of the lack of freedom for women, arguing that women are unable or unwilling to challenge the structure which favours male dominance. The women who did try to challenge the existing structure was exposed for gossip, especially by other women, and as Jeffrey argues (see section 2.2.2) "a woman who goes outside the regulated routine of home and office becomes target of gossip" (Jeffrey, 1992, p.215). As the quote at the beginning of this section suggests, women can sometimes be worse than men in how they behave towards other women. Can this be understood as women being worse than men in reproducing the patriarchal thoughts? Are women's attitudes towards other women a bigger constraint than men?

When asking the informants if they had experienced being treated bad or discriminated in relation of being a man or a woman, some of the female informants discussed it in terms of how other women, or their family in-laws, were treating them. As experienced by Female informant 3: "no, not because of being a woman. I am more confident than I was before. You also see women treat other women bad, for example, my mother in law". This was further

explained by Female informant 5. The informant experienced oppressive attitudes from the previous family in-law to the extent that she eventually became separated:

I have felt gender inequality and bad attitudes, which actually led me to become separated after years of marriage. The family in-law, especially my mother-in-law, did not concern me as an individual in the house. I was nothing ... I did not have any rights ... I had no identity there.

Ending a marriage in Kerala is often associated with shame (Arun, 2018), however, in this incident, it seems like this 'shame' was easier than the discrimination given by the family in-laws. Female informant 10, also experienced the family in-laws as an obstacle:

Normally I work freely, but my husband's family discriminated me a bit since I work. Especially my mother in-law (...) I won't talk about it. I will just keep quiet. Not even to my family.

The notion of men being superior to women can be seen as structures of patriarchy, while masculinity may produce the superior men (Srivastava, 2018). As this argument has been mentioned in previous sections within discussions of men, it can also be important to acknowledge it in terms of women. As women are being exposed to patriarchal structures, the idea of men's superiority might become naturalised into women's everyday lives. After a while, this idea can present itself as a 'doxic' acceptance, in the sense of dominant ideas become acts of knowledge and appear as natural (Bourdieu, 2001, p.34). Following the views of Bourdieu, this relate to how women accept their social destiny, and in that sense, women themselves can be their own worst enemy (Bourdieu, 2001, p.40). Bourdieu explains women's acceptance as,

(...) when their thoughts and perceptions are structured in accordance with the very structures of the relation of domination that is imposed on them, their acts of cognition are, inevitably, acts of recognition, submission (Bourdieu, 2001, p.13)

On the other hand, Kabeer (1999) highlights how oppressive exercise of authority by mothers-in-law over their daughters-in-law is not an uncommon situation within an Indian context. Women's internalisation of their own lesser status can make them discriminate against other females in the same society since the structures indicate that women are inferior (Kabeer, 1999, p.440-441). Moreover, as men might strive to be the 'ideal man', women may strive to

be what Narayan (1997) terms the ‘the perfect Indian wife’. With other words, even though women may complain about traditions, it continues because of how historical and traditional structures produces assumptions as to the importance of being ‘a good Indian wife’. The patriarchal values within the society becomes naturalised, and again provides a picture over what is expected by women. As dichotomised labels in section 6.1 shows, stereotyping gender into typical male and female roles become a natural way of explaining the concept. Despite the obstacles experienced with how women might treat other women, most female informants commented that men`s attitudes, to some extent, were a bigger hindrance in Kerala. Where do ideas of identity and attitudes emerge, and how are they being maintained? I will now turn to a section which seeks to explore possible explanations of where attitudes and identities emerge, to explore how prevalent attitudes is being maintained.

6.5 Where do ideas of identity and attitudes emerge?

Following the answers given by the informants, there exist both positive and more oppressive attitudes towards women. More specifically, the answers given by the informants indicate that both genders take a part in reproducing attitudes that favour the patriarchal structure. For male informants, there exist a mutual understanding that the structure in Kerala is in favour of men, however, not everyone believes that the patriarchal structure should be maintained. For the female informants, as Female informant 1 recap it “(...) women can sometimes be worse than men”. In this sense, women themselves obtain oppressive attitudes towards other women and value the traditional norms. However, as shown, most women in this study have experienced oppressive attitudes by other men. As cultural restrictions can be maintained by women themselves, the experience of oppressive attitudes can be different depending upon the field they are in at a particular time (Akram et al., 2015, p.351). Whereas women may experience being recognised and having opportunities in one field, the experience of subjugation and being exposed for oppressive attitudes in another field is evident. Where do these attitudes emerge?

By following Bourdieu (2001), the idea of masculine dominance is maintained by different agents such as the family, the state, the educational system, the church and other social institutions within society (Bourdieu, 2001, p.34). As shown in chapter 5, both the state and the educational system can be two fields that maintain the patriarchal values (and fields of change as will be discussed in chapter 7). Patriarchy is seen as a social organisation in which

men have more power and dominate women by the reproduction of attitudes that favour men (Srivastava, 2018). There exist several factors that may influence how certain attitudes emerge, such as the cultural capital inherited from the family milieu which forms the habitus as a socialised norm or tendency that guides behaviour and thinking (Bourdieu, 2001; Khanal, 2017). In what follows, two sub-sections will be presented, which discuss possible explanations of where attitudes and identities emerge. The first concentrates on *the household*, whereas the second, focus on *Masculinity and identity* within Connell and Messerschmidt's concept of *geography of masculine configurations*.

6.5.1 The household

When interviewing in the Village, the stories told in relation to where men exposed oppressive attitudes have been taken place within the households. In accordance to Bourdieu's notion of 'fields', where the experiences of power structure may position itself differently, the household can be seen as one field. The tensions and contradictions of power relations in the household are experienced by the informants as an environment where patriarchal values and oppressive attitudes reveal themselves. As female informant 12 claimed

Outside everything is equal and looks good, but then you come inside it is not good. (...) Inside the house there is often no equality at all, this is sad. At first, everything looks good, but the conditions within is something totally different. Here you find really bad attitudes. Men has the power.

The symbolic order of gender within the households becomes a field where a gendered habitus emerges through social construction of gendered practices, norms and dispositions (Arun, 2018). For one of the informants, the experience of oppressive attitudes within the household was linked to how family members behaved towards each other. Female informant 9 says, "even with the sons, I cannot behave freely. You see, sons and mothers do not always have a good relationship between them". In asking the informant to explain, the informant said "There is a distance between men, daughters and sons. This is the way it is in *'the Village'*". In this sense, the younger generations are socialised into patriarchal values, as a result of how the family behave. These socialised values often encourage male power, which can be seen as a constraint for women when the attitudes and behaviour becomes normalised in having control over women (Arun, 2018, p.114). In an attempt to understand the reason for experiencing oppressive attitudes within the households, the discussion once again went back to alcoholism as an obstacle for women's lack of freedom (see section 6.4.1). Alcoholism was

experienced as increasingly common in many households both in the Village and Kerala in general. Female informant 9 told a story about her neighbour:

Almost always men will be the authorities ... My neighbour often gets drunk and create a lot of mess since he has authorities to do whatever he wants. Men always wants to be on the top, and yes this is a very big issue.

By comparing the answers given by men and women, Male informant 21 and 22 expanded on Female informant 9's opinion:

After men have had alcohol, they might start to destroy things in the house, or throw away the food women prepare for them and claim it is tasteless or not good. In this way men don't treat women nicely. (Male informant 21)

There is a lot of violence against women, especially domestically due to alcohol. It is a big problem! (Male informant 22)

According to Sweetman (2013), if a man does not live up to the 'ideal man' in accordance to what is traditionally expected, dominance may be exposed in another way; such as domestic violence and abusive vocabulary. If a man feels his position in the household becomes challenged, it may as Sweetman suggest, "lead to increased violence against the people over whom a man does have power: the women and children within the household" (Sweetman, 2013, p.5). Whether any of the informants experienced violence as an outcome by alcoholism, is however unclear.

Not all informants recognised inequality within their own household, but several highlights examples of their neighbours or other people they knew in the Village. Whether this is an attempt to anonymise themselves and their own experiences is unclear. To openly tell stories about their situations, can be difficult as it may hurt or shame their family (Arun, 2018, p.121). Male informant 18 claimed: "If you go to 100 houses here and ask; they will all say that 'we have full freedom', but if you go inside; you will understand that there is no freedom inside the house". In another setting, my interpreter, in a sense, expands on this by highlighting that the way women tend to argue for having equality in their own house, often relate to the feeling of having power within the kitchen. According to definitions of gender equality (see section 4.1.3); this feeling of power can not necessarily be described as gender

equality, although the informants notion of power relation can be experienced differently within the household compared to other fields. Furthermore, Narayan (1996) highlights that we have to look at women`s position within a cultural context to understand why the informants answer in the way they do. Our own culture defines how we perceive gender equality, where power relations may not always be regarded as an obstacle. Female informant 7 highlights an interesting quote that justifies women`s power within the household: “women are like a machine in the kitchen. No opinions from others are considered in their process of making food. Here lie the women`s power”. Women can accept their role within the household, not because they do not recognise power relations, but that the relation is seen as natural and beneficial (Bourdieu, 2001). In contrast, Female informant 14 highlight an opinion of an obscured reality as she says: “Some men respect women and help them and assist them within the household. But they always think and see women as someone below them”. How can we explain the diversity of experiences within the household?

The experience of different attitudes within the household reflects to how individuals are dispositioned with habitus and “the way in which the field is constructed” (Akram et al., 2015, p.351). This means that the field “become reflected in the ‘incorporated structures’ of habitus, which serves to reproduce the very objective structures of the field of which the habitus itself is the product” (Akram et al., 2015, p.351). In this setting, the thoughts and attitudes exerted by individuals through habitus reproduce itself through the ideas and norms within the household. To an extent, sons and daughters experience being socialised into expectations of what it means to be a man or a woman. For Bourdieu, habitus is socially constructed, in which structures the way people think about aspects of their lives (in Akram et al., 2015). Adopting the approach to the households, habitus reflects towards each individual`s durable dispositions influenced by the lived experiences and norms, which, then affects the way each person behaves and thinks about each gender and their roles. As suggested by Bourdieu, the family is an influential force that forms individual`s habitus which contributes to how people behave outside the household (Bourdieu, 2001). The household as a field, was for some of the informants (e.g. Female informant 9 and 12) experienced as a place where negative attitudes revealed themselves, with alcoholism experienced as an obstacle. Other informants (e.g. Female informant 7) expressed opinions of how household duties (e.g. cooking) can present itself as a feeling of power.

The household is both recognised as a field of subjugation and a field where women may experience having power by being in charge of the kitchen. Attitudes can be formed and affected through ideas and thoughts within the household. In the following, I will account for how factors at global, regional and local level can construct masculinities and in turn, men's attitudes.

6.5.2 Masculinity and Identity

“There is internal tension with the male itself. Even the poorest men share the masculine problem”
(Key informant 7)

With the social construction of masculinity, there is a certain instability with the process of living up to what is perceived as a masculine man. This instability results in men continuously have to prove their masculine dominance, both in public and social spheres (Srivastava, 2018). As accentuated throughout this chapter, male informants acknowledge the preferences by being men in Kerala. With patriarchy being a system that reproduces the assumption of masculine men, some masculinities are more dominant than others. The ‘subordinated’ masculinities may strive to live up to become the ‘ideal man’ that hegemonic masculinity presents. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), argue that hegemonic masculinity does not need to be the most typical pattern in everyday lives. It exposes itself through the production of exemplars of masculinity, which create a cultural framework that is materialised into daily practices and interactions (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). In discussing how men expose different attitudes, what can be seen as factors that maintain the idea of men being presented with power and privileged? And in turn, how do these factors affect attitudes?

Factors that actively plays a part in constructing the ‘ideal man’ associated with power and privileges, can be seen by reflecting Connell and Messerschmidt's concept of ‘geography of masculine configurations’; Global-, regional- and local level. Each of these levels, in turn, influence each other and can provide a framework of how masculinities are constructed. In the following, I will present each level in chronological order with insight into how elements from these levels can influence masculinity and in turn, attitudes within the Village.

Global level

The global level might best be explained through the notion of globalisation processes. For instance, how changes in the global economy affect labour at the local level, whereas men

more easily can experience 'masculinity in crisis' and expose their masculinity in other ways such as domestic violence (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Sweetman, 2013). However, in this section, it will be accounted for how religious thoughts and values may justify male dominance, whereas globalisation processes will be mentioned in section 7.2.2.

Even though there are only two informants who mentioned it, the aspect of religion cannot be ignored. Religious values culturally define representations of masculinity, and in turn, affect masculinities within the regional and local level. As mentioned in section 2.2.1, religious practices are a prevalent feature of the Indian continent as a whole. Religious values, in terms of cultural customs, are based on an appeal to mythic and masculinised histories, whereas men are represented through notions of, for instance, honour and valour (Srivastava, 2018, p.39). The Indian feminist Geetha (2015), attempt to explain why religions declare women to be inferior. For instance, as Geetha highlights, Christianity claims that God created the women out of men's rib, which gives power to men since men are the ones being the exemplary. By following Hinduism, certain scriptural text explains women as "sinful creatures, fire, snake and poison all rolled into one" (Geetha, 2015, p.12). As Geetha continue to explain,

The power and appeal of religious ideas regarding masculinity and femininity are immense. They have survived various transformations in history and continue to haunt us to this day. Neither modern nor democratic political ideas, nor the objectivity of modern science which actively questions the authority of religion, have been able to dislodge completely these ancient notions of the ideal male and female (Geetha, 2015, p.15).

Religious ideas regarding masculinities can affect how men perceive and justify male dominance within the Village. With religion being a common feature in India, men are likely to see religious morality and devotional practices as a way to reinforce their dominance (Srivastava, 2018; Geetha, 2015). Taking key informants into account, religion was held responsible for reinforcing gender inequality: "Kerala is highly patriarchal. Still a lot of inequality due to religion, customs and traditions" (Key informant 2). How religious ideas and values present itself, can form and affect the attitudes of both men and women, and within traditional practices presented at the regional and local level. Religion as internalised value throughout the world symbolically affects masculinities at the regional and the local level.

Regional level

Masculinities can also be constructed by factors at regional level. An interesting observation in the interviews was how the informants blamed Malayalam movies for creating a false picture of how men are supposed to behave towards women. As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) explain, “hegemonic masculinity at the regional level is symbolically represented through the interplay of specific local masculinity practices that have regional significance, such as those constructed by featured film actors and politicians” (p.849). Focusing on Malayalam movies, the way the male actors (or female actors) presents themselves in movies may provide an ideal cultural framework for how masculinities at local level is being shaped and materialised (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Female informant 7 provides one example: “Nowadays, movies show how men behaved in the past, all the bad things that happened to us. From movies, men are learning new things like how to behave badly and express negative attitudes”. As the findings suggest, the ‘ideal man’ in Malayalam movies presents himself with the use of violence, alcohol and abusing vocabulary. This is illustrated by Male informant 18: “these days there are also lots of movies that teach the men this way of thinking. Alcohol abuse, violence, you name it”. According to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) the way masculinity is presented in movies provide a cultural framework which may be materialised in everyday life and through interactions between genders (p.850). The quotes above suggest that the way movies present the man with power, alcohol and violence, can create a ‘misrecognition’ of how the ideal man should behave towards other in society. Through movies, gender inequality can expose itself through the discursive depiction of a superior and inferior hierarchical relationship between men and women (Messerschmidt, 2016). However, not all Malayalam movies may be subjected to the misrecognition of gender roles. ‘Hegemonic masculinity’ becomes symbolically represented through certain local masculine practices, thus can be a factor that forms and affect attitudes at the local level. The regional level shape masculinities in the cultural domain, which can be challenged or altered through local practices (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Local level

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argue that masculinities also becomes constructed by *interactions* in the society. Hegemonic masculinities at local level are to a significant degree constituted in men`s interaction with women. As understood that women`s attitudes also take part in reproducing traditional values, they are to a significant degree involved in producing hegemonic masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.850). An interesting observation

when participating in a local seminar in the Village, was how men and women sat separately from each other. Women on the one side, and men on the other. This was an observation I started noticing when participating in other seminars and activities as well. Through analysing the interviews, how men and women describe how they interact with each other reveals an interesting pattern which emphasises the observation made. Several male and female informants argue for a distance between men and women, where they claim to behave differently when interacting with the opposite gender. For instance:

I have been learnt this way. To always keep a distance. (Female informant 1)

There will be a distance, it is not an equal. (...) There is a limit you see, where they (women) can talk. So, women cannot talk very freely. (Male informant 21)

Distance. Maybe since I just have to friends that are women. (Male informant 25)

It is interesting to have in mind how Key informant 1 claimed that a significant problem towards gender equality lies in the fact that men and women do not interact with each other (see section 5.2.1). The key informant continued saying: “when girls and boys do not mingle with each other, they don’t know how to behave. There can be seen more interactions in modern times, and I believe this can help breaking down stereotypes”. Discussed in section 6.5.1, *habitus* becomes shaped through lived experiences and norms, which affect how individual value the opposite gender. To the extent that sons and daughters become socialised into expectations of what it means to be a man or a woman, the same process can arguably be seen in terms of how men and women behave towards each other. Adapting this to the way the informants have described how they keep distance from each other, the idea of keeping that distance may be practiced in everyday life as something normal. As the quote from female informant 1 accentuates, the informant has been taught to keep a distance.

Masculinities at the local level are to a significant degree constructed through interactions with the same gender, as well as with the opposite. The family and immediate community play an active part in reproducing existing thoughts and values, which presents ideas of how to ‘do gender’ (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.849-859). As the opinion from Key informant 1 indicates, lack of interactions between men and women can help in reinforce prevalent attitudes that become internalised into the individual’s *habitus*. How the global and

regional level provide models of masculinity, reinforces expectations of the ‘ideal man’ at local level, which contributes in affecting attitudes (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Interferences between global, regional and local levels, can help in understanding how attitudes in the Village are created and re-created, and in turn, how the ‘ideal man’ is perceived and justified. Factors at all three levels can maintain how men are associated with power and privileges, and in turn, maintain attitudes in favour of male dominance.

Summary

In this chapter, the experiences of men’s attitudes towards women have been explored. The findings suggest that there exist both positive and more oppressive attitudes towards women, whereby women themselves can reinforce patriarchal values. Moreover, the findings reveal that there exist men reluctant to change the existing patriarchal structures which favour men. With the use of Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic violence, explore possible explanations of how society reproduces the idea of male dominance, and in turn, how prevalent attitudes continue to exist. Connell and Messerschmidt notion of hegemonic masculinity provides insight into social reproduction of gender structures and, in turn, *attitudes*. Besides, how the geographic of masculinity can create notions of the ‘ideal man’, and reproduce expectations of what it means to be a man. By taking the discussion back to SDG 5, the goal only indirectly mentions men. With insight into existing attitudes in the Village, is it time to call for a global goal that includes a focus on men? I will now turn to the final chapter, where the main research question will be discussed.

Chapter 7 – A missing link in SDG 5?

As SDG 5 seeks to empower all women and girls by 2030, the targets and indicators only indirectly mention men. Can there be a missing link in SDG 5 as it does not mention men? The final chapter seeks to discuss the main research question: *To what extent should there be more focus on men in the process of achieving gender equality?* First, in section 7.1, findings from chapter 5 and 6 will be discussed, including some opinions from the participants not mentioned previously. This section seeks to discuss to what extent initiatives at state-level is experienced by informants at the grassroots, and whether there can be seen a wish to include men in gender equality initiatives. The section will end with a discussion about whether attitudes can change to dismiss patriarchal values that reinforce gender inequality. Then, in section 7.2, I will take the literature into account to highlight key issues by incorporating men into gender equality discourses. The discussion seeks to provide a more profound understanding of possibilities and constraints in discussing the main research question. Finally, in section 7.3, the chapter will end by discussing the normative question of whether it is time to include a focus on men to achieve gender equality.

7.1 Experiences of Gender equality; the grassroots and the state

Having divided the findings into chapter 5, which concentrated on Kerala as a state, and the grassroots in chapter 6, contributes to a holistic discussion on whether there is a need to focus on men in the process of achieving SDG 5. First, by having addressed what is being done in Kerala concerning SDG 5 and what the key informants perceive as obstacles, provides insight into the state's progression and contemporary initiatives to achieve gender equality. Second, addressing attitudes in the Village provides insight into prevalent attitudes and opinions of areas critical to advancing gender equality and initiatives that seek to engage people's interest in gender equality. In the following, I will attempt to connect these two chapters for a more profound understanding of the interference between the grassroots and state level. I divide this discussion into two sub-sections. First, *resisting or accepting gender equality*, which seeks to explore how programs at the state level have a significance in the Village, and to what extent the informants want a change. Second, can attitudes actually *change*?

7.1.1 Resisting or accepting gender equality?

According to NITI Aayog (2018), Kerala is one of the front runners in India towards achieving SDG 5 by 2030. In the opinion of Key informant 7:

It is fine to be on the top of the list, but this should not make us ‘sloppy’ and only happy to be on top. (...) In Kerala women at least have a public space, still unbelievable things are happening.

In Kerala, there exist several women-oriented programmes that seek to empower women and girls. The development actors featured in section 5.2, are representatives from agencies that work with, for instance, *self-employment groups*, *skill-development programmes*, and *gender budgeting*. These programmes attempt to provide women with agency, empowerment, and opportunities in society. Accentuated in chapter 5, if there is to be a focus on men, it is through the realms of gender awareness programmes and skill-development programmes in particular; intending to dismiss existing stereotypes, whereby most of the programmes introduced by the development actors are within the field of education. The state’s educational reforms have led to a unique pattern of social development, where statistics have revealed that women are the most literate in India. However, as discussed in section 2.2.2, there exists an illusion of the idea that women are less oppressed by the patriarchy (George, 2011). Through analysing interviews with key informants, two issues were claimed to be the primary obstacles towards achieving gender equality; patriarchy and resistance, in terms of resisting the notion of gender equality. Both these obstacles can, in turn, be seen in the Village; patriarchal values that influence attitudes, whereas some informants are reluctant to change. To what extent does the programs at state-level impact men and women at the grassroots?

In the case of gender awareness programmes, the intention for most of the introduced programmes in section 5.2 (except KSWDC whose primary focus is on women and girls) is to spread awareness to both men and women throughout Kerala. These programmes, to some extent, can be seen as attempts to include men, and address the two obstacles mentioned above. However, initiatives with gender awareness programmes do not seem to influence the Village. The male informants at the grassroots express a common opinion that gender inequality persists in Kerala despite opportunities provided by the state. When asked to discuss obstacles for achieving gender equality, the answers, interestingly enough, are connected to lack of awareness and education. For instance:

It needs to be more education for women and more awareness for men to make inequality go away. (Male informant 2)

Need more focus on men and awareness. It should have been a little bit better actually. (Male informant 21)

I believe there is inequality because of lack of knowledge or awareness amongst men. (...) Not enough gender awareness, I have never heard about programmes here in '*the Village*'. (Male informant 22)

By following the essence of these quotes, it is reasonable to assume that there exists a wish to include a focus on men in terms of awareness towards dismissing persistent inequalities. What becomes interesting with these quotes is that through analysing all answers provided by the informants, a pattern reveals that it is nearly only men, except one woman, that recognises lack of awareness as an implication of inequality. Remembering a quote given by Male informant 4 in section 5.2.3, the informant addresses the wish for more inclusion of men. He states: "But even though different agencies give awareness, they often only include women and girls". In this sense, there is a perception of existing awareness programmes in Kerala. But men seem to be excluded from them. What can be the reason men wishes to be included?

According to Connell (2003, p.6), though there exist men who expose a hegemonic pattern of masculinity reluctant to change, other patterns of masculinity are necessarily present in society. Some of which involve more respectful attitudes which seek to make the lives for women easier. By following Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), in terms of the dynamics of masculinities, certain masculinities may hold seeds of change whereby hegemonic masculinities in time can be challenged to be received in positive terms. In the matter of the quotes given above, men might perceive gender equality as beneficial for both genders, with potential improvement in wellbeing and happiness for men themselves (Sweetman, 2013). On the other hand, it can also refer to a fear of being treated differently, as women are receiving more preferences from development agencies. And thus, wish for more attention and privileges themselves. Section 7.2 will account for key issues while attempting to include a focus on men. It is important to acknowledge that some men might recognise the need for change in theory but continue to sustain practices and traditions that favour male dominance in practice (Connell, 2003, p.9). For instance, even though most of the male informants

recognised gender equality as essential, the men continue describing gender in terms of traditional gender roles, thereby reinforcing factors for gender inequality. Ideas of stereotypes are present in the Village and is a natural way of describing the differences between gender. Accentuated above, development actors in chapter 5 aims to dismiss these stereotypes. As male informants expressed a lack of awareness as a cause for gender inequality, the state's initiatives arguably have no impact in the Village. An illustrative quote is given by Female informant 12: "I have never heard about any awareness programmes or what is being done with this".

In asking the informants whether gender equality is a goal that can be achieved, Male informant 20 from section 6.3.1, claimed that "people are not ready to accept (gender equality) yet". By expanding on this quote, the informant continued to state that gender equality is a new way of thinking, which does not come easily in Kerala. Furthermore, concerning gender awareness programmes presented in section 5.2, the informant expresses:

There are awareness programmes, but people are not interested to participate. Some people like to hear about awareness, but some think they already know everything, and then you have those who don't want to change the situation at all.

Do these quotes indicate that both men and women have no interest in achieving gender equality?

The findings from the Village shows how people are reluctant to change the structure. However, in an attempt to figure out how many of the informants felt the need to involve men towards achieving gender equality, 19 out of 27 recognised a wish for the state to focus more on men. Among the remaining eight; four men expressed a definite no, whereas one man did not have any opinion. In terms of the women; one woman said no, whereas two other women expressed that women and men should try to change themselves without interferences by state policies. With expressing a wish for a focus on men, what then can be the reason for less focus on men by development actors featured in chapter 5?

Concerning SDG 5, it becomes clear that there are no new initiatives towards achieving gender equality other than the already existing women-oriented programmes. As stated by Key informant 3: "Without doing anything, we are doing something new through the SDGs".

According to Government of Kerala (2015), the state has adapted to the global approach of gender mainstreaming and claims the notion of gender equality to be equally as much about men as women (Government of Kerala, 2015). However, as understood, there exists few visible attempts to implement this focus in practice; and as written in section 4.1.2, the Government of Kerala states that the focus remains on the importance of achieving levels of women's empowerment. Following the views of Cleaver (2002), some development agencies do not explicitly consider men as a part of their gender mainstreaming strategies. As Cleaver claims "there may be difficulties in fully institutionalising such policies" (2002, p.19). Furthermore, Key informant 3 highlighted economic aspects as a difficulty to adapt new targets to achieving gender equality: "we need money, and this is difficult". With Key informant 3 recognising financial aspects as an issue for less focus on men, Key informant 5 critically addresses the issue to be because of men themselves:

Most of the leaders in gender organisations and programmes here in Kerala, are men. How do they see aspects of gender equality? Since they work in a women organisation, they do not see the need to talk about the hierarchy within the programme or organisation itself, because they get status by being leaders. There are too many men with power... they do not reflect about gender issues, because it does not happen to them.

Argued above by Key informant 5, the issue for not including a focus on men is claimed to be a result of male leaders. This, to some extent, is further illustrated by Key informant 2: "in the head offices, all the leaders are men. Sometimes it is a challenge, due to their attitudes towards us women. Sometimes our work is affected by their opinion... but there are also female leaders". These quotes, explore, what Cleaver (2002) claims, a potential lack of men's willingness to show interest in gender issues in organisational hierarchies, whereas Sweetmann (2013) goes on to state that the role of leaders is critical in providing positive images of alternative ways of being a man. That being said, it is important to recognise that women necessarily play an active part themselves in maintaining the structure. As illustrated by Key informant 1: "Women should also understand. Women tend to think blindly, and thus the inequality continues to persist. That is why gender awareness is important". This quote is illustrative in an understanding of why gender awareness programmes tend to aim at women in Kerala.

It should be mentioned, as highlighted in section 5.2.3, the only programme that targeted men (or police officers) and their attitudes is the gender-responsive training for police offices by KSWDC. As Key informant 4 claims, the police in Kerala is an influential force where almost all police officers are men: “Men has to understand that there is discrimination going on. (...) if we change the mindset of one person, then more people can change”. This focus, to some extent, is a move towards focusing on men and masculinities.

To what extent informants are resisting or accepting the concept of gender equality, attitudes in the Village reveal the existence of both ‘reluctance’ and ‘acceptance’ to have a change in pursuing gender equality. Even though a pattern in the answers reveal a wish to include more men, several of the informants are, to some extent, satisfied with their situation, as Female informant 10 recap it: “Based on other state it is much better here in Kerala”. With the perception that there are both men and women reluctant to change, is it possible to change attitudes to see gender equality as beneficial? In the following, this question will be discussed.

7.1.2 Can attitudes change?

Addressing attitudes can help in an understanding of prevalent attitudes at the grassroots that continue to challenge efforts to achieve gender equality. Addressing these attitudes become essential for efforts to move forward in advancing gender equality policies (Connell, 2011; Connell, 2003). The discussion above, together with chapter 6, reveal the existence of attitudes of people reluctant to change. Can attitudes within the Village be challenged in terms of the influence given by the Government of Kerala and Development agencies?

With gender being a social construct, it is essential to recognise that a change does not naturally follow. Challenging men’s notion of masculinity at the grassroots can be difficult if social networks continue to perpetuate ideas of men with power (Sweetmann, 2013). For instance, an example presented by Key informant 6 in section 5.3.1, introduced a politician neglecting the idea of bringing more women into the government. Another example in section 6.5.2, accentuated how Malayalam movies were held responsible for presenting men subjected to alcohol and violence. These two examples indicate how masculinities are symbolically represented through the influence of local masculinity practices that have regional significance, and in turn, materialised itself in everyday life (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.849). However, an interesting quote given by Male informant 17 from section 6.3, highlights the informant’s experience of how attitudes differ between

educated and not educated men: “As I have seen, men with an educational background will give more respect to women. The people without will treat women as below them”. Does this indicate that attitudes can change through the gain of knowledge?

Experiences of attitudes presented in chapter 6 reveal that traditional values expose itself in everyday life. For instance, the narrative presented in section 6.2, highlight an educated elderly reluctant to change with a clear statement: “Selfishness will hinder this. (...) if I change, *he laughs*, there is a hope” (Male informant 18). The quote illustrates how men`s lack of interest in gender equality becomes an obstacle. However, as mentioned, a few female informants experienced ‘women being worse than men’, which indicate that patriarchal values become naturalised in the sense of being reproduced as traditional structures by women themselves. Conceptualisations of male dominance given by Bourdieu provides insight into modes of domination. With the notion of men being superior, the patriarchal system produces thoughts that inevitably becomes *natural*, which is the strength of the patriarchal structure (Bourdieu, 2001). Bourdieu claims that the strength of this structure persists with a dualism that reinforces male dominance and the attitudes that come with it, which cannot easily be changed. Bourdieu argues,

These dualisms, deeply rooted in things (structure) and in bodies, do not spring from a simple effect of verbal naming and cannot be abolished by an act of performative magic, since the genders, far from being simple ‘roles’ that can be played at will, are inscribed in bodies and in a universe from which they derive their strength. It is the order of genders that underlies the performative efficacy of words – and especially of insults – and it is also the order of genders that resist the spuriously revolutionary redefinitions of subversive voluntarism (Bourdieu, 2001, p.103).

In other words, the foundation of male dominance lies in the embodied dispositions attuned to the structure of domination. A change can only be broken through a radical transformation where the dominated points of view, as Bourdieu argues (2001), “that lead the dominated to take the point of view of the dominant on the dominant and on themselves” (p.42). In a sense, this illustrates how Male informant 18 in section 6.2 expressed that for change “there has to be a radical change in our mindset”. As patriarchal values create the idea of men holding the primary power, a change in the existing structure (and attitudes) may not easily occur

(Srivastava, 2018). Male informant 4 explained that change is unlikely concerning the political parties:

According to the Government, it is equality between men and women. But within the political parties, there is no equality. And I think this is because of men's attitudes and that men want to continue having the feeling of power.

On the other hand, reflecting on Male informant 17's quote about how men with educational background give respect, it becomes clear that education has impacts on individuals. According to Harber (2014), education is a field with significant influence in changing norms and assumptions of gender equality. This is in line with how key informants argued for education to be an important field that can lead to change. For instance, Key informant 3 in section 5.1 highlighted: "Education is helping". However, education is also seen as a place where oppressive attitudes can reproduce. A quote given in 5.2 by Key informant 6 exemplifies this: "the classroom may teach you aspects of gender equality, but it depends on the attitudes given by the teacher, course, syllabus, structure and so on". In the views of Bourdieu (2001), male dominance is based on common values, rather than by the use of force.

A change cannot occur by only acknowledging the power structure, though, Bourdieu recognises factors of change, as he says: "the major change has doubtless been that masculine domination no longer imposes itself with the transparency of something taken for granted" (Bourdieu, 2001, p.88). Of all the factors of change, Bourdieu claims, "the most important are those that are linked to the decisive transformation of the function of the educational system in reproducing the differences between the genders" (p.89). Kerala's success in providing access to education for both men and women arguably have contributed to what Bourdieu sees as a 'factor of change'. Dismissing stereotypes and questioning social norms in the field of education can help break the *doxa* and expand the space for what is possible (Bourdieu, 2001, p.89). However, in patriarchal societies, men and women are born with different values, whereas men benefit from being men. Masculine dominance is only entirely dismissed if one manages to realise equal opportunities between men and women in all areas (Bugge, 2000, p.151). Based on these arguments, it is reasonable to assume that traditional attitudes within the Village will not easily change without interference from the educational field or governmental programmes. Accentuated previously, educational reforms have created more opportunities for women, which has placed Kerala as one of the front runners to achieve

gender equality. However, as shown in the previous section, gender equality initiatives in Kerala do not have major influence on the men and women interviewed from the Village.

In the case of Kerala, a focus on men can be seen in the attempt to raise gender awareness with skill-development programmes. According to the informants, a reason for persistent inequality is due to lack of awareness, which indicates how gender awareness programmes do not have an impact on the informants interviewed. Through analysing the interviews at the grassroots, both men and women wish for a focus on men and their attitudes. However, as findings suggest, there exist people reluctant to change, thus contributing to reinforce male dominance. A change in prevalent attitudes does not easily occur, where deep-rooted patriarchal values reproduce privileges for men. In a society with deep-rooted patriarchy, can it be beneficial to include a focus on men? The next section presents global discussions about key issues of possibilities and constraint that occur when attempting to include a focus on men.

7.2 Key issues when including men

Moving beyond a focus on the participants in this study; the literature expands on discussions whether it can be beneficial to include men, or not, in the process of achieving gender equality. Key issues arise when attempting to include a focus on men. Firstly, defining the limits and focus area. Secondly, justifying men`s interest in gender equality without losing the ground of women`s oppression. Thirdly, the importance of recognising dimensions of social identities and how these impacts each gender (Clever, 2002, p.24). These issues reflect upon previous discussions from chapter 5 and 6; therefore, in the following, I have divided these issues into three sub-sections that seek to discuss them sufficiently. Since these issues reflect on chapter 5 and 6, I include examples from the fieldwork.

7.2.1 Defining limits and focus

Including a focus on men, indicate a discussion of the limits and focus of such projects without reinforcing men with more power and privileges (Clever, 2002). To contribute to defining limits and focus involve comprehensive research, whereas policy details will vary from one nation to another. There exist contradictory perspectives in arguments for a focus on men, such as those recognising that excluding men is a backlash against gains made in favour of women, to those who recognise involving men as a complex issue with a fear of exposing

men with more privileges (Cleaver, 2002, p.24). As mentioned in section 1.2, it is not an uncommon pattern within gender equality discourses that the hegemonic relations presume men as the bad guys; with men being associated with power and women with powerlessness. By being associated with power, the focus immediately moves towards those with less status, and do not assume the need to focus on ideas and thoughts by those in power (Cornwall & Rivas, 2015). How to define limits and focus without interfering with already existing women policies, is a difficult question. What is recognised as positive and negative issues in defining the limits and focus?

Key issues arise in practice when attempting to defining limits and focus areas. Connell (2011), highlights the importance of transforming what is perceived as a ‘common’ focus in gender equality discourses and adapt an understanding of how men can be essential gatekeepers to achieve progress (Connell, 2011). According to Connell (2011), the state is the primary mechanism to steering gender equality and to influence gender relations in general, including the everyday life of men (p.25). Gender equality policies that recognise men can lead to principles of social justice, which can produce better lives for both women and the majority of men in the long term (Connell, 2011). On the other hand, including a focus on men in gender equality policies, is seen to be problematic as involving a focus on men and masculinities are perceived with a fear of the diversion of funds and attention being taken away from women-oriented programmes (Cleaver, 2002, p.18). According to Cleaver (2002), there exists anxiety that a focus on men and masculinities will risk men’s position being strengthened, which can result in maintaining the pattern of gender inequality.

By following Chant and Gutmann (2002), having a focus on *women-only interventions* provides a possible danger of creating hostilities at the grassroots between men and women, and are insufficient to overturn patriarchal structures. Aside from the fact that men become ‘left out’, a consequence being excluded from gender project is that it can lead to a heavier workload for women in their household (Chant & Gutmann, 2002, p.275). In recent years, contemporary changes in the global economy and women gaining more empowerment (e.g. through education), have resulted in traditional gender roles being challenged. These changes can strengthen the experience of ‘masculinity in crisis’, where men might expose their masculine dominance in other ways; such as turning to domestic violence or alcohol abuse (Chant & Gutmann, 2002; Sweetman, 2013). As Chant and Gutmann (2002) recognised *women-only interventions* as insufficient, certain suggestions is given in ways to include men

without harming existing women initiatives. For instance, to bring more men into women-related development work can accentuate for positive attitudes. As Chant and Gutmann (2002) argue, “In various cultural contexts, for example, it seems that men are more likely to listen to men, including when it comes to talking gender” (p.277). However, as pointed out by Key informant 5 and 2 in section 7.1.1, the key informants critically argue that an issue in Kerala is that there are too many men holding power-related positions, without reflecting on women`s issues. Bringing more men into development work can be perceived as contradictory. As Chant and Gutmann (2002) continues saying “there is no automatic organisational format for approaching these issues” (p.277). Defining limits and focus on how to incorporate men into gender equality policies becomes a strategic question, where it is up to each nation to decide the best possible way to do this (Cleaver, 2002). With a common assumption perceived as men being on top of the gendered hierarchy, associated with power and privileges, what can be done for *gender equality* to be recognised as *beneficial* for both genders?

7.2.2 Engaging men`s interests

The second key issue relates to the discussion of how to encourage men`s interest in achieving gender equality without losing ground of women`s oppression. Recognising the experiences of men`s attitudes towards women becomes essential to explore ways to engage men`s interest in achieving gender equality; and to critically address why men might resist the idea of a gender equal society (Connell, 2011). However, the process of engaging men`s interest does not easily come along, as will be discussed in the following.

According to Sweetman (2013), if men see traditional values being challenged, it might lead to more abuse for women at least on short-term. With other words, if a programme seeks to challenge the power relations between men and women, a series of new problems can occur in terms of domestic violence and alcohol abuse as mentioned in the previous section (Sweetman,2013). In light of these issues, engaging men`s interest might be through initiatives that create opportunities for men, as Sweetman suggests, “to build solidarity, discover common interests and needs, and evolve the conviction that they need to change” (Sweetman, 2013, p.6). By following Connell (2003), global goals and policies may benefit from mentioning men as it may engage in an understanding that gender equality benefits both genders. Connell suggests:

Name men and boys in gender equality policies, rather than leaving their presence implicit. Recognise the well-being of men and boys as a legitimate goal of gender equality measures. Address the specific needs of men and boys, where they differ from the needs of women and girls. Define specific roles for men and boys in gender reform processes (Connell, 2003, p.30).

Collectively, by receiving a patriarchal dividend, men have a lot to lose from pursuing gender equality (Connell, 2011, p.13). With this in mind, it becomes clear that it is essential to engage men's interest in perceiving gender equality as beneficial. However, being on top of the gendered hierarchy, does not automatically lead to a better life. Connell (2011) claims the importance of recognising that men live in social relationships with women and girls, as the quality of men's lives depends on those relationships. In this sense, it becomes natural to talk about men's relational interests in gender equality. With other words, to engage men to see gender equality as beneficial to empower his children or wife's position can engage men in supporting gender equality. Moreover, as the gender hierarchy does not immediately lead to a better life, men might wish to engage in gender equality initiative to avoid the 'toxic' effects that cultural norms may expose (Connell, 2011). An illustrative example is given by Male informant 6 in section 6.4.1: "I feel equality in my own life, still, I don't want to leave my daughter alone. I don't know how other men think. The situation is bad here". Concerning Connell's explanation above, engaging men in to understand that gender equality is beneficial for both genders, may lead to more freedom and agency for their wives and daughters. If more men see the benefits, then the fear of leaving women alone outside might be dismissed.

When speaking of engaging men's interest in gender equality, there is a need to focus on contemporary issues deriving from the global level. Concerning globalisation and development, the change to market economy have arguably had an impact on men and masculinities (Connell,2011). For instance, the rise of agricultural machineries has participated in destabilising what is accounted for as traditional labour divisions in rural societies (Connell, 2011, p.14). As Kerala, and India in general, is experiencing a high unemployment rate, 'masculinity in crisis' becomes apparent in growing concerns with gender change. As discussed in section 6.3.1, men in this study have highlighted the concern of being able to financially support their families, which can lead men into distress. According to Connell (2003), the task of gender equality implementer in this setting will be to build on the concerns of gender change.

Furthermore, as written in section 5.3.1, resisting the idea of gender equality are perceived as an obstacle by the key informants, and becomes an issue when attempting to engage men's interest. According to Sweetmann (2013), resistance can be seen when the idea of women becoming equalised with men is experienced as a threat to men's masculine identity. Men may resist the notion of gender equality if it makes them seem less worthy of respect (Sweetmann, 2013). For instance, as explored in section 6.5.2, religious and cultural ideologies justifies male dominance, and as Connell (2011) argue, "it is a mistake to regard these ideas as simply 'traditional' and therefore outmoded. They may be actively modernised and renewed" (p.15-16). How religious and cultural values reinforce male dominance and how these values again defend conservative views of women, may be hard to dismiss in the process of achieving gender equality. When gender equality initiatives seek to dismiss religious practices and beliefs, resistance becomes obvious. In this case, according to Connell (2003), if there is yet to see grounds of optimism, the task of implementors will be to take these societal concerns into account when developing strategies for how to include men (p.6).

Another reason for resisting the idea of gender equality is in terms of social status. For those men who are of lower status and recognised with subordinated masculinity, the idea of *women-only programmes* can be seen as unfair when advantages gained from these programmes are unavailable for men who experience fewer privileges. As Connell (2003) claim, "programmes to benefit women and girls are seen by some angry men as underserved advantages" (p.10). This example indicates the need for recognising dimensions of social identities to understand how gender equality can become meaningful for the majority. This leads the discussion to the last key issue, namely, dimensions of social identities.

7.2.3 Dimensions of social identities

Engaging men in the work of gender equality highlights some structural limitations, which must be addressed for gender equality to become meaningful for the majority (Cleaver, 2002). The importance of recognising dimensions of social identities, highlights the need for recalling the concept of *intersectionality*.

The diversity of lived experiences and opinions needs to be addressed to understand multiple systems of oppression and how these also affect men. Systems of oppression, such as class, age, and gender, matters to systematically address how gender inequality continues to persist

(Misra, 2018). Misra's (2018) explanation of intersectionality (see section 4.1.4) is helpful to understand the intersecting relations of privileges and disadvantages, resulting in a broader understanding of the structural inequalities that reproduce men's patriarchal dividend. In this study, it is understood that stereotyping men and women are perceived as an obstacle, where it remains a natural way of explaining gender. Moreover, as discussed in section 6.3.1, concerning men, the social status in the Village elucidate the existence of oppressive attitudes among men. As Misra (2018) argues, "intersectionality theory refines structural understandings of inequality, recognising gender, race, class, and other characteristics as structures reflecting power and inequality, providing new blueprints for social change" (p.112). For instance, as chapter 6 sought to highlight men's attitudes, dimensions of social identities become essential to understand why some men inhabit the idea of being endorsed with more power and hegemonic masculinity. Even though patriarchy provides a dividend to men, not all men expose oppressive attitudes. Following the views of Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), the nature of gender hierarchy emphasises the importance of recognising intersectionality to understand why some men hold on to superior positions in society. A focus on social dimensions can help in development initiatives that understand the social dimensions of men, and why men continue expressing certain attitudes. Furthermore, social dimensions of identity are essential when discussing whether men should be more focused on in the process of achieving gender equality. Ideas of how to engage men, as presented above, might be beneficial when understanding how social status can provide both advantages and disadvantages by being men. For instance, insight into men's attitudes in a local context may help in exploring the range of needs to engage men, as well as the intersecting relations of disadvantages and privileges (Misra, 2018).

By following the discussion of three key issues that arise when discussing men and gender equality, it is fruitful to recall Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) reconceptualisation of the dynamics of masculinities. Connell and Messerschmidt suggest that a positive conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity could potentially challenge patriarchal values by moving towards "a version of masculinity open to equality with women" (2005, p.853). Such positive conceptualisation, on the other hand, does not immediately occur since gender relations are areas of tension (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Concerning the three key issues discussed above, Messerschmidt (2016) argues for by addressing issues that affect men can, over time, challenge, contest and change masculinities.

With insight into findings from the fieldwork and suggestions for why it can be beneficial to include a focus on men; is it time to have a focus on men to be able to achieve a sustainable development with gender equality? Is there a missing link in SDG 5 by excluding a focus on men?

7.3 Mainstreaming men into gender equality?

Throughout the world, adopting a ‘gender perspective’ in policy discourses substantially translate into addressing women’s concerns (Connell, 2003, p.10). Is it time to mainstream men into processes of achieving gender equality?

Moving towards gender equality in a society with deep-rooted patriarchal values is a complicated task. This task involves profound institutional changes as well as changes in everyday lives at grassroots (Connell, 2003, p.4). As Connell (2003) argues, “it is not possible to move gender systems far towards equality without broad social consensus in favour of gender equality – and that consensus must include men and boys” (p.4). In essence, moving beyond patriarchal values and practices exposed in societies will require efforts from both women and men (Hopper, 2012, p.114). Global gender equality discourses (e.g. SDG 5), have principally focused on women; and rightly so, since women for a long time have been marginalised in terms of agency and opportunities. Global goals such as SDG 5 can help to identify key elements to create opportunities and possibilities for people to live dignified lives (Rao, 2019). However, as accentuated throughout this study, Chant and Gutmann (2000) argue that without mentioning men, gender interventions can only go so far (p.271).

This thesis has been an attempt to provide insight into a different side of the gender equality discourse by focusing on men. The findings highlight that the gender initiatives at the state level primarily focus on empowering women and girls without incorporating men into the same process. On the other hand, at the grassroots, both men and women express a wish for including a focus on men and persistent attitudes. With cultural and traditional values enclosed by society, both men and women take part in maintaining prevalent attitudes. Most importantly, the findings suggest that there exist men reluctant to change in Kerala. How, then, does the case of Kerala and SDG 5 become essential to exemplify a need to focus on men?

Through the findings and discussions initiated in this thesis; the case of Kerala and SDG 5 can exemplify a need to focus on men for three reasons. *First*, at the state-level; Kerala's unique pattern of social development, with educational reforms and public actions, have resulted in Kerala becoming one of the front runners in India to achieve SDG 5. However, as Key informant 7 accentuated previously: "still unbelievable things are happening". The state's focus on empowering women and girls have been an essential part of the state becoming one of the front runners towards achieving gender equality. However, as attitudes in the Village reveal, there exists traditional values that reproduce patriarchal structures and cultural norms. Unless gender equality is promoted within social and cultural norms, even Kerala's unique access to education cannot alone make room for empowering women (Mitra & Singh, 2007). Findings at the state level suggest that patriarchy and resistance are two primary obstacles towards further achievements in gender equality. However, whether the state will incorporate a focus on men in the nearest future is unclear, as Key informant 1 highlighted in section 5.2: "men already have it all... it is a patriarchal society". In this sense, as men are being associated with power, the focus will shift towards those of less status; with a lack of recognition on whether to focus on ideas and thoughts by those in power (Cornwall & Rivas, 2015). Accentuated by Connell (2011), recognising men in gender equality policies can move towards the principle of social justice, which in turn, can better the lives of women and men in the long term. By adopting SDG 5 in Kerala, Key informant 3 states: "Kerala has been working on several of the issues before the implementation of the SDGs, but UN provides us with new guidelines and indicators so that Kerala has something to use and look into to create development". Concerning this statement, if a global goal, such as SDG 5, initiated a focus on men, gender initiatives within Kerala might have been of different perception.

Second, with insight into the Village; the experiences of men's attitudes highlight opinions and experiences by informants who recognise men as an obstacle towards achieving gender equality, whereby some of the informants want to keep the structure as it is. Knowing opinions and experiences from the Village, the argument for including men into processes towards achieving gender equality is further strengthened. Accentuated by Narayan (1997) in section 4.1.4, it is essential to recognise cultural diversity to not fall into the pit of cultural essentialism. Women themselves may reproduce gender inequality by following traditions, where some women may both be reluctant and eager to achieve gender equality. Drawing on previous discussions on how to engage men, a focus on men can provide a positive effect on women and girls in the long term. As male dominance can present itself as natural within

societies, engaging men can challenge traditional gender roles and perceptions of what is expected by both genders. Accentuated by Connell (2003), men are likely to support a change in society if they can see positive benefits for themselves (Connell, 2003, p.4). Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) claim that the ideal situation is to be able to change the concept of hegemonic masculinity to be associated with a man who accepts gender equality. A focus on men at the grassroots may help in achieving this ideal picture.

Third, in terms of SDG 5 and its global influence; while introducing a global goal followed by 156 countries, it may be even more essential to have goals that seek to incorporate and engage men into becoming positive towards women gaining equality with men. The way global goals can affect gender politics and efforts at the state level, it can arguably be beneficial to recall Connell and Messerschmidt's analysis of the geography of masculinities. Instead of analysing masculinities, a global goal arguably goes through the same construction. To put it simply, global processes have an impact at the regional and local level. When a global goal provides efforts to engage in a focus on men, these efforts can pressure efforts at regional level (in this case both Kerala and India) to implement this focus into gender politics, and arguably include men at grassroots. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) recap this essence:

Global institutions pressure regional and local gender orders. Whereas regional and local level provide cultural materials adopted or reworked in global arenas and provide models of masculinity that may be important in local gender dynamics. These links are important in forming gender politics (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.849).

With this in mind, a global goal such as the SDG 5 might benefit from engaging and mobilising men in the sense that SDG 5 provides guidelines. However, as suggested, including a focus on men might be perceived as problematic for several reasons, such as fear of losing funding's for existing women programmes or reinforcing men with more power. In light of this, it becomes essential to define limits and focus areas without losing ground of women's oppression. Despite this, recognising men and their attitudes can potentially be gatekeepers for achieving gender equality.

Over half of the informants interviewed wish for more focus on men, and as accentuated, most of these are men. Interestingly, some of these men perceive 'lack of awareness' as a primary reason for the persistent inequality. Besides, the findings highlight four men who do

not want the structure to change (in addition to one woman, and two other women who experienced that women and men should change themselves). As shown in the previous section, women-only interventions can create a hostile relationship between men and women at the grassroots. These findings might suggest the need to incorporate a focus on men to make gender equality seem beneficial to the majority. I will end this chapter with a quote given by Connell (2003), which recaps the essence of including men in the discourse of gender equality and perhaps offers a way forward:

For gender equality politics to become hegemonic among men does not require that other political views should vanish. It does require effective responses to the resistance that comes from men still committed to gender privileges, or from men who accept gender equality in principle but do little about it in practice (Connell, 2003, p.28-29).

Summary

By following the answers given by the informants, over half of them (both men and women) wishes there to be more focus on men in terms of gender equality initiatives. On the one hand, there is arguably a missing link in SDG 5 by excluding a view on men. With a goal that is followed by 156 countries, it may be even more essential to have goals that seek to incorporate and engage men to become positive towards women gaining equality with men. As attitudes reveal in the Village, there exists traditional values that reproduce patriarchal structures in society. On the other hand, key issues arise when attempting to include a focus on men. Failing to recognise these key issues can reinforce men with more privileges and power, and in turn reproduce women's lack of freedom and agency. Main criticisms are seen in the fact of the fear of men being endorsed with more power. Global goals on gender equality, such as SDG 5, is essential to empower women throughout the world. However, as I have tried to discuss throughout this thesis, it might be time to include a focus on men and their attitudes to be able to attain sustainable development.

Chapter 8 – Bringing it to an end

8.1 Summary and Concluding remarks

With a case-study on Kerala, this study has been an attempt to highlight a focus on including men when it comes to gender equality. The main research question sought to discuss: *To what extent should there be more focus on men in the process of achieving gender equality?*

For an adequate discussion, two supporting research question was addressed. First, *what is being done in Kerala concerning SDG 5, and to what extent are men incorporated in the process of achieving gender equality?* Second, *what are men`s attitudes towards women in Kerala, and to what extent are men`s attitudes perceived as an obstacle towards achieving gender equality?* I will sum up each research question as presented in chapter 5, 6 and 7, with some concluding remarks.

SDG 5 in Kerala

As discovered in this thesis, there exists few initiatives in Kerala that involves a focus on men when it comes to achieving gender equality. Findings show that SDG 5 does not get any particular attention in Kerala other than the already existing women-oriented programmes. By following answers given by the key informants, we have discovered that the main focus in the contribution to gender equality in Kerala, is focusing on empowering and creating opportunities that are beneficial for women. A focus on men can, to some extent, be located in the realms of gender awareness programmes and skill-development programmes in particular.

The Government of Kerala has adapted to the global approach of gender mainstreaming. Still, the focus remains on providing empowerment and opportunities to all women, hoping to dismiss the existing stereotypes between men and women. With the implementations of schemes, laws and women programmes, there exists several initiatives to empower women and to achieve SDG 5 by 2030. However, patriarchal values and resistance towards the idea of gender equality is highlighted as main constraints to further achievements with SDG 5. These two categories are again reproduced by attitudes from both genders, in private and public spheres.

Attitudes in the Village

The variety of answers given by informants provide contrast between those who are for a male dominant society compared to those who recognise the need for change. As gender is a social construct, ideas of how men versus women are supposed to behave reproduced. Within the Village, there exists both positive and more oppressive attitudes towards women, where both genders take part in reproducing patriarchal values. For male informants, there exists a mutual understanding that the structure in Kerala is in favour of men. However, not everyone believes that the patriarchal structure should be maintained. For the female informants, sometimes the attitudes of other women are experienced as worse than men. Despite this, most of the female informants perceive men's attitudes as an obstacle towards achieving equality between men and women. Most importantly, the findings reveal that there exist men reluctant to change the existing structure that perpetuates gender inequality. With insight into the main research question, this, arguably, indicate a need to focus on engaging men to see gender equality as beneficial.

Including men in the process of achieving gender equality?

Finally, there are several pathways to achieve gender equality, just as to reduce poverty or improving well-being. In Kerala, there exists a recognition that gender equality is equally as much about men as women. However, there cannot be seen any attempts to further engage men into achieving gender equality. While attempting to include a focus on men, key issues arise. These include defining the limits and focus of such projects; engage men's interest in gender equality policies without losing ground of women's oppression; and addressing dimensions of social identity to make gender equality a meaningful concept for the majority.

With patriarchy and resistance perceived as two primary obstacles for achieving gender equality, the state responds through gender awareness programmes. However, as indicated by informants, these programmes do not seem to have an impact on men and women in the Village. In contrast, key informants argue for the fact that these initiatives are essential towards achieving gender equality.

By following the answers given by the informants, a pattern reveals that over half of the informants (both men and women) wishes there to be more focus on men and their attitudes when it comes to gender equality. On the one hand, there can arguably be a missing link in SDG 5 by not mentioning men. Without mentioning men, gender equality can be perceived as

less beneficial and result in a lack of willingness and interest for change by men themselves. On the other hand, obstacles arise when attempting to include a focus on men, such as a fear of reinforcing men with more privileges and power. However, based on the findings from this fieldwork, I would argue for a need to include a focus on men to be able to achieve sustainable development with gender equality.

With insight into the experiences of men's attitudes towards women, in a state which is one of the front runners in India towards achieving SDG 5, patriarchal values continue to persist despite the opportunities created by the state. However, there is a positive outcome of educational access for both genders, and several initiatives to empower women and girls. I will conclude with one quote given by Key informant 4 in chapter 5, in which recaps the idea of including men: "if we can change one person, others can".

8.1.1 Limitations of the study

Conducting fieldwork in a timeframe of nine weeks place some limitations on the research. As accentuated in section 3.6, particular problems occur in an attempt to measure men's attitudes. First, it is critical to acknowledge that researching men's attitudes can develop cultural biases in terms of being a western researcher without sufficient knowledge of Kerala's historical and traditional context. Besides, I cannot ensure that all participants in this study answer in terms of their own opinions or what they think I want to hear. Second, time constraint places limits upon being able to, for instance, having follow-up interviews to get a broader understanding of cultural norms and traditions. Because of time constraint, I cannot claim full competence in the Malayalam culture. Third, the amount of participants in this study does not result in a total representation of the Keralan society. Despite this, I believe the interviews provide fruitful insight into the attitudes that exist within the Village. Concerning the key informants, only one man was interviewed. This may pose this study with some limitations concerning subjective opinions on patriarchy in Kerala.

8.2 The way forward

To achieve gender equality, a focus on men is arguably essential to engage and mobilise men to become willing to change the structures throughout the world. Without directly mentioning men in a global goal such as SDG 5, it may increasingly initiate a lack of interest for men to recognise why women should have an equal opportunity to live a life fulfilled with freedom

and well-being. Global discourses of gender equality tend to recognise men as powerholders, whereby gender inequality continues to persist throughout the world. For instance, as men also can be the losers in a society, the lack of recognition in policies can result in tensions and hostility towards women at the grassroots. With a focus on India with the second largest population in the world, a change in men`s attitudes towards women and gender equality may express a huge crossroad for the whole world. As NITI Aayog argues concerning SDGs, “success stories from India in their journey towards achieving the SDGs have the potential to guide other countries” (2018, p.iii).

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Appendices

Appendix A: Samples of Informants

Gender, age, work	Informant
Woman, 38, married, housewife	1
Man, 20, single, student	2
Woman, 49, married, housewife	3
Man, 26, single, student	4
Woman, 31, separated, employed	5
Man, 56, married, employed	6
Woman, 42, married, housewife	7
Woman, 23, married, student and housewife	8
Woman, 50, married, housewife	9
Woman, 43, married, employed	10
Woman, 25, married, employed	11
Woman, 21, single, unemployed	12
Woman, 35, married, housewife	13
Woman, 23, single, employed	14
Man, 23, single, unemployed	15
Woman, 43, married, employed	16
Man, 20, single, student	17
Man, 61, married, employed	18
Man, 27, single, student	19
Man, 32, single, employed	20
Man, 29, single, unemployed	21
Man, 20, single, student	22
Woman, 64, married, employed	23
Man, 21, single, student	24
Man, 29, single, unemployed	25
Man, 25, single, unemployed	26
Man, 24, single, student	27

Appendix B: Interview guide for the Informants

Interviews with men and women in the Village:

General questions:

1. Ask about age
2. What is your marital status? (single, married, engage etc.)
3. Do you have any occupation? / What do you work with?
4. How many people are there in your household? / Who are you living with?
5. Can you tell me about your role/ your responsibilities in the household?
6. Who takes care of the financial situation in your household?
 - a) What is your opinion on these distributions of roles/responsibilities?

Gender Equality questions:

7. Can you tell me what comes to your mind when I say, “Gender equality”?
8. What does gender equality mean for you personally?
 - a) How do you feel gender equality is in Kerala?
9. Can you tell me about the biggest challenges you face as a women /man in Kerala?
10. What would you say are the differences between men and women in Kerala?
11. Do you think that men and women have different roles/responsibilities in Kerala?
 - a) Do you think men and women can do the same type of work? Why/Why not.
 - b) How would you describe your family when it comes to gender roles, responsibility and work share?
12. How do you behave when interacting with the opposite gender?
 - a) Can you tell me how you behave?
13. Do you feel like you get treated differently by the opposite gender?
14. What is your opinion on how men are treating women in general in Kerala?
15. Have you ever experienced being discriminated/ harassed/ treated bad?
 - a) Can you tell me about a situation where you felt discriminated?
 - b) Women have lots of laws that protect them, in what way do you think these laws are affecting men?
16. According to statistic and statements given by United Nation, Kerala is doing well with gender equality, and is one of the front runners in India when it comes to equality between women and men. What is your opinion on this statement?

17. Do you think that gender equality has a different meaning in other states in India?
Why/Why not?
18. If you experience any issue with gender inequality (example: being harassed or discriminated), who would you address these issues too?
19. Do you know any programs in Kerala that works with either women or men for gender equality?
20. What is your opinion on gender awareness in Kerala?
 - a) Do you think there is enough gender awareness in Kerala?
21. If your party in the government nominated a woman as leader, would you vote for her if she were qualified for the job?
22. I am curious to figure out more about men`s attitude towards women. What is your experience with men`s attitude towards women in Kerala?
 - a) Would you say that it is necessary to focus on men`s attitude towards women in Kerala?
23. What do you think is the main cause for gender inequality in your society?

Appendix C: Example of interview guide with Key informants

Key Informant 3 – Centre Plan Monitory Unite, SDG

Introduce myself and the research issue.

Questions:

1. What is your relation towards the SDGs? What do you work/focus with/on regarding these goals?
2. Can you tell me a bit about the work that is being done with the SDGs in Kerala?
 - a. Is there a focus on the SDGs?
 - b. Has there been implemented new initiatives in relation to the SDGs?
3. Are there meetings where issues regarding the SDGs are being discussed directly?
4. Can you tell me a bit about Kerala`s progress with the SDGs?
 - a. How are the statistics being reported and evaluated to show Kerala`s commitment and how Kerala performs?
 - b. How does the state work to provide information about the state performance?
5. According to statistics and statements given by United Nation and NITI Aayog, Kerala is doing well with gender equality and is one of the front runners in India to achieve this goal by 2030. What is your opinion on this statement?
 - a. Who gets included in these statistics? How do they measure it?
6. Which goals are the state focusing on? How do they choose?
 - a. If not focusing on SDG 5: Are there any reason for not focusing on SDG 5? Why?
 - b. If they are focusing on this goal: What is the reason for focusing on this goal?
7. In SDG 5, men are not mentioned directly in the goal. What do you think is the reason for this?
 - a. Would it be necessary to have a goal that also focus directly on men?
8. Why do you think Kerala is one of the front runners in India to achieve gender equality?
9. What do you think international goals like SDGs do for development in India in general, and in Kerala in particular?
 - a. Is it necessary to have such goals?

**Do you have any reports, articles, webpages you recommend me to look into?*

**Is there anyone you think I should talk to?*

Appendix D: Agree/Disagree Form given out in the Village

I am a:

Woman

Man

Age _____

Tell me if you agree or disagree with these statements:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Most men are better suited emotionally for politics than women.		
Men make better political leaders than women do.		
Women are more suitable for taking care of the family than men.		
Men and women take equally much responsibility for the home and children.		
Men should take as much responsibility as women for the home and children.		
It is more important for a wife to help her husband's career than to have one herself.		
Culturally women and men have different roles in the society.		
Gender inequality is a concern for men in Kerala.		
Gender inequality is a concern for women in Kerala.		
Women have equal rights and opportunities as men in Kerala.		
Gender equality (meaning that all genders are equal) has already been achieved for the most part in Kerala.		
Men has the responsibility for the economic situation in the household		

Comments on what Gender Equality mean for you:

Would you like to participate in the research project

“Gender equality in Kerala within the framework of UNs Sustainable Development Goals”

This is a question for you to participate in a research project where the purpose is to understand gender equality in Kerala. In this letter I will provide you with information about the goals of the project and what participation will mean for you.

Purpose of research project

This research project is being conducted to gather information for my master thesis and will be used for this purpose only.

The research project seeks to understand gender equality within the framework of *United Nation`s (UN) Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5)*, with a focus on men`s attitudes towards women and gender equality. It seeks to analyse SDG 5, and to what extent the goal include both woman and men, and their attitudes towards each other. By using a case-study on one of the front runners in India to achieve SDG5 by 2030, this research project seeks to provide an understanding on SDG5 and its performance in Kerala.

Who are responsible for this research project?

Department of International Studies and Interpreting, Faculty of Education and International Studies at Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway.

What does it mean for you to participate?

If you choose to participate in this research project, it means that you will be interviewed with questions about gender equality. The questions will include some personal aspects, and it is up to you if you want to answer them or not. The answers given by you will help my research in an understanding of how gender equality is experienced in Kerala. The interview will last for approximately 30 – 45 minutes.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may at any time withdraw your consent without giving any reason. All information about you will be anonymized. It will have no negative consequences for you if you do not want to participate or later choose to withdraw.

Your privacy

The information gathered will only be used as data for my master thesis. Your information will be treated confidentially and in accordance with the Privacy Policy.

- By participating in this research project, you are ensured anonymity and your name will not be used. Since the aspect of gender is important in this study your gender will be mentioned.
- You will not be recognized in the master thesis. The information you give will be anonymized.
- The master thesis will be read by my supervisor during the project period.
- The information given by you will be registered by written notes and transcribed on a computer after the interview. The information will be secured on a computer that Oslo Metropolitan University has approved. Any personal identifying information will be anonymized when the interview is being transcribed.

What happens to your information when the research project is finished?

The project is scheduled to end in May 2020. When the research is finished, all the information given by you will be anonymized and you will not be recognized in the master thesis. Any personal identifying information will be deleted when the purpose of the project is achieved.

Your rights

As long as you can be identified in the data material, you have the right to:

- have insight into which personal information is registered about you,
- correct personal information about yourself,
- get personal information written about you deleted,
- get a copy of the personal data that will be used from your interview,
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or the Data Inspectorate in Norway about the processing of your personal data.

What gives me the right to process personal information about you?

I will process information about you based on your consent.

On behalf of Oslo Metropolitan University, NSD - Norwegian Center for Research Data AS has considered that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with the privacy regulations.

Where can I find out more?

If you have any questions about the study, or wish to use your rights, please contact one of the persons below:

- The interviewer and student Ingunn Haaberg on email: **ingunn_haaberg@hotmail.com**
- The supervisor and the person in charge of this research project, Berit Helene Vandsemb on email: **beritv@oslomet.no**
- Department of International Studies and Interpreting, Faculty of Education and International Studies, on phone: +47 67 23 50 00

- Data Protection Officer at Oslo Metropolitan University, on email: **personvernombud@oslomet.no**
- NSD – *Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS (Norwegian Center for Research Data AS)*, on email (**personverntjenester@nsd.no**) or phone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Best Regards,

Ingunn Haaberg (*Student*)

Your Consent

I have received and understood information about the project *Gender equality in Kerala within the framework of UNs Sustainable Development Goals* and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I agree to:

- Participate in the research project

I agree that my information is processed until the project is completed, approximately in May 2020.

(Signature, date)

Appendix F: India`s national framework of SDG 5

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	
Nodal department: Social Justice	
Target	Proposed national indicator
5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere	5.1.1 Rate of crimes against women per every 1,00,000 female population
	5.1.2 Proportion of women subjected to dowry related offences to total crime against women
	5.1.3 Sex Ratio at Birth
	5.1.4 Whether or not legal framework are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex.
5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation	5.2.1 Proportion of crime against women to total crime reported in the country during the calendar year
	5.2.2 Proportion of sexual crimes against women to total crime against women during the calendar year
	5.2.3 Proportion of cruelty/ physical violence on women by husband or his relative to total crime against women during the calendar year
	5.2.4 Proportion of sexual crime against girl children to total crime against children during the calendar year
	5.2.5 Proportion of trafficking of girl children to total children trafficked during the calendar year
	5.2.6 Percentage of currently partnered girls and women aged 15-49 years who have experienced physical and / or sexual violence by their current intimate partner in the last 12 months. (Modified Indicator: Percentage of Ever Married Women Age 15-49 Years Who Have Ever Experienced Physical or Sexual Violence committed by their Husband)
	5.2.7 Child Sex Ratio (0-6 Years)
5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital Mutilation	5.3.1 Proportion of cases reported under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (early marriage of children below 18 years of age) to total crime against children.

	5.3.2	Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 18. (Modified Indicator: Percentage of women aged 20-24 years who were married by exact age 18 years)	
5.4	Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate	5.4.1	Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work.
5.5	Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life	5.5.1	Proportion of seats held by women in national Parliament, State Legislation and Local Self Government
		5.5.2	Number of women in Board of listed companies. (Modified Indicator : Proportion of women in managerial positions including women in Board of Director, in listed companies (per 1000 persons))
5.6	Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences	5.6.1	Percentage of currently married women (15-49 years) who use any modern family planning methods
		5.6.2	Unmet need for family planning for currently married women aged 15-49 years
		5.6.3	Proportion of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV / AIDS. (Modified Indicator: Percentage of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS)
5.a	Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws	5.a.1	Operational land holdings - gender wise
		5.a.2	Proportion of female agricultural labourers
		5.a.3	Wages of casual labourers (gender wise)
		5.a.4	Agricultural wages (gender wise)
		5.a.5	Exclusive women SHGs in Bank linked SHGs
		5.a.6	Percentage of adult having an account at a formal financial institution
		5.a.7	Percentage of women having an account at a formal financial institution
		5.a.8	Number of borrowers per 1,00,000 adults (Male & Female - wise)
5.b	Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women	5.b.1	Percentage of women employed in IT and ITeS industry

<p>5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels</p>	<p>5.c.1 Number of Central Ministries and States having Gender Budget Cells (GBCs)</p>
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Document received from Key informant 3. Originated from Government of India (2018). *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – National indicator framework.*

Appendix G: Kerala's progress with SDG 5 (2016, 2017 & 2018)

SDG 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Sl. No.	Indicator		Year			
			2016	2017	2018	
0	5.1.1	Rate of Crimes against women per every 1,00,000-female population	83.967	79.189	36.944	
1	5.1.2	Proportion of women subjected to dowry related offences to total crime against women	0.230	0.202	0.111	
2	5.1.3	Sex ratio at birth (SRB)	959	Not available	Not available	
3	5.2.1	Proportion of crime against women to total crime reported in the state during the calendar year	0.021	0.022	0.024	
4	5.2.2	Proportion of sexual crimes against women to total crime against women during the calendar year	0.411	0.496	0.536	
5	5.2.3	Proportion of cruelty/physical violence on women by husband or his relative to total crime against women during the calendar year	0.230	0.202	0.111	
6	5.2.4	Proportion of sexual crimes against children to total crime against children during the calendar year	0.737	0.775	0.817	
7	5.2.5	Proportion of trafficking of girl children to total children trafficked during the calendar year	0.592	0.330	0.275	
8	5.2.7	Child Sex Ratio (0-6 years)	964@	Not available	Not available	
9	5.3.1	Proportion of cases reported under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (early marriage of children below 18 years of age) to total crime against children	0.003	0.008	0.007	
10	5.3.2	Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 18	7.6	Not available	Not available	
11	5.5.1	Proportion of seats held by women in national Parliament, State legislation and Local Self Govt.	National Parliament	3.4%	3.4%	3.4%
			State legislation	5.7%	5.7%	5.7%
			Local Self Govt.	51.85%	51.85%	51.85%

12	5.6.1	Percentage of currently married women(15-49 years) who use modern methods of family planning		50.3	Not available	Not available
13	5.6.2	Unmet need for family planning for currently married women aged 15-49 years		13.7	Not available	Not available
14	5.6.3	Proportion of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge HIV/AIDS	Women	42.5%	Not available	Not available
			Men	51.8%	Not available	Not available
15	5.a.1	Operational land holdings-gender wise	Women	1742477	Not available	Not available
			Men	5777543	Not available	Not available
16	5.a.2	Percentage of female agricultural Workers among female workers		31.9	Not available	Not available
17	5.a.5	Exclusive women SHGs in bank linked SHGs		208947	271447	291772
18	5.c.1	Number of Central Ministries and States having Gender Budget Cells (GBCs)	Yes			

Received from Key informant 3. Data compiled by various departments publications originated from Government of Kerala (2016, 2017 & 2018)