

# AWARENESS ABOUT RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT AMONG COLLEGE TEACHERS

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## **Abstract :**

*The Right to Information Act allows citizens of India to access public information and thus to question the government and bureaucracy in many ways. RTI Act facilitates establishment of knowledgeable society by putting pressure on officials to ensure transparency and involvement of citizens in decision making. The implementation of the Act would lead to eradicate corruption to large extent and ensures the transparency between government and citizens. In this study an attempt has been made to explore the awakening amongst the college teachers regarding Right to Information Act. It was a curiosity to know about the knowledge and information of RTI Act among college teachers who are responsible to mould the future generation of India. Researcher has made an attempt to collect data from one hundred fifty college teachers of Himachal Pradesh. The study revealed that majority of college teachers are aware about of the Right to Information Act-2005.*

**IndexTerms:** Knowledge, Awareness, Transparency, College Teachers, RTI-Act

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The Right to Information Act allows citizens of India to access public information and thus to question the government and bureaucracy in many ways. RTI Act facilitates establishment of knowledgeable society by putting pressure on officials to ensure transparency and involvement of citizens in decision making. The implementation of the Act would lead to weeding out corruption to large extent and promoting interface between government and citizens (RTI Act 2005). The basic object of the Right to Information Act is to empower the citizens, promote transparency and accountability in the working of the Government, to eradicate corruption, and make our democracy work for the people in real sense. It goes without saying that an informed citizen is better equipped to keep necessary vigil on the instruments of governance and make the government more accountable to the governed. The Act is a big step toward making the citizens informed about the activities of the Government.

## **II NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE**

The RTI Act has empowered ordinary citizen to ask for even basic information which they could never get before. Hence, creating awareness is very important. The more awakened and informed the citizen, the more responsive or careful official will be. We being a responsible citizen of country cannot leave the fate of our programme and policies, in which we spend thousands of crores of rupees each year, to the care of the bureaucracy alone. The active participation of the people and of people's elected representative is a must for the success of all our development endeavours. Hence there exists a need to work on this study to find the awareness among the people. So, the persons chosen for this study were the teachers who are expected to be updated with awareness about happening around us. They are considered to be most influential in society to prepare the future generation. So, it was important to acknowledge the awareness amongst them about RTI Act. This study is an effort made to

know the actual condition of awareness about this powerful right provided by parliament of India among teachers to participate in good governance.

### III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the light of the above study an attempt has been made to review some of the studies pertaining to our research problem. Such an exercise may help us in understanding the related research problem.

Sahu and Dwivedi (2006) examined the need for effective implementation of RTI Act in India and noted that the organizations with high use of information technology had not faced many difficulties in the dissemination of public information according to the provisions of the act. The study concludes that Information Technology is a tool in effective implementation of RTI Act, 2005. The scholars suggested that Public Information Officers should work with dedication and responsibility in the realization of the goals of the information movement.

Goel (2007) in his study “Right to information and good governance” described certain aspects like relationship between good governance and right to information; limitations of this act; Organisational structures to implement right to information Act, 2005; implementation of this act; different reforms etc. He said that the benefits of modern science and technology can reach the people only if such services are properly planned and effectively implemented. An increase in the scientific nature of determination is an important factor in raising its efficiency.

Jain (2007) in his work “Right to information –Concept, Law, and Practice” described historical background of this Act like history of the (Mazdoor Kishan Shakti Sangathan) MKSS Movement. He also described main features of this Act; State-level laws; and about the role of government. He also described the necessity of right to information and position in other countries; what are the right to information (regulation of fee and cost) Rules, 2008; what are the various state acts pertaining to right to information; provisions of the official secret act, 1923 etc. This study attempts to outline the importance of the right to information, particularly in empowering ordinary citizens to combat state corruption and to play an active role in participating democracy.

Thote (2007) has found that the secondary school teachers are moderately aware about RTI and they are less concerned with its proper use. It is also observed that there is significant difference among male-female and urban & rural teachers regarding the awareness about Right to Information Act.

Mishra et. al. (2008) examined the relationship between right to information and privacy and noted that right to information permits citizens to gain information under government control but it also threatens the privacy of patients and research subjects, especially those in government institutions. The scholars further observed that it is important for clinicians, administrators, information officers, patients, and research subjects to understand that the RTI Act generally does not require or permit disclosure of personal health information to third parties. The scholars suggested that the authorities should understand the need for safeguarding patient privacy in modern society.

Bhattacharyya (2014) examined the right to information and its application in India and reported that RTI is an essential step in ensuring transparency and accountability in governmental systems and processes. The study revealed that right to information is a condition precedent to a good and transparent government in a developing nation like India. The scholar suggested that intellectuals and activists should sensitize the policy makers, officials and people about the best means of application of right to information which allows citizens to participate in the process of governance of the county.

In another study (Singh, 2015) has highlighted about the right to information which has been recognized as a fundamental human right, which upholds the inherent dignity of all human beings. The right to information forms the crucial underpinning of participatory democracy, it is essential to ensure accountability and good governance. This study was descriptive

survey in nature which was conducted on college and university teachers attending orientation and refresher course in UGC-HRDC, Shimla, and Himachal Pradesh from different states in India. The investigator has classified the sample on the basis of gender, years of service, faculty or discipline and type of institutions. In this study questionnaire was used as a tool to assess the awareness of teachers toward RTI-Act. Significance between means was worked out to know the awareness of teachers toward RTI-Act. The study revealed that up to maximum extent college and university teachers are aware about RTI Act-2005 but they do not know it completely. There is no significant difference found on the issue of awareness towards RTI Act-2005 among teachers on the bases of gender and years of service but on the bases of nature of job and faculty (Arts and Science) difference found was significant.

So, after reviewing the above literature investigator planned to conduct a study on Awareness among college teachers towards Right to Information Act-2005. Teachers have been chosen for study because investigator felt that they are the best reflectors and also assumed to belong to an aware section of the society. They are also responsible for disseminating awareness and information amongst the masses and their acceptability ratio is also high. Since teachers are the much aware section of society and can bring change by disseminating the information.

#### IV. OBJECTIVES

- 1) To acknowledge the awareness about Right to Information Act among teachers.
- 2) To know about the procedure involved to use Right to Information Act among teachers.
- 3) To acknowledge the opinion about Right to Information Act 2005 among college teachers.

#### V. METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

For the present study the efforts have been made to explore the awareness among the teachers regarding Right to Information Act 2005. The data is collected from different college teachers of Himachal Pradesh. For the research purpose a questionnaire was designed consisting of both open and closed ended questions. A small sample for the present study comprised of 150 teachers. Sample selected by random sampling method; which were available conveniently to fill up questionnaire. Responses from the teachers were collected and analysed for better understanding and interpretation.

##### Tools and Techniques of Data Collection

For the present study the data has been collected with the help of primary and secondary sources. The primary sources mainly consist of questionnaire designed for the purpose of ascertaining information on different aspects of the research problem. For this purpose Researcher used a self prepared Questionnaire to assess and analyze the knowledge and awareness about Right to Information Act among the college teachers. A structured questionnaire has been designed consisting of both open and closed ended questions. All these questions were related to the awareness about the RTI Act 2005. Responses from the teachers are collected and analysed for better understanding and interpretation.

##### Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Analysis of data was done by using percentage of responses given for knowledge and about procedure of RTI act and opinion was interpreted. Thus on the basis of collected data the following analysis and interpretation is as follows:

##### Age

Age is an important indicator which reflects the human behaviour. Different age groups have different experiences in their social life. Table: 1 shows the age-wise distribution of the respondents.

**Table 1**  
**Age-wise classification of the Respondents**

Sr.No.	Age group (in years)	Frequency	Percentage
1	Below 35	100	66.70
2	Above 35	50	33.30
	Total	150	100.00

The table 1 show that out of the total 150 respondents interviewed during the study, most of the respondents (66.7 percent) are in the age group below 35 years. However, only 33.3 percent respondents are more than 35 years age groups. Thus, it is found that majority of the respondents are in the age group below 35 years age.

### Gender

The gender is also an important indicator of the socio-demographic profile of study. It is an important characteristic which determines the difference between human beings. On the basis of gender, human beings are differentiated into two categories i.e. male and female.

Table 2 shows the gender wise classification of the respondents.

**Table: 2**  
**Gender wise Distribution of the Respondents**

Sr. No.	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
1	Male	58	38.67
2	Female	92	61.33
	Total	150	100.00

The data in table 2 shows that most of the respondents (61.33 percent) are females whereas 38.67 percent respondents are males. Thus, we found that majority of the respondents are females.

Further, with regard to the awareness about RTI Act-2005, it is found that cent-per cent of the respondents are aware about the RTI Act of the Parliament of India. They also know that the RTI Act is covered under Article 19(1) (a) of the fundamental right of the constitution of India. In addition to this the respondents have also been asked whether the respondents are aware about that the state (J.K) which is excluded from the purview of RTI Act. The following table shows the responses of the respondents in this regard.

**Table: 3**  
**Awareness about the state that Jammu and Kashmir is excluded from the Purview of RTI Act**

Sr. No.	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	130	86.67
2	No	20	13.33
	Total	150	100.00

The table 3 shows that majority of the respondents (86.67 Percent) know that the Jammu and Kashmir does not come under the purview of RTI of India Act. Whereas only 13.33 Percent of the respondents do not know that Jammu and Kashmir is excluded from the purview of RTI Act. This is due to the fact that J&K has its own constitution.

Further, with regard to the time period within which the public authority must reply the request of the citizen. It is found that majority of the respondents (86.67 percent) know that it is within 30 days and rest of the respondents (13.33 percent) do not

know the about the time period within which one has to supply the information. However with regard to enactment of the Act it is found that cent-percent of respondent knew the enactment date of the RTI act.

Further with regard to the time limit provision under RTI Act, if life or liberty of any person is involved in request in that case it should be supplied within 48 hours it is found that majority of the respondents (80.00 percent) responded that it should be within 48 hours and whereas only 20.00 percent were not sure about to answer this question. Further the respondents were asked about the documents that is required by the citizens under RTI Act in response to this cent percent respondents are aware about this. And also know about the application to which it is submitted, if the authority fails to provide the information within specified time limit, then the information supplied is at free of cost.

Further, with regard to awareness that the applicant need not to give reason or personal detail for requisition of information under RTI Act. The following table shows the responses of the respondents.

**Table: 4**

**Awareness about the Reason for Requisition of Information under RTI Act**

Sr .No.	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	100	66.70
2	No	50	33.30
	Total	150	100.00

Table 4 shows that majority of the respondents (66.7 Percent) are of the view they have the awareness that there is no need to give the personal detail or reason to seek information through RTI act. Whereas only 33.3 percent respondents are not aware about the reasons whether personal information or detail is required to elicit the information under RTI act. From this it is found that majority of the respondents are aware about that personal detail or information is not required in this regard.

Lastly a question was asked to the respondents whether they are interested to know more about the RTI act. The following table shows the responses of the respondents

**Table: 5**

**Interest of the Respondents about RTI Act**

Sr. No.	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	140	93.33
2	No	10	6.67
	Total	150	100.00

The table 5 shows that an overwhelming majority of the respondents (93.3 percent) are interested to know more about the RTI Act. However, only 6.67 respondents do not show much interest to gain more knowledge about RTI Act-2005. Thus, it is evident that majority of the respondents are interested to know more about the Right to Information act-2005

### Findings

Data collected through the tool of questionnaire is analyzed and conclusion drawn on the basis of interpretation made by using statistical tool percentage method.

- Most of the respondents (66.70 percent) are in the age group below 35 years.
- Most of the respondents (61.33 percent) are female respondents.

- With regard to Awareness of RTI Act-2005 cent-per cent of the respondents are very much aware about the RTI Act of the Parliament of India and they also know that it is covered under Article 19(1) (a) of the fundamental right of the constitution of India.
- Majority of the respondents (86.67 Percent) know that the Jammu and Kashmir is excluded from the purview of RTI Act-2005 of India.
- With regard to the time period within which the public authority must reply the request of the citizens majority of the respondents (86.67 percent) answered correctly that it is 30 days.
- With regard to time limit provided under RTI Act, if life or liberty of any person is involved in request it is found that majority of the respondents (80.00 percent) responded that it should be within 48 hours.
- It is found that majority of the respondents (66.70 Percent) are of the view that to elicit the information through RTI no reason or personal detail is required.
- Lastly, it is found that majority of the respondents (93.33 percent) are interested to know more about the RTI Act-2005.

## CONCLUSIONS

From the analyses of the data it is said that majority of respondents are aware about the Right to Information Act-2005. In this study most of the respondents are female teachers and all of them are aware about RTI Act. In this study it is revealed that majority of the respondents are aware of the Act and had a fairly good knowledge with the Act. The Right to information act work as an instrument to galvanise administrative processes, guide them to the purposeful path of correction, reform and improvement and thus build a relationship between the citizens and his government. It also enables the people to elicit information from the public authority, and brings transparency and accountability in the working of the government. The Right to information Act mandates that timely response be given to any citizens who ask for it. This study attempts to outline the significance of Right to Information, awareness and its social implications particularly among the teachers in empowering ordinary citizens to combat corruption and to play an important and active role between the government and citizens.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Though basic theoretical knowledge about RTI Act 2005 of teachers is good but still they are not aware about its legal procedure or use in detail of RTI Act. Hence, efforts must be done to provide information about this Act.
- Reliability regarding use of this Act to get information need to be increased to fulfil the objective of this Act.
- Understanding of legal provision and usability of this Act can be improved by seminars, group discussion of teachers in college and educational institutions.
- Lectures/seminars should also be imparted to the teachers and students by the legal experts.
- No doubt it is beneficial to the Public but it should be wisely used.

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