

AWARENESS OF RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT (2005) AMONG LIS PROFESSIONALS AND STUDENTS IN TAMIL NADU

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ABSTRACT

A citizen has a right to seek such information from a public authority which is held by the public authority or which is held under its control. This right includes inspection of work, documents and records; taking notes, extracts or certified copies of documents or records; and taking certified samples of material held by the public authority or held under the control of the public authority. It is important to note that only such information can be supplied under the Act which already exists and is held by the public authority or held under the control of the public authority. The study shows that out of the total 132 Respondents 42 were M.L.I.Sc., 62 were M.Phil Scholar and 28 were Ph.D Scholar. When we expressed in the form of percentage, it is 32 percent, 47 percent and 21 percent respectively. Majority of the population was M.Phil Scholar followed by post graduate group. Ph.D Scholar respondents were less in number. The study reveals that 42 respondents i.e. 32 percent were responded that the information was provided in the format they wanted. Also, 84 respondents i.e. 64 percent of the total Respondents said that they were not provided the information in the format as they had sought. Total 6 respondents fall under the category of don't know about as they never applied to seek information under the Right to Information Act.

Keywords: Right to Information Act (RTI), LIS Professionals, Corruption, Government, Publics.

INTRODUCTION

Information is any material in any form. It includes records, documents, memos, e-mails, opinions, advices, press releases, circulars, orders, logbooks, contracts, reports, papers, samples, models, data material held in any electronic form. It also includes information relating to any private body which can be accessed by the public authority under any law for the time being in force. A “public authority” is any authority or body or institution of self government established or constituted by or under the Constitution; or by any other law made by the Parliament or a State Legislature; or by notification issued or order made by the Central Government or a State Government. The bodies owned, controlled or substantially financed by

the Central Government or a State Government and non-Government organisations substantially financed by the Central Government or a State Government also fall within the definition of public authority. The financing of the body or the NGO by the Government may be direct or indirect.

The basic object of the Right to Information Act is to empower the citizens, promote transparency and accountability in the working of the Government, contain corruption, and make our democracy work for the people in real sense. It goes without saying that an informed citizen is better equipped to keep necessary vigil on the instruments of governance and make the government more accountable to the governed. The Act is a big step towards making the citizens informed about the activities of the Government.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Thite Dinesh informs that the increase in number of Right to Information applications made to the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) has slowed down and civic officials attribute the trend to proactive disclosure of information by the PMC. Due to measures like Right to Information library where all important documents of the PMC are made available, so that people can easily access them. Also, the initiative of Open Day by which citizens can access PMC documents without prior notice has helped citizens. The RTI library of the PMC inaugurated by noted RTI activist, Arvind Kejriwal, is an open library accessible to anybody. As per Thite Dinesh in 2008, there were 308 first appeals in the PMC and the number increased to 486 in 2009. The number of first appeals increased to 553 in 2010. But in 2011, the number declined to 403.

Verma R. K. has given an insight into the practical aspects of the Right to Information Law commenting precisely on the needs of the Public Information Officer and the information seeker alike. The book has been written in a simple and concise manner. The book is written with an aim to create awareness amongst the citizens and to provide immense assistance to the various Public Information Officers and Appellate Authorities of the different public authorities. The book is also useful to private organizations to ascertain their liabilities under the act and the applicability to them.

Sabnis Vivek gives information on how Anna Hazare as social activist waits for the government to meet his demand for the passage of the Jan Lokpal bill of parliament who is also working towards spreading awareness in the country on the proposed legislation that will arm an ombudsman with extensive powers to check corruption. The Bhrashtachar Virodhi Jan Aandolan Trust (BVJAT) coordinator Shankar Tadakhe said Hazare was skeptical about the Jan Lokpal bill getting approved and further commented that the first RTI bill was approved in 2000 but was opposed by Hazare himself because it did not cover his demands. If the same thing happens with Jan Lokpal Bill, he may even restart his nationwide agitation.

Aggarwal Mayank informs that while some of its senior ministers rue over the 'misuse' of RTI, the centre has decided to take the success of the transparency law to the common man's living room. A television serial, based on the common man's success stories achieved through RTI, is being planned in co-ordination with Doordarshan. The show is being planned by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), the centre's nodal department for handling RTI related matters. A senior DoPT official told DNA that no doubt there are a few cases of misuse of RTIs. But when compared to the success the RTI has achieved in the last six years, the former stands

nowhere. There are innumerable stories where use of RTI has solved the common man's problems and that the RTI has ushered in a new era of transparency in the last six years. However, it has still not reached the people living in the most distant or rural areas. The official added that they are already using advertisements on radio and television to sensitize people about the RTI Act. He further said that this serial would be over and above all those efforts, as half minute advertisements won't be sufficient in creating awareness. It would also educate people about the methods of using the RTI Act.

Chaudhari Sachin has contributed an article on 'Right to Information - slow progress' an article stating the slow progress of right to information in India, and how people slowly understand the importance of Right to Information. So in spite of the slow progress accorded to the Right to Information legislation, empowerment and awareness campaign have made substantial gains in recent years. There is a need to further popularize this Act so that maximum number of people is benefited.

Mishra Sudhansu has presented research papers which give the scope, different provisions, strengths and shortfalls of the RTI Act. The book also gives valuable suggestions to make the common man partner in the development efforts for rural India. It brings out the origin and history of right to information necessary to understand the requirement for a community and analyses the movements for right to information in India. An attempt has been made to trace the origin and brief history of Right to Information Act and to critically analyze its impact on Indian democracy. Considering the importance of RTI Act for sustainable rural development, many social scientists drawn from different faculties have presented their well-considered views on different primary data for investigation and action research, this book portrays the various aspects of RTI Act and its vital role in accentuating rural economy.

Acharya N. K. has given comments on right to information with examples of query and answers to the query. The book also gives explanations about the obligations on the part of public authorities and the procedure of disposal of request for information. There are examples on information asked and the information provided under the Act provisions. It brings out the origin and history of right to information necessary to understand the requirement for a community and analyses movements for right to information in India. An attempt has been made to trace the origin and brief history of Right to Information Act and to critically analyze its impact on Indian democracy. According to the author all the critics who are otherwise prone to critics adversely any new enactment, have welcomed it. None have expressed any reservations or suggested any amendments of importance. The fact that some of the critics wanted that the Official Secrets Act should not have been in the Act, are only making mere suggestions which they know are not possible in the context of the needs of free, independent and efficient administration.

OBJECTIVES

The following objectives are evolved for the purpose of the present study:

1. To know the awareness of Right to Information Act among LIS professionals and students.
2. To study the respondents' satisfaction of information in the format provided under RTI Act, 2005.

3. To study the respondents' satisfaction and Problems in getting the information's under RTI, 2005.
4. To know the respondents' RTI application filing process.
5. To examine the respondents' purpose of using Right to Information Act.
6. To know the impact of Right to Information Act among Common men.
7. To know the RTI has been Successful in Controlling Corruption in India.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher has employed a well structured questionnaire for collecting the data from the LIS professionals. The questionnaire has been prepared in such a way that the respondents could easily understand the items. A website was created for the research questionnaire to sent individual e-mail and link with LIS Forum. The questionnaire will be made available in online also to get quick response. Necessary provision will be made in the website to elicit the views, observations and suggestions of the experts through e-mail. The data will be organized on the basis of age, gender, qualification, occupation and experience. During May 2013 to July 2013, the investigator could collect questionnaires around 132 LIS professionals.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1: Gender wise Response of Respondents

Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	94	71
Female	38	29
TOTAL	132	100

The expected response of 150 out of which 132 respondents were collected. The total 132 respondents where the Male respondents responded 94 and Female were in 38. To represent in Table 1, these numbers to be convert in the form of percentage, almost 71% of Male and 29% of Female. On this view, the awareness of ICT resources is highly significant in male as compared to Female.

Table 2: Age wise Respondents response

AGE	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
<25	22	17
26-40	70	53
41-50	32	24
>50	8	6
TOTAL	132	100

The age of the respondents is grouped under different levels as shown in Table 2. This Categorization is used to know the age group where the awareness level about RTI Act is more as compared to the other age groups. To make easier, the ages are categorized in to four groups such as, below 25, 26-40, 41-50, and above 50. The table 2 explains that the age group of 26-40 responded almost half of the respondents as compared to the other. This show the use of ICT resources is more in the age group of 26-40. Out of the total 132 respondents who responded to age column, 22 respondents i.e. 17 percent were below the age of 25, 70 respondents i.e. 53 percent were from the age group 26-40, 32 respondents i.e. 24 percent were from the age group 41-50, 8 respondents i.e. 6 percent were from the age group of above 50. Majority of respondents were from the age group 26-40 followed by the age group 41-50. Only a few respondents responded in the age group of above 50.

Table 3: Respondents Qualification

Qualification	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
M.L.I.Sc	42	32
M.Phil	62	47
Ph.D	28	21
TOTAL	132	100

We want to get information on qualification of respondents. This information is useful to know the qualification group where awareness level or experience about RTI Act is more as compared to the other qualification groups. To make better easier, the qualification is divided into three groups, viz., M.L.I.Sc, M.Phil, and Ph.D respectively. Under the qualification wise classification of respondents in the above Table 4.3, it is seen that out of the total 132 Respondents 42 were M.L.I.Sc., 62 were M.Phil Scholar and 28 were Ph.D Scholar. When we expressed in the form of percentage, it is 32 percent, 47 percent and 21 percent respectively. Majority of the population was M.Phil Scholar followed by post graduate group. Ph.D Scholar respondents were less in number.

Table 4: LIS Professionals and Students Studied in Undergraduate

Under graduates	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Arts	48	36
Science	42	32
Commerce	28	21
Management	8	6
Law	4	3
Information Technology	2	2
TOTAL	132	100

From the above Table 4 revealed that the Faculty wise respondents where the majority of total 36 percent occupy the faculty of Arts and followed by 32 percent of faculty of Arts have responded.

To point out of the total sample 132, 28 were Commerce, 8 were Management and 4 were Law. When we expressed in the form of percentage, it is 21 percent, 6 percent and 3 percent respectively.

Table 4.5: Service wise Respondents Response

Years in service	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
<5	24	18
6-10	22	17
11-15	26	20
16-20	16	12
>20	8	6
Not Applicable	36	27
TOTAL	132	100

The need of researcher wants to gather information on work experience of respondents. This information is added advantage to know the work experience that affects the awareness about RTI Act. In fact, highly experienced people are in a good position and to judge the right performance and implementation of any act. According to this study, the including of this table may take good impact.

The classification of respondents in the above table suggest that out of 150 Respondents, 132 Respondents responded out of which 24 Respondents i.e. 18 percent had work experience less than 5 years. 22 Respondents i.e. 17 percent had work experience from 6-10 years and 26 Respondents i.e. 20 percent had work experience from 11-15 years. 16 Respondents i.e. 12 percent had work experience from 16-20 years and 8 Respondents i.e. only 6 percent had work experience from above 20 years. 36 Respondents i.e. about 27 percent of the respondents are students did not respond to the work experience column as it is not applicable to them.

Table 6: Respondents Occupation wise Classification

Occupation	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Students	22	17
Scholars	18	14
Non-Teaching Staff's	46	35
Teaching Staff's	46	35
TOTAL	132	100

This information is tells about to know the occupation where the general awareness level about RTI Act is more as compared to the other occupations. Thus, the occupation is divided into four groups, viz., Students, Scholars, Non-Teaching Staff's, and finally Teaching Staff's. The

classification of occupation wise respondents with their frequency in number and percentage form is given in the Table 6.

When the respondents were classified on the basis of occupation it was found that out of 132 Respondents, 22 Respondents i.e. 17 percent were students, 18 Respondents i.e. 14 percent were doing as Scholars, 46 Respondents i.e. 35 percent were Non-Teaching Staff's including Librarian, Deputy Librarian, Asst. Librarian, Library Assistant, 46 Respondents i.e. 35 percent were Teaching Staff. Majority of the respondents were Teaching staff's and Non-Teaching staff's are almost same in this Category.

Table 7: Awareness of Right to Information Act among LIS Professionals and Students

Awareness of RTI	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	116	88
NO	12	9
Don't Know	4	3
TOTAL	132	100

Data depicted in the Table 7 has shown that there is a Perfect variation in the level of awareness among Respondents. 88 percent of the total Response is aware of the Right to Information Act, 2005 where as 9 percent of the Respondents are unaware of it. This indicates that level of awareness among a majority of people is significantly high but 3 percent of the respondents do not know about the name of this Act.

Table 8: Gender wise Awareness about Right to Information Act, 2005

Responses	GENDER		TOTAL (%)
	MALE	FEMALE	
YES	84	32	116 (88)
NO	10	6	16 (12)
TOTAL	94	38	132 (100)

Table 8 shows that 88 percent of the population are aware of the Right to Information Act. Only 12 percent of the populations are not aware of the RTI Act. By Gender wise categorization, out of 116 respondents 84 were male and female were in 32 i.e. 72 percent were male and 28 percent in female. This indicates that a low level awareness among female respondents and High level awareness among male respondents.

Table 9: Age wise Respondents Applied to Seek Information under Right to Information Act, 2005.

Responses	AGE GROUP				TOTAL (%)
	<25	25-40	41-50	>50	
Yes	0	24	14	0	38 (29)
No	18	44	18	8	88 (67)

Don't Know	4	2	0	0	6 (5)
TOTAL	22	70	32	8	132 (100)

Another essential question that was set to the Respondents whether they had anytime applied to seek information under RTI Act. The responses of respondents are represented in the following Table 4.9.

To find the awareness among on which age group contribute the most part to apply to seek information. Responses of people related to the age group as indicated in the above table and graph demonstrate that there is no one applied to seek information among the age group of below 25 and the age above 50 but they are aware of the Right to information act. The age group 25-40 contribute the most part and followed by 41-50 are applied to seek information under RTI Act whereas the total of 88 respondents i.e. 67 percent have never applied to seek information under RTI Act. Thus it can be said that only as few of respondents have applied to seek information under RTI Act. The 6 respondents are all known about the RTI but they don't want to apply to seek information.

Table 10: Awareness of Important Provisions of the RTI Act (2005), among LIS Professionals and Students.

Occupation	No. of Respondents			Total
	Yes	No	Don't Know	
Students	12	10	0	22
Scholars	12	6	0	18
Professionals	72	12	8	92
TOTAL (%)	96 (73)	28 (21)	8 (6)	132 (100)

To find the respondents are aware of the important provisions of the RTI Act like application fees, minimum period for disclosure of information, appeal to higher authority, etc. According to this finding, the respondents were asked whether they were aware of the important provisions of the RTI Act. The responses of respondents are represented in the Table 4.10 and its figure. The responses of the Respondents indicate that 12 respondents were Students and 12 respondents were Scholars are aware of the important provisions of the RTI Act. Also the major contribution of 72 respondents was Professionals are aware of it. Around 36 respondents are not aware of it. According to this depicted table, we said that majority of the respondents are professionals were aware of the important provisions of the RTI Act.

Table 11 The Respondents Satisfaction of Information in the format has been provided under Right to Information Act, 2005.

Satisfaction of Information has been provided	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Satisfied	42	32
Not satisfied	84	64
Don't Know	6	5

TOTAL	132	100
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Table 11 shows that 42 respondents i.e. 32 percent were responded that the information was provided in the format they wanted. Also, 84 respondents i.e. 64 percent of the total Respondents said that they were not provided the information in the format as they had sought. Total 6 respondents fall under the category of don't know about as they never applied to seek information under the Right to Information Act.

Table 12: Use of standardized format by officers in supply of information

Responses	Studied in Under Graduate			Total (%)
	Arts	Science	Commerce & Management	
Satisfied	18	8	12	38 (29)
Not satisfied	31	35	22	88 (66)
Don't Know	3	1	2	6 (5)
TOTAL	52	44	36	132

“Organisations may keep the information in manual records or may have a systematic information system where the information may be arranged as required”. To find whether such use of information technology was made while providing the information. Thus the researcher asked the question “whether the official has used standardized computer generated format for providing the information which was sought for”. The responses of Respondents are represented in the following Table 12. The responses of respondents for the question asked above. It shows 38 respondents i.e. 29 percent of the total respondents, the officials used standardised computer generated format for providing the information. Also 88 respondents i.e. 66 percent of the total respondents, the officials did not use the standardised computer generated format. It is observed that less number of respondents is provided with the information in standardised computer generated format. Total 6 respondents drop under the category of Not Applicable as they never applied to seek information under the RTI Act.

Table 13: Facing Problems by LIS Professionals and Students in getting the information's under RTI, 2005.

Occupation	Responses			TOTAL
	Yes	No	Don't Know	
Students	6	8	8	22
Scholars	2	12	4	18
Professionals	20	68	4	92
TOTAL (%)	28 (21)	88(67)	16(12)	132

Much trouble may be encountered by the people to seek information under the RTI Act like delay

in receiving the information, supply of incomplete or wrong information, denial of information, etc. Hence, we find to know whether the respondents faced similar problems in getting the information, they were asked the question “Did you face any problems in getting the information?” The Occupation wise responses of respondents are demonstrating in the following Table 13.

The responses of the respondent are pointed out in the above Table 4.15 and its figure. The Total 28 respondents faced some sort of problem in getting the information under the RTI Act and 88 respondents did not face any such problem. The remaining 16 respondents, fall under either never applied to seek information nor they don't care about any such problems.

Table 14: The Respondents know about the RTI Application Filing Process

About RTI Filing Process	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Application Format	64	34
Public Information Officer	52	28
Fee – General and Below – Poverty-line	20	11
Time Period	20	11
Appellate Authorities	24	13
Don't Know	8	3

Note: Total Sample exceeds the required size since the questions are multiple choices.

From the above Table 14 and followed by Figure, to know about the respondents' view of RTI filing process 47 percent of the respondents came to know about RTI Act from the media like television, radio, newspaper, and internet.

Table 15: Impact of Right to Information Act among Common men

Impact	No. of Respondents	Percentage
A Tool in Hand	40	29
Opportunity to participate in Government processes	30	21
Reduced Corruption	20	14
All the Above	50	36

Note: Total Sample exceeds the required size since the questions are multiple choices.

From the above Table 15 we can find the impact of Right to information act has created among common men. Almost 36 percent of the total respondents revealed that the Right to information Act is a tool in hand, Opportunity to participate in Government process, and Reduced Corruption. The respondents in this way they use right to information act in all the method they want. Now, we conclude that the impact is high among common men.

Table 16: The RTI has been Successful in Controlling Corruption in India

Successful	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Very Much	34	26
Much Less	44	33
Negligible	14	11
Not Successful	40	30
TOTAL	132	100

Note: Total Sample exceeds the required size since the questions are multiple choices.

The Third fourth of the respondents were accepted that the RTI is a Successful tool for controlling corruption in India. From the above Table 4.20 demonstrates that 34 respondents i.e. 26 percent were agreed very much as the RTI has been successful in controlling corruption in India whereas the majority of the respondents said that the impact of RTI is much less in controlling corruption i.e. 33 percent of the total Respondents. The Total 40 respondents are not agreed by the given statement.

SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions are put forward to improve the awareness of RTI among LIS professionals:

- LIS education curricula should be revised at the national level to accommodate the integration of information literacy and the awareness of RTI, either as embedded or standalone courses.
- Conduct national level workshops, inviting CIC, SICs, Civil Society Organizations and other stakeholders of RTI to discuss the RTI Progress across the nation;
- Develop and organize educational programmes to advance the understanding of the public, in particular of disadvantaged communities regarding how to exercise the rights contemplated under this Act; Disseminate rules /guidelines/key judgments of CIC/SIC etc to PIOs
- Encourage Public Authorities to participate in the development and organization of programmes referred to in clause (a) and to undertake such programmes themselves;
- Promote timely and effective dissemination of accurate information by Public Authorities about their activities; and
- Train Central Public Information Officers or State Public Information Officers, as the case may be, of Public Authorities and produce relevant training materials for use by the Public Authorities themselves.

CONCLUSION

In the space of less than a decade, the burgeoning movement for the right to information in India has significantly sought to expand democratic space, and empower the ordinary citizen to exercise far greater control over the corrupt and arbitrary exercise of state power. The right to information is implicit in the Constitution of India; even so the dominant culture of the executive has been one of secrecy and resolute denial of access of information to the citizen. Citizens

groups have long battled for the exercise of these rights in courts. The movement for the right to information received a fresh impetus from a courageous and powerful grassroots struggle of the rural poor for the right to information, to combat rampant corruption in famine relief works. The reverberations of this struggle led to a nationwide demand for a law to guarantee the right to information to every citizen, with widespread support from social activists, professionals, lawyers, and persons within the bureaucracy, politics and the media, who are committed to transparent and accountable governance and people's empowerment. Three successive federal governments in quick succession have committed themselves to the passage of a law to guarantee the people's right to information and some state governments have actually passed such laws and administrative instructions. Until the introduction of the Right to Information Act, information was the property of those people who are in the ruling side and secrecy was maintained. With the commencement of the Act, now the people have got right to take, see, check and inspect any information, which is not coming under the exemption list. But at the same time it require a lot of awareness campaign among the people in order to utilize the act to combat the corruption and get the services of the State, otherwise the present Right to Information Act 2005 will also become just like any other act.

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