

Right to Information Act, 2009: A Tool to Tackle Corruption in Bangladesh and Citizens' Perception

SHARIF ADNAN

Phd Researcher

Dr. Wazed Research and Training Institute

Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur

“Corruption is something that we talk about, it’s something that we complain about, it’s something whose negative impact we recognize, it’s something that even the corrupt acknowledges about it. But the irony and the tragedy at once is that those who engage in corruption love it. — Patrick L.O. Lumumba

Abstract

Bangladesh is a democratic country and to ensure democratic system in all of its organs the presence of good governance is a must. One of the most colossal hinders in case of ensuring good governance is Corruption. In our country, there is freakish corruption at all sectors. The root fact behind that is secrecy. Breaking the prolonged chain of secrecy is much needed to prevent corruption that can ensure transparency and accountability in the government’s organs. Right to Information Act, 2009 in that case is an effective weapon to fight against corruption as it creates scope for citizens to cooperate with the public officers and other governmental and nongovernmental institutions to look over their activities. This paper examines the effectiveness of the Right to Information Act, 2009 as a tool for combating corruption in Bangladesh and citizens' perception on this Act. In this regard, content analysis, case study, and survey method have been used. The findings show that the RTI Act can be an effective weapon in the battle against corruption in Bangladesh. Respondents have also agreed that ratification of the RTI Act in Bangladesh is a bright sign which is dedicated to set up transparency and accountability in the public sectors and other institutions. It is also found that there is still lacking in terms of awareness about the RTI Act among the citizens. The more worrying

scenario is that those who have knowledge about the RTI also don't know how to use this law properly.

Keywords: Information Act, corruption, Bangladesh, citizens' perception

INTRODUCTION

The word corruption is originated from the Latin word “corruptus,” that means “corrupted” (Olaekan. T. Ologunleko;2011). In general, Corruption involves abusing of entrusted power for private gain in both public and private sectors which is the greatest foe of good-governance and causing great harm to society and the nation. As a Bangladeshi we living in a country where each and every organ of the country, activity and functions is related with corrupt practices. No matter, how many numbers of institutions and organizations we create, they themselves become slave of corruption. The rate of corruption in some sectors is so high that it may seem that good governance cannot exist in this country. If it cannot which is the snake in the grass that supports such corrupt practices? The Answer is SECRECY. Secrecy is the root factor of corruption; unaccountability and it is a great enemy to good governance. Question arises how can we uproot this chain of secrecy. The simple answer is that through right to information. As we know, Information is the magic lamp and, in every country, it is recognized that information is potential and important for development. For that reason, many countries have decided to implement Right to Information Act. Bangladesh is not exceptional to that; our country has added a lustrous new leaf of good governance through the enactment of Right to Information Act 2009. Article 39 of the Bangladesh Constitution establishes freedom of speech, thought and conscience as one of the fundamental rights and to ensure these the journey towards RTI started, when the Bangladesh Press Council demanded for the freedom to publish government information in 1983. However, the real development of RTI took place during the time, when there were lots of discussions and debates on the accountability and transparency of a system, which ensures people access to information in various forums — after being ranked as one of the most corrupted countries in the world for successive years. Various NGOs, civil society, institutions,

organizations have been advocated for people access and demand for information afterward till the Bangladesh Law Commission drafted a right to information act in 2002, though their hope for enactment of this law was failed. Later on, in the year 2006, a strong advocacy movement was initiated by civil society actors in Bangladesh. It demanded an act, which would ensure citizen's right to access government held information, data, facts, which ended up in an initiative taken by the Caretaker Government in response to the popular demand. As a result, the Right to Information Ordinance was enacted in 2008. The parliament finally passed 'The Right to Information Act' in 2009. RTI law is the great achievement for the citizens of Bangladesh and now it is being considered as a great tool for demanding information in all the steps and activities of public-private sector of different departments, organizations, agencies and institutions that touch the life span of the citizen. **Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina, has stated that:** "The enactment of the Right to Information Act is an epoch-making incident in the history of Bangladesh. It will greatly help to establish accountability and transparency in every sphere of society and the administration, the government will continue to work to safeguard the people's right to information because this act is a potent weapon to fight against corruption, arbitrariness and misuse of power. Most importantly it breaks the chain of secrecy" (**Iftekharuzzaman, 2009**). Present paper is also an attempt to understand the role of RTI in case of eradicating corruption through participation of people in democratic process and the citizens' perception about it.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

Corruption is one of the biggest obstacles for development. No matter how large your country is or how much money a government have if you don't stop the practice of corruption and destroy the root of secrecy; the dream of establishing transparency, good governance and achieving development will just be an illusion. Right to Information act in that case is worldwide known as the key tool to tackle corruption, ensuring transparency, establishing accountability and good governance in the society.

The objectives of this research can be specified as under which spotlights on finding the answers of following questions:

1. To find out why this Act is recognized as a potential weapon for declining the culture of secrecy, lessening the practice of corruption and annihilate red tapism in Bangladesh.
2. To understand the citizens' perception about the RTI ACT, 2009.
3. To study the experience regarding the use of Right to Information Act, 2009.
4. To analyze the factors that affect proper implementation of RTI ACT 2009.

By conducting this research, we will be able to know how ensuring right to information for every citizen through RTI act can be helpful to establish transparency, accountability both in the governmental and non-governmental institutions. How implementation of this act can be lethal weapon to break the deep dark chain of secrecy and tackling down the corruption. We will also have a good perception of citizens' knowledge about Right to Information act,2009 such as What they think about this act, is it helpful to stop corruption in their eyes or not and so on. As a result, we can determine the effectiveness of that act and can take further actions to moderate it.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Both the qualitative and quantitative method of sociological science research has been used in this research paper to collect data. By considering the need, nature and objectives of this research paper two case studies are discussed and analyzed to understand the effectiveness of this act as a tool to tackle corruption. Survey research method has been used to understand the perception of general public about this act. Respondents have been selected from three upazilas of Gaibandha district and four upazilas of Dinajpur district. The quantitative analysis of the survey research is based on close-ended questions and the results is presented in numerical, percentages, tables, graphs and descriptive forms. The literatures in the paper cover journals, articles, pamphlets, books. Contents which are collected from Primary and secondary sources are analyzed to enrich the discussion of this paper. This paper has used the news and article published in 2009 to 2020.

Sample Size

The sample comprised of 400 adult male and female members who are registered citizens of Bangladesh. 200 of them are from Gaibandha and 200 are from Dinajpur districts including workers, working at the offices or the shop keepers and other people belonging to certain different occupations. Some of the samples are the students of various Universities different departments e.g. Mass Communication, International Relations, MBA, Commerce, English etc. In some questions number of the responders or sample size fluctuate based on question background, type and nature.

Sampling Technique

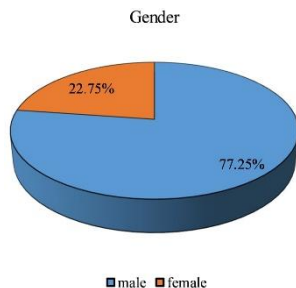
The sampling population is selected based on convenient sampling. Survey was conducted on the sample which was easy to access and was easily available.

Data Collection and Data Collection Mean

To get the basic data for research questions, the method of survey questionnaire has been used. The questionnaire comprises of close-ended questions to get the basic information and the opinion from the target sample as a tool of data collection.

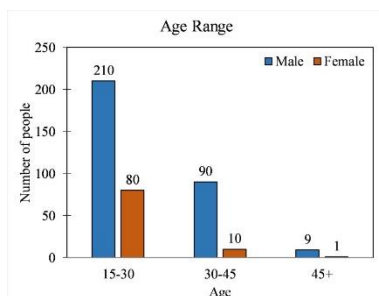
DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES

Survey research method has been used to this research for understanding the perception of general public about RTI act. Population of the sample size are 400 in number who are citizens of Bangladesh selected from 2 districts which are Gaibandha and Dinajpur. The sampling population is selected based on convenient sampling. Survey was conducted on the sample which was easy to access and was easily available.



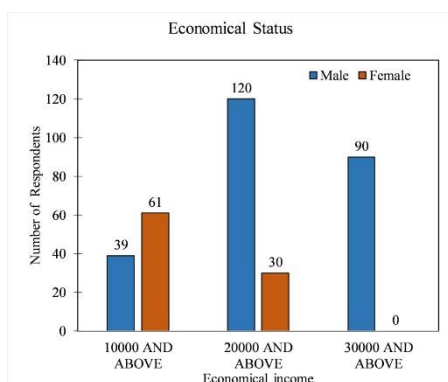
GENDER	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
MALE	309	77.25%
FEMALE	91	22.75%

The total sample size is composed of 400 where number of males are 309 in number and female are 91. In percentage, 77.25% people are male and 22.75% people are female.



AGE	15-30	30-45	45+
MALE	210	90	09
FEMALE	80	10	01
Total	290 (72.5%)	100 (25%)	10(2.5%)

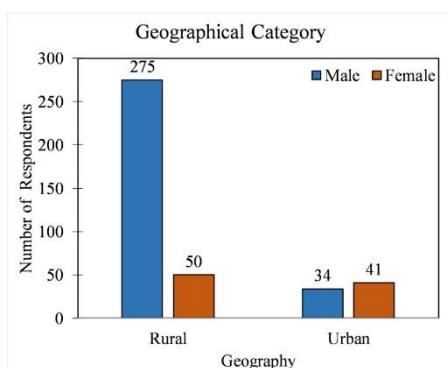
Interviewees are mostly in 15-30 age range. We see 100 interviewees are in the age range between 30 to 45. Among them 90 are male and 10 are female. 290 people are in the age range between 15-30, among them 210 are male 90 are female. 10 people are in 45+ age range. So, in total 72.5% people are in 15-30 years range. 25% people are in the 30-45 age range and 2.5% people are in the over 45 age category.



ECONOMICAL STATUS

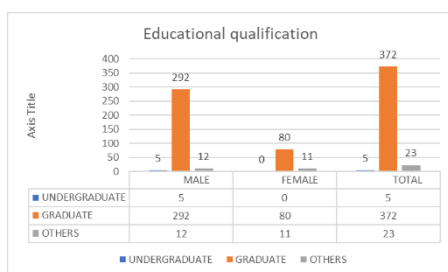
ECONOMICAL INCOME	MALE	FEMALE
30000 AND ABOVE	90	00
20000 AND ABOVE	120	30
10000 AND ABOVE	39	61

61 female respondents and 39 male respondents have income range between 10000 and above. 120 males and 30 females have income range between 20000 and above. 90 males have income range 30000 and above.



GEOGRAPHY	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
RURAL	275	50	325
URBAN	34	41	75

275 males and 50 females who are interviewed live in rural area. Whereas 34 males and 41 females live in urban area.



EDUCATION LEVEL	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
UNDERGRADUATE	05	00	05
GRADUATE	292	80	372
OTHERS	12	11	23

The respondents who are interviewed, 292 males and 80 females among them are from Graduate level. 5 males are undergraduate. 12 males and 11 females are from others educational background.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review is a published information based on discussion of a specific topic or subject area within a certain time of period. It's a survey of scholarly knowledge on a subject which is used to identify debates, trends and gaps of the research as well as analyzes, synthesizes, evaluates to depict the crystal-clear pictures of the state of knowledge on the subject. So many scholars discuss and publish their research related to RTI act. Summary of some of the most significant researches related to RTI act are highlighted below:

In his research, Rahman, Aliur (2013) found that, the Right to Information is mother to all other rights. It is one of the most effective tools to empower people, whom power should belong in democracy. Freedom of information can bring an inconceivable success to build up a transparent and healthy knowledge society. In Bangladesh it is utmost necessary to enhance the freedom of information for redressing the mistrust, indignity and human crisis from the society. Free flow of information is also very much helpful to reduce corruption and can promote towards an answerable public administration. In a democratic culture freedom of information and accountability are two fundamental preconditions or means for exercising the rights to the citizen. It is not possible to assure the peoples' rights and access to information by the government or the powerful authorities beyond showing the personal respect to the citizens.

Baroi (2013) carried out a study in two Union Parishads focusing on the implementation of RTIA in Bangladesh. He found that those who had good understanding of policy objectives had profound influence on implementation success of RTI Act. According to them this Act has provided a crystal-clear way to destroy corruption and the dark chain of secrecy from the Bangladeshi government affairs and shows the path for governance reform, ensuring accountability and assuring transparency in government subjects. The researcher also found that there was lack of initiatives to make RTI Act popular among common people that is why lack of proper understanding crates the negative result.

Chouhan (2013) conducted a study in the Gwalior city of Madhya Pradesh in India on the implementation of RTI act and its uses. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods in his study, he found that socio-economic condition plays an influential part in case of effective enactment and implementation of RTI act in the Gwalior city. By analyzing he also tracks that due to lack of record keeping management, lack of consciousness, lack of electrical and population resources of the institutions etc. are hindering the implementation process of RTI act in the city. He also added that RTI is an effective tool to reduce corruption.

Karim (2013) conducted a study in four upazillas of Mymensingh district based on questionnaire and non-formal discussion. In his research he found that that respondents are not pleased at RTIA because they face so many obstacles while using this act and noted that according to the opine of respondents 99 percent of the information are kept in dark from the public. They think Information Commission cannot arrange any programs to aware both the demand and supplier side which is another crucial challenge to implementation of RTI. It is found that half of the institutions haven't required information officials and level of knowledge related to the RTI act of the recruited are so low that they cannot satisfy the demand of the asking side. According to the researcher, establishing Information Clinic at each ward in rural Bangladesh with good speed of internet, using available mass media and other forms of cultural communication to make people understand how this act can be effective for the citizens is important as most of them still have lacking about this act.

Corruption in Bangladesh and Its Impact on Good Governance as well as Development:

Over the last few years, headlines of the papers are clouding with corruption scandals about Bangladesh's government. No doubt Corruption is the mammoth foe in the way of establishing transparency and good governance. Corruption of administration and governance causes common people become prey and victims. For example, Bangladeshi government in 2018-2019 fiscal year spend 1,76,320 crore takas for development. Which was the highest in the last six years. Moreover, Bangladesh approves over taka 2 trillion for development budget for the fiscal year 2019-2020. If these resources had been used properly and without misappropriation at various levels, we might

solve many of our problems in health sector, educational sector, economical sector and other areas of social development. There is a conclusion given by TI global index Bangladesh is now 14 th most corrupt country in the world. Reason behind this, because of the absence of answerability, transparency and participation in governance and administration. If we don't ensure these elements in governance and administration, we cannot root out and prevent Corruption as it directly or indirectly affects the country 's economy and decrease development rate of state.

Key Findings from the literature review:

After interpretation and analyzation of above discussed researches the following matters are found:

1. Implementation of Right to Information Act,2009 Increases Transparency and Accountability:

One of the major reasons that strengthen the chain of corruption is the lack of transparency. Lack of information doesn't provide citizens the opportunity to realize the full range of their human rights. If you don't allow freedom of information, certainly transparency will be extinct therefore good governance will be elusion. So, no doubt, Freedom of information can bring an inconceivable success to build up a transparent and healthy knowledge society. In every country it is utmost necessary to enhance the freedom of information for redressing the mistrust, indignity and human crisis from the society. Free flow of information is also very much helpful to reduce corruption and can promote towards an answerable public administration. So, to prevail the right to know we must ensure effective implementation of Right to Information Act.

2. Enactment of Right to Information Act, 2009 breaks the chain of Corruption:

Lack of accountability in the workplace often stems for ineffective leadership, practices and Low morale mindset. The failure of citizens to consistently demand accountability from their leaders and duty bearers is a major cause of corruption and development. To overcome this problem Right to Information Act can be an exemplary way, as it makes information available for the people so that they can participate

in the democratic government system. As a result, the level and trends of corruption decrease in different organizations and ministries.

3. Practice of Secrecy:

In Bangladesh, many officials think that every official document or file is under the official secrecy act. As they don't know about Right to Information Act, 2009. Therefore, 99 percent of them are kept in dark from the public. Which increases the practice of secrecy. Therefore, information become unavailable for public which cause corruption.

4. Lack of knowledge:

A large portion of population still don't know about this act as a result they are neglected from their right to know. Moreover, those who know that this act exists; don't have adequate knowledge about this act. Even they are not familiar with how to apply for information through this act. Government may focus on organizing educational programs to develop the understanding of the public. Media can play an important role in that case to arise awareness among the people.

5. Lack of Personnel:

Less employees are recruited as information officers in the governmental and nongovernmental institutions. Moreover, they are not trained. So, they do not provide information as they have lack of knowledge in case of providing information.

SURVEY FINDINGS

Findings of data and information of the above-mentioned survey are derived basically from the quantitative methods of investigation. The quantitative data of the findings are presented below:

1. It was asked to every respondent that **whether they know about The Right to Information Act, 2009 or not**. Through their response it is found that, most of them haven't any idea about RTI act. In Gaibandha district only 5% percent people know about this act. 95% people don't know about it. In Dinajpur 7.5% people know about this RTI act 2009. 92.5% percent people don't know about it. Number of males know about the Act in Gaibnadhha and Dinajpur district are 09 and 10. Whereas Number of Females know about the Act in both

district are 01 and 05. Number of males don't know about the Act in Gaibnadh and Dinajpur district are 151 and 139. Whereas Number of Females don't know about the Act are 39 and 46. Overall, 6.25% Answered Yes, 93.75% Answered no. Total 19 males. **06** Females know about it. Whereas 290 males and 85 females don't know about it.

Table No. 1

Do you know about Right To Information Act , 2009	Answered Yes	% of Yes	Answered No	% of No	Number of males know about the Act	Number of Females know about the Act	Number of males don't know about the Act	Number of Females don't know about the Act	TOTAL
Gaibandha District	10	5%	190	95%	09	01	151	39	200
Dinajpur District	15	7.5%	185	92.5%	10	05	139	46	200
Overall	25	6.25%	375	93.75%	19	06	290	85	400

2. It was questioned to the respondents that, **do they think the RTI Act is a peoplefriendly law in establishing civic rights.** In Gaibandha 50% percent people think RTI Act is a people-friendly law in establishing civic rights, 50% people don't think so. In Dinajpur 66.66% people think RTI Act is a people-friendly law in establishing civic rights, 33.34% percent people don't think so. Number of males in Gaibnadh and Dinajpur district who think RTI Act is a people-friendly law in establishing civic rights are 04 and 07. Whereas Number of Females in both district who don't think so are 01 and 03. In Gaibnadh and Dinajpur district number of males who don't agree with the point are 05 and 03. Whereas Number of Females don't think RTI Act is a people-friendly law in establishing civics rights in both districts are 00 and 02. Overall, 58.3% Answered Yes, 41.67% Answered no.

Table No. 2

Do you think the RTI Act is a people-friendly law in establishing civic rights	Answered Yes	% of Yes	Answered No	% of No	Number of males think so	Number of Females think so	Number of males don't think so	Number of Females don't think so	TOTAL
Gaibandha District	05	50	05	50	04	01	05	00	10
Dinajpur District	10	66.66	05	33.34	07	03	03	02	15
Overall	15	58.3	10	41.67	11	04	08	02	25

3. It was asked to every respondent that, **do they know any specific provisions of the RTI act, 2009 or not.** It is found that 85% respondents don't have any idea about any single provisions of the Right to Information Act, 2009. Only 15% respondents have knowledge about some specific provisions of this act. In Gaibandha none but one respondent has knowledge about some provisions of this act. Others don't have knowledge. In Dinajpur only 3 respondents know about the provisions. Others don't know.

Table No. 3

Do they know any specific provisions of the Right to Information Act, 2009 or not?	No. of Respondents Yes	% of Yes	No. of Respondents No	% of No	Total Respondents
Gaibandha District	01	10%	09	90%	10
Dinajpur District	03	20%	12	80%	15
Total	04	15%	21	85%	25

4. It was asked to the respondent that, **Do they apply for information under the Right to Information Act, 2009 or not.** Through their answer it is found that percentage in Gaibandha District in case of applying to search information under the Right to Information Act, 2009 by filling up an RTI application is 20% and 80% don't apply. Here the population consist of 10. The percentage in Dinajpur District is 26.66% who applied for seeking information under the RTI Act 2009 by filling up an RTI application and 55.8 % don't use this act. Here the total respondent is 15. Therefore, comparing two districts in case of applying to search information under the Right to Information Act, 2009 is 23.33 % who apply or use this act to find information by filling up an RTI application and rest 76.67% haven't use this act yet. The following table no 4 shows the total analysis

Table No .4

Have you ever applied for seeking information under the RTI Act 2009 by filling up an RTI application?	No. of Respondents Yes	% of Yes	No. of Respondents No	% of No	Total Respondents
Gaibandha District	02	20%	08	80%	10
Dinajpur District	04	26.66%	11	73.34	15
Total	06	23.33%	19	76.67%	25

5. It was asked to the respondents that **Did they face any problems in getting the information**, in response it is found that the percentage in Gaibandha in case of facing any problem while finding information, 50% responders replied Yes and 50% replied no. here the calculating respondents are 02. Where as in Dinajpur district 75 % responders face problem, 25% don't. Overall, 62.5% citizens face obstacle in getting information and 37.5 % don't. The analysis was shown in table 5 below:

Table No. 5

Did you face any problems in getting the information?	Number. of Respondents say Yes	% of Yes	Number. of Respondents say No	% of No	Total Respondents
Gaibandha district	01	50%	01	50%	02
Dinajpur district	03	75%	01	25%	04
Total	04	62.5%	02	37.5%	06

6. The respondents were asked, is RTI Act 2009 play a promotional role in establishing accountability, transparency and good governance at all levels of the state. Through their opine it is found that 60% people of Gaibandha district think RTI Act 2009 play a promotional role in establishing accountability, transparency and good governance at all levels of the state and 40% don't agree with the point. 33.34 % people of Dinajpur district don't think that whereas 66.66% citizens agree with that point. Above all, 63.33% of total population thinks RTI act increases transparency and accountability of organizations and ministries and 36.37% don't think so. The analysis are shown below in table 6:

Table No. 6

RTI Act 2009 play a promotional role in establishing accountability, transparency and good governance at all levels of the state	No. of Respondents Yes	% of Yes	No. of Respondents No	% of No	Total Respondents
Gaibandha District	06	60%	04	40%	10
Dinajpur District	10	66.66%	05	33.34%	15
Total	16	63.33%	09	36.37%	25

7. The Respondents were questioned, Is awareness increased among the citizens about the right to information after the enactment of RTI act 2009. In district Gaibandha, 60% people think that awareness

increased among the citizens, after the enactment of RTI act 2009 and 25% people don't think so. In Dinajpur 73.34% people agree with the point and 33.33% don't. Overall, 66.67% think that awareness increased among the citizens about the right to information after the enactment of RTI act 2009 and 33.33% people don't agree with that point. Total analysis is shown in the table no.7 .

Table No. 7

Is awareness increased among the citizens about the right to information after the enactment of RTI act 2009	No. of Respondents Yes	% of Yes	No. of Respondents No	% of No	Total Respondents
Gaibandha district	06	60%	04	40%	10
Dinajpur district	11	73.34%	04	26.66%	15
Total	17	66.67%	08	33.33%	25

8. The Responders were asked, have they noticed any changes in attitude or behavior of the public service delivery officials after the enactment RTI act 2009. In district Gaibandha , 60% people noticed changes in attitude or behavior of the public service delivery officials after the enactment RTI act 2009 and 40 % people don't think so. In Dinajpur 53.33% people agree with that point and 46.67 % don't. Overall, 56.66 % noticed changes in attitude or behavior of the public service delivery officials after the enactment RTI act 2009 and 43.33% people don't agree with that point. Total analysis is shown in the table no.8.

Table No. 8

Have you noticed any changes in attitude or behavior of the public service delivery officials after the enactment RTI act 2009	No. of Respondents Yes	% of Yes	No. of Respondents No	% of No	Total Respondents
Gaibandha district	06	60%	04	40%	10
Dinajpur district	08	53.33%	07	46.67%	15
Total	14	56.66%	11	43.33%	25

9. The responders were questioned that, do they think that RTI Act is an effective tool to tackle corruption. After analyzing their answer, it is found that 76.67% people think that

RTI Act is an armor to tackle corruption where as 23.33% people don't think so. In Gaibandha district out of 10 people 08 people agree that this act is a lethal weapon to wipe out corruption which is 80% and only 02 people don't think it is an anti-corruption tool which is 20%. In Dinajpur 73.34% people who are 11 in out of 15 opine that this act can prevent corruption. Whereas 23.33% people who are 04 out of 15 don't agree with it. The analysis was shown in table 9:

Table No. 9

Do you think that RTI Act is an instrument to prevent corruption	Number of Respondents	% of Yes	Number of Respondents	% of No	Total Respondents
	Yes		No		
Gaibandha District	08	80%	02	20%	10
Dinajpur District	11	73.34%	04	26.66%	15
Total	19	76.67%	06	23.33%	25

10. The respondents were asked that, do they think, the level and trends of corruption are decreasing in different organizations and ministries after the enactment of RTI act 2009. While analyzing their answer, it is found that 71.67% people think that RTI Act decreases corruption in different organizations and ministries. Whereas 28.33% people don't think so. In Gaibandha district out of 10 people 07 people agree that this act is a lethal weapon to decrease corruption in different organizations and ministries which is 70% and only 03 people don't agree with that point which is 30%. In Dinajpur 73.34% people think that this act decrease corruption in different organizations and ministries who are 11 in out of 15. Whereas 26.66% people don't agree with it who are 04 out of 15. The analysis was shown in table 10:

Table No. 10

Do you think, the level and trends of corruption are decreasing in different organizations and ministries after the enactment of RTI act 2009?	Number of Respondents	% of Yes	Number of Respondents	% of No	Total Respondents
	Yes		No		
Gaibandha District	07	70%	03	30%	10
Dinajpur District	11	73.34%	04	26.66%	15
Total	18	71.67%	07	28.33%	25

11. The responders were questioned that are transparency and accountability of different organizations and ministries increased by the implementation of the RTI Act. After analyzing their answer, it is

found that 51.66% people think that transparency and accountability of different organizations and ministries increased by the implementation of the RTI Act. Whereas 48.34% people don't think so. In Gaibandha district out of 10 people 05 people agree that transparency and accountability of different organizations and ministries increased by the implementation of the RTI Act which is 50% and other 05 people don't think so, who are 50%. In Dinajpur 53.33% people opine that this act increases transparency and accountability of different organizations and ministries who are 08 in out of 15. Whereas 46.67% people who are 07 out of 15 don't agree with it. The analysis was shown in table 11:

Table No. 11

Are transparency and accountability of different Organizations and ministries increased by the implementation of the RTI Act	Number of Respondents Yes	% of Yes	Number of Respondents No	% of No	Total Respondents
Gaibandha District	05	50%	05	50%	10
Dinajpur District	08	53.33%	07	46.67%	15
Total	13	51.66%	12	48.34%	25

12. The responders were asked that, are there any limitations of RTI act 2009, after analyzing their answer, it is found that 40% people think that RTI Act has limitations. Whereas 60 % people don't think so. In Gaibandha district out of 10 people 04 people think RTI act has limitations, which is 40% and other 06 people don't think so, who are 60%. In Dinajpur, 40 % people think RTI Act has limitations who are 06 in out of 15. Whereas 60 % people who are 09 out of 15 don't agree with it. The analysis was shown in table 12:

Table No. 12

Are there any limitations of RTI act 2009	Number of Respondents Yes	% of Yes	Number of Respondents No	% of No	Total Respondents
Gaibandha District	04	40%	06	60%	10
Dinajpur District	06	40%	09	60%	15
Total	15	40%	10	60%	25

TWO CASE STUDIES:

A case study is a research method that involves in depth and detailed investigation, interpretation and analysis of subjects of a study in order

to understand the complex issues or objects. It has been widely used in social sciences as a qualitative research method to investigate contemporary real-life situations to increase experience or level up the existing knowledge through previous research.

Let's take a look in two case studies related to the implementation of Right to Information Act 2009:

Case Study 01:

Majider Vita Government Primary School is situated in Padumshohor Union of shaghata thana, Gaibandha. Though it was a government school, it had many problems including a lack of space. For these reasons, it was not possible to continue educational programs. The teachers filed an application to the government, asking for it to extend the school building. In the 2010-2011 election, landless committee leader Fazlul Haque became the president of the school management committee. After getting elected, Fazlul Haque discussed plans of the school's extension with other members of the landless committee. The members collected 3000 signatures in a petition to extend the school building, with the support of the landless leaders, the school management committee presented a memorandum to the officer-in-charge of Primary Education Improvement Project. Copies of the application were also sent to the primary education ministry, local government ministry and also the rural development ministry.

The application for the school extension was approved. This project was named the 'extra classroom construction' project. The engineering department of the local government ministry was given the responsibility to implement this project. The cost was estimated at TK 12, 75504.

In June 2010, the local government's engineering department called for tender. Abdul Hamid Babu, being the lowest bidder, was given the work, Later on Abdul Hamid Babu gave the work to local contactor Enamul, Sub contractor Enamul started the work on 7th August, 2010 but did not pay much attention to the quality of the work. Seeing this, the landless committee wanted detailed information about the project, including the design of the building and the specification of ingredients. The committee got this information on the 26th of September and started using it to inspect the work's progress. The

landless committee saw differences between the project's plan and actual work.

On 27th September, the committee discovered that more sand was mixed with the cement than was specified in the plan, and the rods used were of inferior quality. Then the landless demanded that the developers showed their construction plan. Instead of listening to them, the developers threatened them. To avoid scuffles the landless left the place and sat at a meeting to discuss what actions they could take. They decided to take help of RTI act. So, they applied under the RTI Act to know answers from the the upazilla technician and the local government technical office authority of the following questions:

- 1) Why the Sub contractor was appointed
- 2) Why the contractor did not provide information of the construction though it was demanded
- 3) Why builders from outside were appointed and
- 4) Why the project manager did not come to inspect the work regularly

Within a few days they have their answers and the owner of the main developer organization and the chairman of Padumshohor Union Parisad came to inspect the situation. They agreed that the project inspection was insufficient. For this reason, some changes were brought to the project, the main contractor was asked to do the work himself. They built the foundation again based on the specifications, and the engineer agreed to visit the building regularly. The extension project was completed on 9th November due to the unified intervention of the landless and by implementing the Right to Information Act, 2009.

Case study- 02

Aleya Begum, lives in Saidpur, which is located in northern part of Bangladesh. She wanted to help a poor patient who also lived in her locality. She knew free medical service was available to the local hospital for indigent patients. SO, one day she took her neighbor to the Saidpur Government Hospital. When she asked for free medicine for her sick neighbor she was behaved rudely and refused to give free medicine. She had to pay for the medicine forcedly. Later in weekly meeting to her PAR group's, Aleya Begum share her heartened experience. The group suggested him that why not she take help of RTI act. So, she applied under the RTI Act to know from the Hospital authority that whether government provide free medicine for indigent

patients and, if so, what are the name of these medicine and how much of the medicine are provided for free distribution in the previous month. Within a few days she received a call from that hospital authority. They told her to meet DO at hospital. She went to the DO who warmly received Aleya Begum. He praised her for her responses to help a poor patient. Then he promised to provide her the information she sought. Within a few days, Aleya got the information she wanted.

In another PAR group's weekly meeting, Aleya Begum shared her good experience. She said she got all the information she wanted to know. she also added that all the medicines which they bought on that day are free but because of some bad people; patience had to buy these medicines which is totally illegal. The hospital authority promised to find out those culprits and will take action to punish them and they kept their promise. They also publicized the list of free medicines for the patients so that no one could be harassed. This story of Aleya Begum makes local population believe that with the help of RTI act they can demand information to ensure their citizens right.

Findings from the case study:

Public are accredited when they have the power to know information from the governmental and non- governmental authority. While individuals are not to feel free to ask questions governmental and non-governmental officials, particularly at the local level, in that case RTI act provides a legal mechanism and an avenue for seeking information. Individuals like Aleya Begum and Fazlul Haque can apply or demand their necessary information using the RTI Act to empower themselves as well as individuals in their communities that face common challenges. Thus using the RTI Act can be a platform for both communities and individuals to stand for the rights and ensure that they receive all the government benefits.

Collective action can be combined with RTI requests for more effective advocacy against corrupted practices. Fazlul Haque and his communities experience proved that. While Sub – Contractor refuses to give them information they use RTI act. After that within a few days, they have their answers and the owner of the main developer organization and the chairman of Padumshohor Union Parisad came to inspect the situation. They agreed that the project inspection was insufficient. For this reason some changes were brought to the project.

Which clearly indicates that RTI Act can serve as a vehicle for obtaining information when other administrative systems have been exhausted.

Patience and persistence can overcome bureaucratic attitudes and the traditional culture of secrecy within many government offices. Like Aleya Begum who used this RTI Act to know from the Hospital authority that whether government provide free medicine for indigent patients. Within a few days she received a call from that hospital authority. They told her to meet DO at hospital. She went to the DO who warmly received Aleya Begum. He praised her for her responses to help a poor patient. Then he promised to provide her the information she sought. Within a few days, Aleya got the information she wanted. She brought under justice to those officials who have no respect to their duties. She also make people believe that as a citizen you have the right to know what is going on in your locality and elsewhere in Bangladesh to aid communities in making lawful demands.

The Right to Information Act 2009 has created the scope for citizens to get information from the government. Before the enactment of this law all the official documents of both governmental and non-governmental institutions are prohibited for the general public but now RTI act opens the information to ensure transparency and accountability. For various benefits of this Law Day by day, the law is becoming popular. According to the annual report 2017 of Information Commission the total number of applications applied for various information was 8167, whereas in 2018 the number was 8660. In various ministry number of applications for information is 4207, in commission the number was 198, 42 applications were applied to bank, in NGO the number is 385. So, we can easily see how the using rate of this act is increasing and Bangladesh starts to find out the effectiveness and benefits of using this act. According to Transparency International index before introducing the RTI act Bangladesh was champion or position second, third in corruption but things got changed after the enactment of that law. Now position of her is 14 th in the ranking of corruption. Reason behind this, It gives individuals, groups, and companies the right to be able to obtain information from public bodies while also obliging those public bodies to facilitate that access through responses to requests and the proactive publishing of information. Moreover, the adoption of right to information legislation has been found to improve the record keeping practices of public bodies so that the remains no way to engender of corruption. It's a matter of great

hope Bangladesh is on the right track in case of implementation of this act

Overall Analysis and Findings:

RTI act has brought transparency and accountability in various sector which consequences good governance and development. It is considered the mother of all rights as it ensures people participation which is pre condition of development and democratic system. Based on the facts, information, analysis and evaluation, the following matters are crystal clear that:

1. Implementation of Right to information act 2009 enables citizens, media, NGOs and agencies to use officials' records, information to uncover cases of corruption and illegal activities.
2. Right to information is essential to run a democratic society and promote participation, transparency and accountability. It allows governments to mobilize new sources of policy ideas, information and resources. It contributes to build public trust in government, raise the quality of democracy and strengthen civic capacity. It also helps to strengthen representative democracy to ensure political accountability. Right to information is intended to foster a culture of openness - making government more accountable and enhancing public participation in the democratic decision-making process.
3. Still in some cases, government officials don't want to disclose information due to their lack of knowledge about the Act. While it is true that some officials continued to deny information even after learning about the Act. Less employees are recruited as information officers in the governmental and non-governmental institutions. Moreover, they are not trained.
4. Still most of the people don't know about the existence of this act. Therefore, they are neglected and cannot consume their citizen rights in some cases. While analyzing it is found that In Gaibandha district only 5% percent people know about this act. 95% people don't know about it. In Dinajpur 7.5% people know about this RTI act 2009. 92.5% percent people don't know about it. Number of males know about the Act in Gaibnadh and Dinajpur district are 09 and 10. Whereas Number of Females know about the Act in both district are 01

and 05. Number of males don't know about the Act in Gaibandha and Dinajpur district are 151 and 139. Whereas Number of Females don't know about the Act are 39 and 46. Overall, **6.25% Answered Yes. 93.75% Answered no.** 19 males know about the Act. **06** Females know about it. **290** males don't know about the Act. **85** females don't know about it.

5. The majority of the people think that, Right to Information Act is a citizen-friendly law that makes the public a confidence on the government as well as increased government's accountability. They also think that RTI provides citizens the opportunity of being informed of what government does for them, why and how it does. In Gaibandha district 50% percent people think RTI Act is a people-friendly law in establishing civic rights. 50% people don't think so. In Dinajpur 66.66% people think RTI Act is a people-friendly law in establishing civic rights. 33.34% percent people don't think so. Overall, **58.3% Answered Yes. 41.67% Answered no.**

6. Nearly all of the respondents haven't any knowledge about the provisions of RTI Act. It is found that 85% respondents don't have any idea about any single provisions of the Right to Information Act, 2009. Only 15% respondents have knowledge about some specific provisions of this act. In Gaibandha none but one respondent has knowledge about some provisions of this act. Others don't have knowledge. In Dinajpur only 3 respondents know about the provisions. Others don't know.

7. The majority of the respondents haven't use this act yet. Through their answer it is found that number of percentage in Gaibandha District in case of applying to search information under the Right to Information Act, 2009 by filling up an RTI application is 20% and 80% don't apply, here the population consist of 10. The number of percentage in Dinajpur District is 26.66% applied for seeking information under the RTI Act 2009 by filling up an RTI application and 55.8 % don't use this act, and here the total respondent is 15. Therefore, comparing two districts in case of applying to search information under the Right to Information Act, 2009 is 23.33 % who apply or use this

act to find information by filling up an RTI application and rest 76.67% haven't use this act yet.

8. Most of the people face problems in getting the information. It is found that the percentage in Gaibandha in case of facing any problem while finding information, 50% responders replied Yes and 50% replied no. here the calculating respondents are 02. Where as in Dinajpur district 75 % responders face problem, 25% don't. Overall, 62.5% citizens face obstacle in getting information and 37.5 % don't.

9. The majority of the respondents thinks RTI Act 2009 play a promotional role in establishing accountability, transparency and good governance at all levels of the state. They also think that RTI act switch up the rate of transparency in high level. It is found that 60% people of Gaibandha district RTI Act 2009 play a promotional role in establishing accountability, transparency and good governance at all levels of the state and 40% don't agree with the point. 33.34 % people of Dinajpur district don't think that. whereas 66.66% citizens agree with that point. Above all, 63.33% of total population thinks RTI act increases transparency and accountability of organizations and ministries and 36.37% don't think so.

10. Most of the people agree with the point that, awareness is increased among the citizens about the right to information after the enactment of RTI act 2009. In district Gaibandha , 60% people think that awareness increased among the citizens, , after the enactment of RTI act 2009 and 25% people don't think so. In Dinajpur 73.34% people agree with the point and 33.33% don't. Overall, 66.67% think that awareness increased among the citizens about the right to information after the enactment of RTI act 2009 and 33.33% people don't agree with that point.

11. The majority of the respondents agree with the point that they noticed changes in attitude or behavior of the public service delivery officials after the enactment RTI act 2009. In district Gaibandha , 60% people noticed changes in attitude or behavior of the public service delivery officials after the enactment RTI act 2009 and 40 % people don't think so. In Dinajpur 53.33% people agree with that point and 46.67 % don't. Overall, 56.66 % noticed changes in attitude or behavior

of the public service delivery officials after the enactment RTI act 2009 and 43.33% people don't agree with that point.

12. Most of the people think that RTI Act is an effective tool to tackle corruption. After analyzing their answer, it is found that 76.67% people think that RTI Act is an armor to tackle corruption where as 23.33% people don't think so. In Gaibandha district out of 10 people 08 people agree that this act is a lethal weapon to wipe out corruption which is 80% and only 02 people don't think it is an anti-corruption tool which is 20%. In Dinajpur 73.34% people who are 11 in out of 15 opine that this act can prevent corruption. Whereas 23.33% people who are 04 out of 15 don't agree with it.

13. The majority of the respondents think that the level and trends of corruption are decreasing in different organizations and ministries after the enactment of RTI act 2009. After analyzing their answer, it is found that 71.67% people think that RTI Act is an armor to tackle corruption where as 28.33% people don't think so. In Gaibandha district out of 10 people 07 people agree that this act is a lethal weapon to decrease corruption in different organizations and ministries which is 70% and only 03 people don't agree with that point which is 30%. In Dinajpur 73.34% people who are 11 in out of 15 opine that this act decrease corruption in different organizations and ministries. Whereas 26.66% people who are 04 out of 15 don't agree with it.

14. Nearly half of the respondents thinks transparency and accountability of different organizations and ministries increased by the implementation of the RTI Act. It is found that 51.66% people think that RTI Act is an armor to tackle corruption where as 48.34% people don't think so. In Gaibandha district out of 10 people 05 people agree that transparency and accountability of different organizations and ministries increased by the implementation of the RTI Act which is 50% and other 05 people don't think so, who are 50%. In Dinajpur 53.33% people who are 08 in out of 15 opine that this act increases transparency and accountability of different organizations and ministries. Whereas 46.67% people who are 07 out of 15 don't agree with it.

15. Most of the people think that there are some limitations of RTI act 2009. It is found that 40% people think that RTI Act has limitations. Whereas 60 % people don't think so. In Gaibandha district out of 10 people 04 people think RTI act has limitations, which is 40% and other 06 people don't think so, who are 60%. In Dinajpur, 40 % people think RTI Act has limitations who are 06 in out of 15 . Whereas 60 % people who are 09 out of 15 don't agree with it.

16. Effective use of the RTI Act by citizens can not only enhance individual living conditions, but can also inspire other members of their community to make use of RTI. In some of the cases presented citizens were inspired to use RTI after witnessing the result of RTI use by others.

Recommendations

No doubt right to information act 2009 is a vanguard to protect society from the bite of corruption but to use this armour first you have to know how to use this act and other facts about it. So, awareness must be grown among the people about Right to information act .In that case, media can be great tools to create awareness among the citizens. They can telecast various programs or can write articles about the advantage of this act so that people can know about the existence of it. Moreover, following matters can be emphasized for effective implementation of this act:

- There is a need of Planning for proper infrastructure system so that effective implementation of RTI can be ensured. The roles and responsibilities at all the execution and monitoring levels are need to be clearly defined. It is seen that lacking in monitoring process often disturbs smooth practice of this act.
- It is important to establish an RTI Implementation Cell. This Cell will check implementation status and the official's execution rate of work to understand overall implementation level.
- Initiative of educational programs and trainings, in particular of disadvantaged, neglected and rural communities

regarding how to exercise the rights contemplated under this Act, should be emphasized.

- It is found that people sometimes complain that the officials don't give them information because they haven't any records or file on that subjects. Therefore, it is important to have a effective record management system that should facilitate:

1. Recycle bin of records in a timely manner;
2. Fastest searching method and timely bound retrieval of records when in time of need.
3. Monitoring of different type of records over its life cycle;
4. Protection of records, data, information against risks such as disaster, fire etc.

- For reshaping the processes, structure and operations, information technology can be used. By using it, the productivity and efficiency of the Public Authorities will increase, which will ensure improving the quality of service. So, this process should be given more emphasized.

- Sometimes it is seen that information officers are not good at in giving information to the demand side as they have lack of knowledge about Right to Information Act. So, Training of Information Officers in case of dealing with the information seeker should be given priority.

- The government may also give emphasis on the following topics:

1. UN Convention Against Corruption, is the global initiative that provides a framework for putting an end to corruption. Government of our country may focuses on strict implementation of the UNCAC.

2. Strengthening of the prevention of Corruption Act and removal of the restriction.

3. Giving independence to Anti-Corruption Commission

4. To ensure public services Citizens charters with penalty clause are hanged in the institutions.

5. Strengthen the Planning Commission role to monitor the expenditure of money, subsidies, grants and laying stress on outcomes rather than outputs, etc.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS:

The results argued that Right to information act creates hinders in case of smooth practice of secrecy and corruption. As a result, the corruption rate is decreasing day by day. Though a large number of people still don't know about this act. Those who know about the exitance of the law having lack of knowledge of using it. They don't know the important provisions of this act. Moreover, information officials are not professional too. In fact, their number is less than the required man power. People often complain that they don't find information because the appointed officials are not good at their work. Those who use this act opine that this act is an effective armour and vanguard to prevent corruption and wiped out secrecy. They think it is also effective to ensure the constitutional right of citizens. Before the enactment of this law institutions and organizations don't allow citizens to show any governmental or institutional documents but now, they are bound to show or publish it. They see this as the success of RTI act. According to them government must focus on Using available mass media and other forms of cultural communication to make people understand how this act can be effective for the citizens to ensure their citizen right. If the effective implementation of this act is assured only then it is possible to ensure transparency, accountability and good governance in every sphere of Bangladesh.

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