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Vijay M. Kumbhar



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## Research Article

### ROLE OF RTI ACT IN COMBATING CORRUPTION: EMPIRICAL EVIDENCES FROM MAHARASHTRA STATE, INDIA

Vijay M. Kumbhar

Department of Business Economics, Dhananjayrao Gadgil College of Commerce,  
Satara (MS) India 415001

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#### ABSTRACT

Right to Information Act 2005 (RTI Act 2005) is enacted for controlling corruption and bringing accountability as well as transparency in the civil services and public work. However, due to the lack of proper knowledge about the provisions and illiteracy it can't be used as tool against corruption. Hence, therefore the present study was conducted to address the issue and make suggestion. The Results of the study shows that there is poor awareness about RTI and its provisions for controlling corruption. Many backward social group, farmers, self-employed persons, students and housewives don't have any idea about the RTI act. There are many documents and information brought in the confidential documents and information cluster it become a problem for successful use of RTI as tool for controlling corruption. Hence, there is need of more awareness and improvements in the RTI so that Right to Information is a potent weapon to fight against corruption, arbitrariness and misuse of power.

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#### INTRODUCTION

The problem of corruption is one of the major problems of Indian economy. It is observed that the problem of corruption and bribery has been increased since last 15 years. Many evidences indicate that the problem of corruption spread over the whole economy and all aspects of the life of common man. Corruption in India is a major issue that adversely affects economic development and social development in India. Various studies and reports show that more than 62% of Indians had first-hand experience of paying bribes or influence peddling to get public utility services. There are many provisions and legal arrangements have been made by the government for combating corruption in India. Among the different provisions for combating corruption the Right to Information Act -2005 (RTI Act 2005) is one of the most important provision for the controlling the corruption and bribery in India. The present study has been intended to investigate the effectiveness of RTI and its role in combating corruption in India.

##### Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are as below;

1. To understand the perception of the common man regarding usefulness of the RTI for controlling corruption and bribery

2. To understand the profession wise awareness about RTI and its use for controlling corruption and bribery
3. To understand the social group wise awareness about RTI and its usefulness for controlling corruption and bribery
4. To assess the trust of common man about usefulness of the RTI for controlling corruption

##### Hypothesis of the Study

To understand the issues related to the RTI and corruption the researcher has formed the following hypothesis based on available literature. These hypotheses have been tested using the primary data collected from the study region.

**Hypothesis-1:** There is statistically significant relationship between the location of the respondents and perception about the usefulness of RTI act in controlling corruption

**Hypothesis-2:** There is association between occupation/profession of the respondents and their awareness about the usefulness of the RTI Act as tool for controlling corruption

**Hypothesis-3:** There is association between social group of the respondents and their awareness about the usefulness of the RTI Act as tool for controlling corruption

\*Corresponding author: Vijay M. Kumbhar

Department of Business Economics, Dhananjayrao Gadgil College of Commerce, Satara (MS) India 415001

### Data and Methodology

In order to test whether the RTI Act is promoting transparency in the Indian Civil services and it became useful or not? Researcher has collected the primary data from the 2306 respondents belongs to the Satara, Ratnagiri, Yewatmal, Wardha, Nashik and Latur districts in Maharashtra state of India. The responses have been collected from the Farmers, Employees, housewives, Students, Self-employed, Businessman, Unemployed persons and Retired persons. All the data have been collected from August 2015 to January 2016 through the using structured schedule having 3 point likert scale based statements. The written responses have been recorded followed by the short interviews of the respondents.

### Sampling and Sample Size

There are total 35 districts in Maharashtra State out of 36 districts researcher have selected 06 districts (*Satara, Ratnagiri, Yawatmal, Wardha, Latur and Nashik*) and its 70 Tehsils for in-depth investigation. Sample district has been selected based on reports of the Anti-Corruption Bureau, Maharashtra. There are six circle offices i.e. Amravati Range, Aurangabad Range, Mumbai Range, Nagpur Range, Nanded Range, Nashik Range, Pune Range and Thane Range, out of these six ranges of The Maharashtra State Anti-Corruption Bureau one district has been selected for the study. As per the census data published in Census 2011 researcher have selected 02 districts from lower population, 02 from middle population and 02 from higher population than state average population.

Researcher has surveyed total 2306 respondents from these places (Pls. See Table 1.3 and Table 1.4) The respondents has selected using cluster cum convenient sampling techniques. following technique has been used for calculating sample size for finite population as sown below;

### Sample Size<sup>1</sup>

$$n = N x / ((N-1)E^2 + x)$$

Here

n = sample

N = the population size,

X = (Z(c/100)2r(100-r))

E = margin of error E =Sqrt[(N - n)x/n(N-1)]

r = the fraction of responses that is interested

Z(c/100) = the critical value for the confidence level c.

**Table 1** District wise Respondents Surveyed for the Study

	No. of hhs.	Tehsils	Samples
Satara	6,53,735	11	384
Ratnagiri	3,97,115	09	384
Wardha	3,09,846	08	384
Yevatmal	6,46,886	16	384
Nashik	12,22,887	15	386
Latur	4,81,572	10	384
Total	37,12,041	69	2,306

### Data Screening and Data Analysis

Actually the researcher have collected 2263 responses about the corruption issue and role of RTI in combating corruption but out of these responses only 2306 appropriate and complete signed schedule have taken in to considered for the data

analysis. Incomplete and misinterpreted schedules have been ignored from the data analysis to avoid inaccurate responses for this study. All the collected data have been analyzed using SPSS 20.00. However, the screening and verification of data accuracy have been performed using MS Excel 2007. For analyzing the data researcher have used the frequency, t test, Percentage, ANOVA, Chi Square test.

### Profile of the Respondents

For the getting overall responses the researcher has been collected responses from the different type of respondents as shown in Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 2 indicates that 90% of the respondents are male and 10% are female. 48.9% are belongs to rural, 30.7% are belongs to semi-urban and 20.4% are belongs to urban area. 3.7% of the respondents are illiterate, 58.3% are semi-literate and 37.9% are literate respondents.

Table 3 indicates that the 13.6% belongs to Scheduled caste, 5.6% belongs to Scheduled tribes, 30.4% are belongs to other backward Class, 2.0% belongs to Special Backward Class, 8.3% are belongs to Nomadic Tribes and 57.9% are belongs to general class. The researcher has taken the responses from different social classes of the India to get variety of responses. The social categories shown in the Table 3 are the most important social categories of the India and almost of the people categorized in these social categories.

Table 4 shows occupational distribution of the respondents, we have chosen the most important occupations and professions of the study region. These occupations and professions covers almost of the respondents required to get different opinions of the common man in Indian society. Table 4 indicates that the 5.2% of are farmers, 23.4% are self-employed, 10.5% are businessmen, 19.7% are employees, 23.4 are students, 0.4% are housewives, 2.65 are unemployed and 14.9% are retired persons. District wise distribution of the respondents is varies by occupation and profession however; researcher has tried to cover all type of the respondents in this study.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

#### Location wise Responses about the Usefulness of the RTI Act

For the examine the association between the location of the respondents and their perception about the usefulness of the RTI act for controlling the corruption the Chi-Square test has been used along with the descriptive statistics. Table 5 depicts that 44.7% of the respondents are completely agree with that the RTI act useful for the controlling corruption, 27.1% of the respondents are somewhat agree with that the RTI act useful for the controlling corruption and 28.2% of the respondents are completely disagree with that the RTI act useful for the controlling corruption. Overall responses indicates that the RTI act is useful for the controlling the corruption issues in the study region.

In order to test whether there is any association between location of the respondents (i.e. rural, semi-urban and urban) and their perception about the usefulness of the RTI Act for controlling corruption researcher has used Chi-square test.

<sup>1</sup> Online sample size calculator <http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html>

**Table 2** Profile of the Respondents

	Gender		Location			Educational Status		
	Male	Female	Rural	Semi-Urban	Urban	Illiterate	Semi-Literate	Literate
Satara	87.0%	13.0%	62.8%	17.2%	20.1%	3.1%	57.8%	39.1%
Ratnagiri	88.8%	11.2%	49.5%	33.3%	17.2%	2.9%	65.4%	31.8%
Wardha	96.6%	3.4%	37.0%	45.6%	17.4%	4.2%	52.9%	43.0%
Yewatmal	97.7%	2.3%	51.8%	34.6%	13.5%	3.4%	66.1%	30.5%
Nashik	71.8%	28.2%	45.9%	25.9%	28.2%	5.4%	45.9%	48.7%
Latur	97.7%	2.3%	46.6%	27.6%	25.8%	3.4%	62.0%	34.6%
Total	89.9%	10.1%	48.9%	30.7%	20.4%	3.7%	58.3%	37.9%

Source: Field Work

**Table 3** Social Group wise distribution of the Respondents

	Category						Total
	SC	ST	OBC	SBC	NT	General	
Satara	10.9%	2.1%	19.0%	1.6%	10.2%	56.3%	100.0%
Ratnagiri	10.7%	1.6%	43.5%	3.4%	4.2%	36.7%	100.0%
Wardha	19.5%	3.6%	54.7%	1.6%	5.2%	15.4%	100.0%
Yewatmal	18.2%	12.8%	31.5%	2.3%	14.3%	20.8%	100.0%
Nashik	7.8%	11.7%	17.1%	0.3%	8.3%	54.9%	100.0%
Latur	14.6%	1.6%	16.4%	2.9%	17.4%	47.1%	100.0%
Total	13.6%	5.6%	30.4%	2.0%	9.9%	38.6%	100.0%

Source: Field Work

**Table 4** Occupation/Profession distribution of the Respondents

	Professions							Total	
	Farmers	Self-employed	Businessman	Employees	Students	House Wife	Unemployed		Retired
Satara	5.7%	15.1%	3.6%	25.3%	32.3%	0.5%	2.6%	14.8%	100%
Ratnagiri	2.1%	15.6%	3.4%	31.8%	14.1%	0.8%	4.2%	28.1%	100%
Wardha	12.2%	21.4%	19.8%	13.3%	18.8%	0.3%	4.9%	9.4%	100%
Yewatmal	3.9%	29.2%	11.5%	10.2%	25.8%	0.3%	1.8%	17.4%	100%
Nashik	2.3%	38.6%	12.7%	25.6%	16.1%	0.0%	1.3%	3.4%	100%
Latur	4.9%	20.6%	11.7%	12.0%	33.6%	0.5%	0.5%	16.1%	100%
Total	5.2%	23.4%	10.5%	19.7%	23.4%	0.4%	2.6%	14.9%	100%

Source: Field Work

**Table 5** Dose the RTI playing significant role in controlling corruption?

Location	Yes	No	Somewhat Level	Total
Rural	507	298	323	1128
% within Location	44.9%	26.4%	28.6%	100.0%
Semi-Urban	316	215	177	708
% within Location	44.6%	30.4%	25.0%	100.0%
Urban	208	136	126	470
% within Location	44.3%	28.9%	26.8%	100.0%
Total	1031	649	626	2306
% within Location	44.7%	28.1%	27.1%	100.0%

The table 6 indicates that there is no statistically significant relationship between the location of the respondents and perception about the usefulness of RTI act in controlling corruption (chi-square with 4 degree of freedom = 4.720, p = 0.317).

**Table 6** Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig.	Result
Pearson Chi-Square	4.720 <sup>a</sup>	4	.317	Accept the null Hypothesis
Likelihood Ratio	4.730	4	.316	
Linear-by-Linear Association	.190	1	.663	
N of Valid Cases	2306			

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 127.46.

**Profession wise Distribution of Awareness about RTI and use of RTI Act**

To understand the Profession wise Distribution of Awareness about RTI and use of RTI Act for controlling corruption researcher has collected data accordingly.

Table 7 indicates that 65.4% of the respondents are aware about use of RTI as tool of controlling corruption; however, 34.6% of the respondents are completely unaware about the RTI act and its usefulness for controlling corruption.

**Table 7** Professions wise Awareness and perception about usefulness of RTI

	I am Aware	Not Aware about	Total
House Wife	55.6%	44.4%	100.0%
Self-employed	59.1%	40.9%	100.0%
Students	62.2%	37.8%	100.0%
Farmers	65.8%	34.2%	100.0%
Businessman	66.0%	34.0%	100.0%
Unemployed	69.5%	30.5%	100.0%
Employees	71.4%	28.6%	100.0%
Retired	71.7%	28.3%	100.0%
Total	65.4%	34.6%	100.0%

Source: Field Work

In order to test whether there is any association between occupation/profession of the respondents and their awareness about the usefulness of the RTI Act as tool for controlling corruption researcher has used Chi-square test. The table 8 indicates that there is association between occupation/profession of the respondents and their awareness about the usefulness of the RTI Act as tool for controlling corruption (chi-square with 7 degree of freedom = 26.034, p = 0.000). According to the Table 7 the housewives, self-employed, students, farmers and businessman are most unaware persons about the RTI act and its usefulness for controlling corruption.

**Table 8** Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig.	Result
Pearson Chi-Square	26.034 <sup>a</sup>	7	.000	
Likelihood Ratio	26.170	7	.000	Reject Null
Linear-by-Linear Association	15.995	1	.000	Hypothesis
N of Valid Cases	2306			

a. 1 cells (6.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.11.

**Social Group wise of Awareness about RTI and use of RTI Act**

Table 9 indicates the social group wise awareness of the respondents about the usefulness of the RTI act. The data shows that respondents from Scheduled Tribe, Other Backward Class and Nomadic Tribes are most unaware about the RTI act. It denotes 43.8%, 39.6% and 37.6% respectively.

**Table 9** Professions wise Awareness and perception about usefulness of RTI

	I am Aware	Not Aware about	Total
1 SC % within Category	71.3%	28.7%	100.0%
2 ST % within Category	56.3%	<b>43.8%</b>	100.0%
3 OBC % within Category	60.4%	<b>39.6%</b>	100.0%
4 SBC % within Category	71.7%	28.3%	100.0%
5 NT % within Category	62.4%	<b>37.6%</b>	100.0%
6 General % within Category	69.1%	30.9%	100.0%
Total % within Category	65.4%	34.6%	100.0%

Source: Field Work

In order to test whether there is any association between social group of the respondents and their awareness about the usefulness of the RTI Act as tool for controlling corruption researcher has used Chi-square test. The table 10 indicates that there is association between social group of the respondents and their awareness about the usefulness of the RTI Act as tool for controlling corruption (chi-square with 5 degree of freedom = 24.266, p = 0.000). According to the Table 9 the respondents belongs to Scheduled Tribe, Other Backward Class and Nomadic Tribes are most unaware about the RTI act.

**Table 10** Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig.	Result
Pearson Chi-Square	24.266 <sup>a</sup>	5	.000	
Likelihood Ratio	24.203	5	.000	Reject Null
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.081	1	.149	Hypothesis
N of Valid Cases	2306			

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 15.90.

**Trust on RTI and RTI Related Mechanism**

To solve any type of problem the trustworthiness is very important, without the trust on system anyone can't be solve problem related to public services. Even the trust should be developing by the government through the assurance and proper implementation of the provision made under the act or any legislation. In this report the researcher has been collected the responses about the trust of the respondents on RTI act. Table 11 shows that the district wise analysis, the overall data indicates that only 46.7% of the respondents trust on RTI act, 24.2% of the respondents trust at somewhat level and 29.1% of the respondents don't trust on the RTI act for controlling the corruption. They don't believe that the RTI act is useful for the controlling the corruption.

**Table 11** Do you trust on RTI and related mechanism for solving the problem of corruption?

District	Yes	No	Somewhat Level	Total
1 Satara	50.8%	31.0%	18.2%	100%
2 Ratnagiri	32.3%	35.9%	31.8%	100%
3 Wardha	51.8%	39.3%	8.9%	100%
4 Yewatmal	44.8%	28.1%	27.1%	100%
5 Nashik	50.5%	9.3%	40.2%	100%
6 Latur	50.0%	31.0%	19.0%	100%
Total	46.7%	29.1%	24.2%	100%

Source: Field Work

Table 12 indicates that the only 37.3% of the respondents said that the RTI act having enough provisions for controlling corruption. There are interesting responses of the literate persons, the 40.1% of the literate respondents mentioned that there are no enough provisions in the RTI act for controlling corruption and only 46.1% of the literate persons said that there are enough provisions for controlling corruption. Even though 36.5% the semi-literate persons also agree with this statement that there are no enough provisions in the RTI act for controlling corruption.

**Table 12** Does the RTI Act have Enough Provisions for Controlling corruption?

District	Yes	No	Don't Know	Total
1 Illiterate	29.1%	16.3%	54.7%	100%
2 Semi-Literate	32.0%	36.5%	31.4%	100%
3 Literate	46.1%	40.1%	13.8%	100%
Total	37.3%	37.1%	25.6%	100%

**FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION**

The present study indicates that the RTI act can be used as one of the useful tool for controlling corruption in civil services and public utility services. Laws regarding public access to information pertaining to government services have been adopted by [United Kingdom](#), Japan, South Africa, Mexico and a host of other countries including India ([Florini, 2007](#)). However, due to the improper awareness and understanding the provisions made under this act it can't be used for the controlling corruption ([Chetan Agrawal, 2012](#)). Many people belong to backward social groups are not aware about the use of RTI act. Occupation wise data also directs that the housewives, self-employed, students, farmers and businessman are most unaware persons about the RTI act. Analysis indicate that there many people don't trust on the RTI related mechanism for solving the problem of corruption. There are some problems like negligence of the bureaucrats, problem of ineffective legal provisions and better provisions about fine and punishment under RTI act ([Singh, 2007](#)). Role of media and e-governance is very important to increase awareness about the RTI and reduce corruption ([Krippendorff, 2004](#))

**Recommendations**

On the basis of primary data analysis researcher suggest some policy measures to control corruption through effective use of RTI act and wants to suggest some improvement in the provision made under RTI act.

1. For the purpose of eradication of corruption we have introduced right to information Act 2005 but it is not enough because the common man doesn't have any

proper idea about this act. For the eradication of corruption we should apply the public information system in wide manner which enable the citizens their rights easily.

2. Civil Society Organizations and social activists are enhancing the reach and awareness of RTI among the masses. It is mostly with the support of the social activists and Civil Society Organizations that a person in a village is able to use the RTI Act for ensuring his basic rights (Price water house Coopers, 2009)
3. The researcher recommends to the government that RTI should be compulsory part of secondary and higher education programme including the adult literacy programme.
4. The local government should conduct at least one programme each year on RTI awareness once in year for all citizens. The local governments should hang the banners at public places about provision made under RTI.
5. The government should reduce the numbers of confidential documents at government departments and offices. Because, many time the bureaucrats deny to give required information to the public.
6. Non-confidential documents of civil service departments and sections should be a public interest disclosure. Any disclosure made under this Act shall be treated as public interest disclosure for the purposes of review and analysis by any interested persons
7. Government body should make readily available information about its functions and responsibilities, without need for a request. All required information and public disclosure should be current, clear, and in plain language (Rajak, 2014)

8. Freedom of Information act should be introduce in India to replace the Right to Information Act, 2005 because the RTI act have its own limitations because there is some information which can't be given due to the provision of Official Secrets.
9. The local bodies should provide information kits to the public and it should be in simple language which can be easy understandable to common man.

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