

LEVEL OF AWARENESS ABOUT RTI AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

RAVDEEP KAUR*
HARPREET KAUR**

ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to study the level of awareness about Right to Information among college students. For this investigation, descriptive study was conducted. Self prepared questionnaire was used to measure the level of awareness about Right to Information among college students. The present study was conducted on 300 undergraduate college students of Ludhiana district. The sample was comprised of 150 male college students and 150 female college students of Ludhiana district. Investigator found that level of awareness about Right to Information among college students is very low. The study reveals no significant difference in level of awareness about Right to information between male and female college students. There is no significant difference in level of awareness about Right to information between urban and rural college students and also there is no significant difference in level of awareness about right to information between humanities and science stream college students.

Key words: **RTI (Right to information)**

INTRODUCTION

Information is the oxygen of democracy. If people do not know what is happening in their society and if the actions of those who rule them are hidden, then they cannot take a meaningful part in the affairs of that society. But information is not just a necessity for people – it is an essential part of good governance. Bad governance needs secrecy to survive. It allows inefficiency, wastefulness and corruption to thrive. As Amartya Sen, the Nobel Prize-winning economist has observed that there has not been a substantial famine in a country with a democratic form of government and a relatively free press.

* **Asst. Prof., B.C.M. College of Education, Ludhiana**

** **M.Ed. Student, B.C.M. College of Education, Ludhiana**

Information allows people to scrutinise the actions of a government and is the basis for proper, informed debate of those actions.

Right to information is a right of citizens which can empower citizens to take charge by participating in decision-making and by challenging corrupt and arbitrary actions at all levels. With access to government records, citizens can evaluate and determine whether the government they have elected is delivering the results that are expected out of it. RTI is thus a tool that can change the role of the citizens from being mere spectators to that of being active participants in the process of governance.

Right to Information Act 2005

Right to Information is an Act to provide for setting out the practical regime of right to information for citizens to secure access to information under the control of Public Authorities, in order to promote transparency and accountability in the working of every Public Authority the constitution of a Central Information Commission and State Information Commissions and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Citizen's access to public information – held by or under the control of the government or of a government-supported organisation – had been recognized as a key governance reform. In order to bring about this reform, the Government of India (GoI) enacted the 'Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005'.

The Act gives you the right to access Information held by a public authority, information under the control of a public authority and includes the right to:

- inspect work, documents, and records;
- take notes, extracts or certified copies of documents or records;
- take certified samples of material;
- obtain information in the form of diskettes, floppies, tapes, video cassettes or in any other electronic mode or through printouts where such information is stored in a computer or in any other device.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The investigator reviewed related literature. From this, it has been drawn that level of awareness about RTI among masses is low (Ansari, 2008;

CIC, Gol, 2008; RaaG and NCPRI, 2009; PWC, 2009; Roberts, 2010; LEAF) in different states of India. Also, it was observed that the citizens face difficulties for extracting information from public authorities. The studies (CHRI, 2009; PWC, 2009) reviewed here particularly tell that the PIO's are not themselves aware and trained to work in accordance with RTI Act 2005. The studies (The Hunger Project; LEAF Society) shown that with some RTI awareness campaigns the RTI Act can be successfully executed and implemented. There was no research study in the region of Punjab to study the level of awareness about RTI among masses, so the question of framing policies for creating awareness among citizens, could not arise. With this piece of research, the investigator with her resources and limited time tried to know the level of awareness about RTI among college students of Ludhiana district.

EMERGENCE OF THE PROBLEM

Information is the currency that every citizen requires to participate in the life and governance of society. The greater the access of the citizen to information, the greater would be the responsiveness of government to community needs. The scams and scandals, ranging from Bofors, Hawala, Fodder, Tehelka and Unit Trust of India were caused in a system which is based on secrecy. Democracy cannot survive without free and fairly informed voters. Right to Information is a fundamental human right and a prerequisite for the realization of other human rights. But many citizens are not able to use the law to its fullest extent due to unawareness. Right to Information is a effective tool against all kinds of corruption. Thus creating awareness among the students who will be the future torch bearers of the country is essential. It will help them to address issues immediately affecting them, like college and hostel administration, examination system etc. and others. Also, it will help them to become good and responsible citizens who will take our country to new heights of development and to make India a corruption free country. With this study the investigator tried to know the level of awareness about RTI in college students of Ludhiana district so that the policy makers and executives can be helped by this piece of research for further actions.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the level of awareness about Right to information among college students.
2. To study and compare the level of awareness about Right to information of male and female college students.
3. To study and compare the level of awareness about Right to information of urban and rural college students.
4. To study and compare the level of awareness about Right to information of Humanities and Science stream college students.

HYPOTHESES

1. There is no significant difference in level of awareness about Right to information between male and female college students.
2. There is no significant difference in level of awareness about Right to information between urban and rural college students.
3. There is no significant difference in level of awareness about Right to information between Humanities and Science stream college students.

METHODOLOGY

Tools used

In order to study the level of awareness about Right to information among college students, self prepared questionnaire on Right to information awareness was employed by the investigator.

Sample

The random sampling technique was used in the present study as it was not possible to cover entire population. So, a sample of 300 students was selected from Humanities and science streams of undergraduate classes of six colleges of Ludhiana District.

Design

The present study is of descriptive survey design. Data was collected from the sample of 300 undergraduate college students of humanities and science streams from six colleges of Ludhiana district covering rural and urban

areas with the help of questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed by the investigator to assess the level of awareness about Right to Information among college students.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Descriptive statistics like Mean and Standard Deviation were used to examine the nature of distribution of scores. And T-test was used to find out the significant difference among data.

Ho- There is no significant difference in level of awareness about Right to information between male and female college students. (N=300)

TABLE-4.5

Level of awareness about Right to Information among male and female college students

	N	Mean	S.D	SE	t-ratio
Male	150	19.53	4.248	.535	.523
Female	150	19.81	4.993		

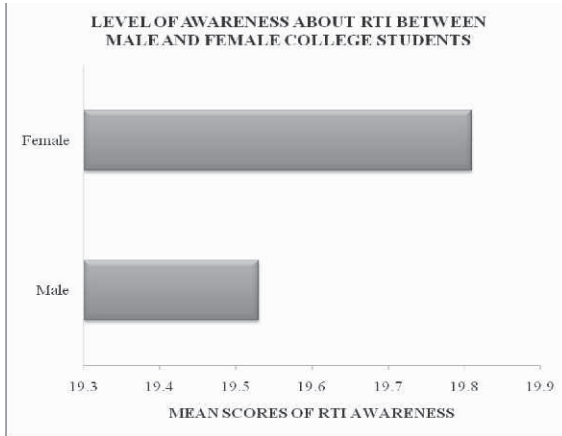
Table 4.5 and fig 4.5 revealed that the mean score of male college students is 19.53 and the mean score of female college students is 19.81. And their respective standard deviations are 4.248 and 4.993. The mean score of male college students and female students are shown graphically in fig 4.5. The t-ratio was calculated as .523 which is not significant at 0.05 level of confidence.

This revealed that the level of awareness about Right to Information male and female college students do not differ significantly at 0.05 level of confidence. Hence it means that male college students are at par with female college students in level of awareness about Right to Information.

So, it can be concluded that the male college students and female college students have similar level of awareness about Right to Information.

Hence it is concluded that there is no significant difference in level of awareness about Right to information between male and female college students. So, the first hypothesis is not rejected.

Fig 4.5 Mean score of male and female college students in level of awareness about Right to Information. (N=300)



Ho- There is no significant difference in level of awareness about Right to information between urban and rural college students. (N=300)

TABLE-4.6

Level of awareness about Right to Information among urban and rural college students

	N	Mean	S.D	SE	t-ratio
Rural	150	19.49	4.364	.535	.673
Urban	150	19.85	4.890		

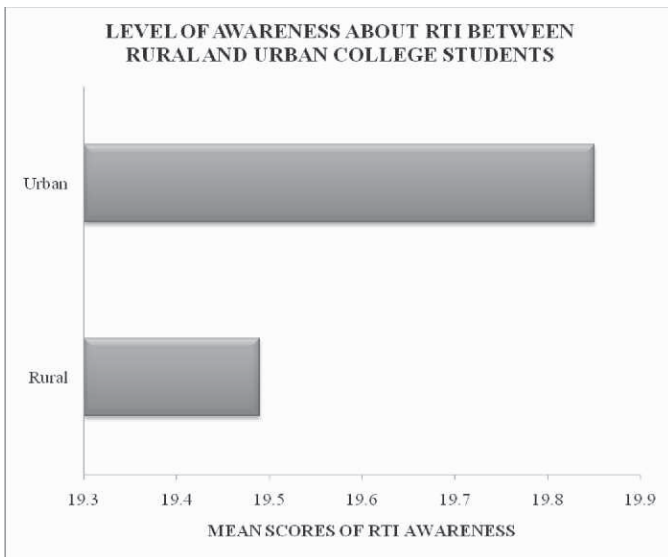
Table 4.6 and fig 4.6 revealed that the mean score of rural college students is 19.49 and the mean score of urban college students is 19.85. And their respective standard deviations are 4.364 and 4.890. The mean score of rural college students and urban college students are shown graphically in fig 4.6. The t-ratio was calculated as .673 which is not significant at 0.05 level of confidence.

This revealed that in level of awareness about Right to Information urban and rural college students do not differ significantly at 0.05 level of confidence. Hence it means that urban college students are at par with rural college students in level of awareness about Right to Information.

So, it can be concluded that the urban college students and rural college students have similar level of awareness about Right to Information.

Hence it is concluded that there is no significant difference in level of awareness about Right to information between urban and rural college students. So, the second hypothesis is not rejected.

Fig 4.6 Mean score of urban and rural college students in level of awareness about Right to Information. (N=300)



Ho- There is no significant difference in level of awareness about Right to information between Humanities and Science stream college students. (N=300)

TABLE-4.7

Level of awareness about Right to Information among humanities and science stream college students

	N	Mean	S.D	SE	t-ratio
Science	150	19.53	4.261	.535	.523
Humanities	150	19.81	4.982		

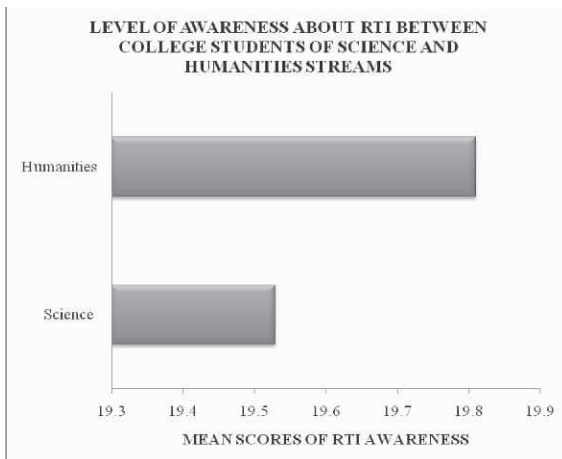
Table 4.7 and fig 4.7 revealed that the mean score of science stream college students is 19.53 and the mean score of humanities stream college students is 19.81. And their standard deviations are 4.261 and 4.982 respectively. The mean score of science stream college students and humanities stream college students are shown graphically in fig 4.7. The t-ratio was calculated as .523 which is not significant at 0.05 level of confidence.

This revealed that in level of awareness about Right to Information humanities and science stream college students do not differ significantly at 0.05 level of confidence. Hence it means that college students of humanities stream are at par with college students of science stream in level of awareness about Right to Information.

So, it can be concluded that the college students of humanities stream and college students of science stream have similar level of awareness about Right to Information.

Hence it is concluded that there is no significant difference in level of awareness about Right to information between Humanities and Science stream college students. So, the third hypothesis is not rejected.

Fig 4.7 Mean score of college students of humanities stream and science stream in level of awareness about Right to Information. (N=300)



CONCLUSIONS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Following conclusions are drawn from the present study:

- Overall the level of awareness about RTI among college students was 45.75%.
- The level of awareness about RTI among male college students was 45.41%.
- The level of awareness about RTI among female college students was 46.06%.
- The level of awareness about RTI among rural college students was 45.32%.
- The level of awareness about RTI among urban college students was 46.16%.
- The level of awareness about RTI among college students of science stream was 45.41%.
- The level of awareness about RTI among college students of humanities stream was 46.06%.
- No significant difference has been found in level of awareness about Right to information between male and female college students.
- No significant difference has been found in level of awareness about Right to information between urban and rural college students.
- No significant difference has been found in level of awareness about Right to information between Humanities and Science stream college students.

Thus it can be concluded that the level of awareness about RTI among college students was very low.

In the light of above results, educationists should make more effective efforts to aware students about their rights. They should organize some activities i.e. debates, seminars on such important topics. So that students become aware about their rights and can use their rights in a proper manner and can participate in the process of governance. Policy makers should amend their present policies and more awareness campaigns should be started to improve the level of awareness about RTI among masses.

REFERENCES

- Ansari, M. M. Impact of Right to Information on Development: A Perspective on India's Recent Experiences. Paris: UNESCO. 2008
- CIC. *Report of National Coordination Committee on Right to information*. Central Information Commission, Government of India. 2008
- Goetz, A. A. Accounts and Accountability: Theoretical Implications of the Right to Information Movement in India. *Third World Quarterly*. 1999. 20 (3):603-622.
- Kundu, S. Democratic Need of Right to Information Act in India. *Global Media Journal - Indian Edition*. 2010 (Winter Issue).
- OIC. *General Public Awareness of Rights to Information Survey 2010: Summary Report*. Office of the Information Commissioner.
- Kaur Amarjeet. Human rights awareness among teacher trainees. The Sadbhavna-Research Journal of Human Development. 2012 December; 2(4): 53-60.