

Awareness Among College and University Teachers Toward Right to Information Act-2005

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Abstract

The right to information 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. The greater the access of the citizen to information, greater the responsiveness of government to community needs. The present study was descriptive survey in nature which was conducted on college and university teachers attending orientation and refresher course in UGC-HRDC, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh from different states in India. The investigator 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. Item wise analyses were done and mean scores were also calculated to test the significance difference. 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.

Key words

RTI-Act, UGC-HRDC, College and University Teachers.

I. Introduction

Accountability as well as transparency and information constitute two of the seven specific aspects of 'governance' identified by the 1992 World Bank document on Governance and Development in its quest for 'good governance'. Consequently, the citizen's right to information is increasingly being recognized as an important instrument to promote openness, transparency and accountability in public administration. The RTI Act, 2005 is a revolutionary legislation in the history of democratic India. The Act has the unprecedented potential to transform governance and bring in accountability and transparency in the government functioning. It is also an instrument to herald participatory governance where citizen's can become active participants in the governance process rather than being mute spectators with little or no potential of demanding accountability from public institutions. The national movement for people's right to information was initiated by social activists, journalists, lawyers, professionals, retired civil servants and scholars, in 1996 with the purposes of a national law facilitating the exercise of the fundamental right to information. In recent years, there has been an almost unstoppable global trend towards recognition of the right to information by countries, intergovernmental organizations, civil society and the people. Alternatively, the greater the restrictions that are placed on access, the greater the feelings of 'powerlessness' and 'alienation'. Without information, people cannot adequately exercise their rights as citizens or make informed choices.

In order to ensure greater and more effective access to information it was decided to repeal the freedom of information act 2002 and enact another law for providing effective framework. To achieve this objective right to information bill was introduced in the parliament and was passed by Lok Sabha on 11 may 2005 and by the Rajya Sabha on 12 may 2005. It received the assent on 15 June 2005. It came to be known as right to information Act-2005. This law empowered Indian citizens to seek information from public authorities thus making the government and its functionaries more accountable and responsible. Only the citizens of India are eligible to exercise this Act. This act does not cover Jammu and Kashmir

where J & K right to information Act is enforced.

II. Rationale of The Study

Review of literature shows that some studies are undertaken to know the awareness of teachers, present status of RTI and effect of awareness programme. 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. Sahu & Dwivedi (2008), Singh, et al. (2010) and Kumar (2011) and explained RTI is taken as the fundamental right, the objective of RTI act can be achieved when there are certain changes need to be done in the existing system of providing the information sought by the Act, Standing against corruption which has been a major anxiety for our country for decades has an answer potentially in the hands of RTI. Tiwari (2010) in his article "Right To Information: An important tool of social development, good governance and strong democracy" explains that RTI Act can be effective in informing crores of grassroots people whose development is flawed due to corruption. According to him the greatest challenge of today's India is the bad governance. Chitra & Neelamalar (2013) says that for past 5 years, usage of social networking sites has increased among youth. According to a latest poll, 22% of teenagers log in more than 10 times a day on to their favorite social media sites. Social networking sites discuss various topics that lead to social change by creating awareness on the topics it discuss. One of the topics is the RTI Act. According to Shekhar (2010) the recent communications technologies create and collect substantial records about individuals in the process of providing communications. These few reviews shows the different areas of research on RTI and some gaps to fill through further research like awareness of college/university teachers toward RTI.

RTI-act has proved to be a magic wand in our hands for good governance. But is it a success, although it has stormed all the organizations and offices. Everybody has become prudent. Still we find that at times some fake or irrelevant information is given

to the seeker, even the whistle blowers ask for irrelevant facts, the guilty are not penalized and no action is initiated against them. People are also not that much participative. Therefore we find that after so many years and with so much of the changes being introduced the act is not that effective as it should have been. It can be attributed to the lack of awareness amongst the masses and also due to some flaws existing in the act, which discourages the initiative on people's part. So keeping in mind the gaps found in review of literature and above discussion guided the investigator to select the problem "Awareness among teachers toward Right to Information Act-2005." Teachers have been chosen as targets because they are the best reflectors and also represent an aware section of the society. They are good disseminators of awareness and information amongst the masses plus their acceptability ratio is also high.

III. Objectives of The Study

- To know the awareness of teachers toward RTI-Act 2005.
- To study the differences in the level of awareness among people with respect to gender, year of service, nature of job and faculty.
- To know about opinions of the participants towards RTI Act.
- To make appraisal of the RTI Act and draw certain conclusions on the bases of the study.

IV. Hypothesis

- There is no significant difference in mean scores of awareness of RTI act of male and female teachers.
- There is no significant difference in mean scores of awareness of RTI of teachers having less than 5 years' service and more than 5 years services
- There is no significant difference in mean scores of awareness of RTI act of teachers working in Govt. and Semi Govt. sector.
- There is no significant difference in mean scores of awareness of RTI act of teachers from Arts and Science faculty.

V. Method and Procedure

The study was descriptive survey in nature which was conducted on university teachers attending orientation and refresher course in University Grants Commission-Human Resource Development Centre (UGC-HRDC), Shimla, Himachal Pradesh from different

states in India. The investigator classified the sample on the basis of gender (male and female), year of service (less than 5 years and more than 5 years), faculty (arts and science) and type of institution (Govt. and Semi Govt.). In the 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. All the teachers were administered questionnaire on awareness of teachers toward RTI-Act (developed by the investigators). Item wise Analysis was done and mean scores were also calculated to test the significance difference.

A. Sample

In the present study, participants from 21 states and 34 disciplines attending the orientation and refresher course (both under UGC-HRDC, Shimla) in the month of June and July 2015 formed the sample for the study. The size of sample was 70 of college and university teachers, out of these 70 teachers 46 were Male and 24 were female. Purposive sampling was done.

B. Tool

Questionnaire on awareness of teachers toward RTI-Act has been constructed to measure the awareness of teachers toward RTI-Act by the researchers. From available sources a short questionnaire containing 22 items were prepared. Items of the test include questions having Yes and No answer type questions. Each participant will give any one response. One (1) mark is given for the Yes response and zero (0) mark is given for No response on each item. In this way, the total score of the teacher's awareness toward RTI-Act is taken-out.

VI. Statistical Techniques Used

The techniques used for analyzing the collected data in the present study were both descriptive and statistical like- measures of Central tendency, Percentage and t-ratio.

VII. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The collected data is meaningless unless analyzed and interpreted properly so as to arrive at significant conclusions. Analysis of data means to bring forth, the latent meaning from the tangled mass of confusion, by studying tabulated material to determine the facts. For this research work data was analyzed by using percentage (%) analysis.

Table 1 : Percentage of Yes and No responses on each item of the questionnaire on RTI-Act awareness

Q. No./ Response	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9a	9b	9c	9d	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
YES	70	56	65	37	44	42	33	47	22	13	22	17	22	37	48	28	14	52	65	56
%	100	80	93	53	63	60	47	67	31	19	31	24	31	53	69	40	20	74	93	80
NO	00	14	5	23	26	28	37	23	48	57	48	53	48	33	22	42	56	18	05	14
%	00	20	07	47	37	40	53	33	69	81	69	76	69	47	31	60	80	26	07	20

Table 01 shows the response of all the teachers on questionnaire related to awareness of teachers toward RTI Act -2005. All responses are shown also in percentage (%). All findings of above table are explained in conclusion.

Table 2 : Group wise mean scores, S.D., N and t-value of mean scores of teachers' awareness toward RTI-Act 2005 among Male and Female

Gender	N	Mean	S.D.	S.E _D	t-value	Remarks
Male	46	10.98	3.74	1.03	.343	Not significant even at .05 level of significance
Female	24	11.33	4.69			

From table 02, it is evident that the mean scores of male and female students are 10.98 and 11.33 respectively. Table shows that SD for male and female students is 3.74 and 4.69 respectively. Female students mean score is higher than male students. The value of t-test is .343, which is not significant even at 0.05 level. It indicates that the mean scores of awareness of RTI-Act 2005 of male and female groups do not differ significantly. Hence hypothesis (1) stating "There is no significant difference in mean scores of awareness of RTI among male and female Teachers" stands accepted.

Table 3 : Group wise mean scores, S.D., N and t-value of mean scores of teachers' awareness toward RTI-Act 2005 experience of less than 5 years and more than 5 years of service

Year of service	N	Mean	S.D.	S.E _D	t-value	Remarks
Less than 5 Years	23	12.00	4.85	1.05	1.24	Not significant even at .05 level of significance
More than 5 Years	45	10.69	3.73			

From table 03 is evident that the mean scores of teachers less than 5 years and more than 5 years' service are 12.00 and 10.69 respectively. Table shows that SD for teachers less than 5 years and more than 5 years' of service is 4.85 and 3.73 respectively. Teachers less than 5 years of service have higher mean score than Teachers having more than 5 years of service. The value of t-test is 1.24, which is not significant even at 0.05 level. It may therefore be concluded that teachers in both groups were equal on test scores of teachers' awareness toward RTI-Act 2005 among Male and Female. Hence hypothesis (2) stating "There is no significant difference in mean scores of awareness of RTI of teachers having less than 5 years' service and more than 5 years services" stands accepted.

Table 4 : Group wise mean scores, S.D., N and t-value of mean scores of awareness toward RTI-Act 2005 of teachers' working in Govt. and Semi Govt. institutions

Nature of Job	N	Mean	S.D.	S.E _D	t-value	Remarks
Govt.	44	11.75	3.90	1.07	2.16*	significant at .05 level of significance
Semi Govt.	21	9.43	4.31			

From table 04, it is evident that the mean scores of teachers working in Govt. institutions and Semi-govt. institutions are 11.75 and 9.43 respectively. Table shows that SD for teachers less than 5 years and more than 5 years' of service is 3.90 and 4.31 respectively. Teachers working in Govt. institutions have higher mean score than teachers working Semi-Govt. institutions. The value of t-test is 2.16, which is significant at 0.05 level. It indicates that the mean scores of teachers working in Govt. institutions and teachers working in Semi-Govt. institutions differ significantly. Hence hypothesis (3) stating "There is no significant difference in mean scores of awareness of RTI act of teachers working in Govt. and Semi-Govt. sector" is rejected.

Table 5 : Group wise mean scores, S.D., N and t-value of mean scores of awareness toward RTI-Act 2005 of teachers' from Arts and Science streams

Faculty	N	Mean	S.D.	S.E _D	t-value	Remarks
Arts	27	12.33	3.47	1.00	2.39*	significant at .05 level of significance
Science	38	9.92	4.34			

From table 05 is evident that the mean scores of teachers from Arts and Science faculty are 12.33 and 9.92 respectively. Table shows that SD for teachers from Arts and Science faculty is 3.47 and 4.34 respectively. Teachers from Arts faculty have higher mean score than teachers from Science faculty. The value of t-test is 2.16, which is significant at 0.05 level. Hence hypothesis (4) stating "There is no significant difference in mean scores of awareness of RTI act of teachers from Arts and Science faculty" was rejected.

VIII. Conclusion:

To check the awareness of teachers teaching in various colleges and universities this descriptive- survey study was conducted on sample of 70 teachers attending orientation programme and refresher course in UGC-HRDC, Shimla in the month of June-July 2015. The followings are the conclusions of the present study:

- All teachers are well aware about the RTI-Act 2005 by name passed by the Indian Parliament.
- Majority of the teachers are aware about issues or areas they can use the RTI Act for oneself or family.
- Majority think RTI is a major instrument which will bring

- about a social change.
- Almost half of the teachers are saying they are not aware about any information from prominent display in all Government offices spreading awareness about the RTI.
- Large number of teachers knows the duties of Public Information Officer and other appellate authorities.
- Large number of teachers has reported that they have read the important provisions of the RTI Act.
- More than half of the teachers are saying they do not know the websites where they can file RTI application online.
- Large number of teachers knows whom the application is to be addressed and where to submit it.
- Majority of teachers have not ever tried to seek information Under RTI Act.
- Majority of teachers have said they have not cited any reason for asking the desired information.
- Majority of teachers said they have not received the information from the official concerned, the answer may be due to the reason they have not ever tried to get info under RTI.
- Majority of teachers have said faced no problems in getting the information.
- Majority of teachers have said they do not know any exceptions to get information under RTI Act.
- More than half of teachers have said they do know provision of voluntary disclosure of maximum information on National wide network for any public authority.
- Majority of teachers have said they are aware that there is no fee for citizens who are below the poverty line to get information under RTI Act.
- Majority of the teachers have said they do not know what kind of information they can get from Private bodies under RTI Act.
- Majority of the teachers have said they do not know about any provision/ security for whistle blowers.
- Majority of the teachers have said they are willing to actively participate in the activities of organizations involved in spreading the information on RTI.
- Almost all of the teachers have said they think that RTI is a major instrument to bring transparency in the administrative system.
- Majority of the teachers want political parties to be included in the Public authorities.
- The awareness level of RTI Act-2005 among male and female teachers is quite equal.
- The awareness level of RTI Act-2005 among teachers having less than 5 years' service and more than 5 years services is quite equal.
- The awareness level of RTI Act-2005 of teachers working in Govt. sector is higher than Semi Govt. sector.
- The awareness level of RTI Act-2005 of teachers from arts faculty is higher than Science faculty.

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