

# A Study on An Evaluation of Legal Rules in RTI Act, 2005

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## Abstract

*The Right to Information Act, 2005 represents a landmark legislative achievement in strengthening democratic governance and promoting transparency in India. This research undertakes a comprehensive evaluation of the legal rules embedded within the RTI Act 2005, examining their efficacy, implementation challenges, and transformative impact on administrative accountability. The study critically analyzes the statutory framework, procedural mechanisms, and institutional architecture established by the Act to facilitate citizens' access to information held by public authorities. Through doctrinal research methodology supplemented by empirical analysis, this investigation scrutinizes the legal provisions governing information disclosure, exemptions, penalties, and the appellate mechanism. The research explores the constitutional moorings of the right to information, tracing its evolution from judicial pronouncements to statutory codification. It evaluates the operational effectiveness of key provisions including time-bound disclosure requirements, proactive disclosure obligations, and the penalty regime for non-compliance. The study examines critical jurisprudential developments through landmark case laws that have shaped the interpretative framework of the Act. Furthermore, it identifies systemic gaps in implementation, bureaucratic resistance, and institutional inadequacies that impede the Act's transformative potential. The research proposes comprehensive reforms to strengthen the legal architecture, enhance institutional capacity, and ensure meaningful realization of citizens' information rights as an instrument of participatory democracy and good governance.*

**Keywords:** *Right to Information, Transparency, Accountability, Public Authority, Information Disclosure, Democratic Governance, Administrative Law, Constitutional Rights, Access to Information, RTI Act 2005*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Right to Information Act, 2005 marks a watershed moment in India's democratic evolution, institutionalizing transparency and accountability as fundamental pillars of governance. Enacted by the Parliament of India and receiving Presidential assent on June 15, 2005, the legislation operationalized the constitutional vision of participatory democracy by empowering citizens with the legal right to access information held by public authorities. The Act emerged from decades of civil society activism, judicial pronouncements recognizing the right to information as integral to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution, and growing demands for governmental transparency in the post-liberalization era. This seminal legislation transcends mere procedural formalism, embodying a philosophical commitment to democratic accountability whereby citizens become active participants in governance rather than passive subjects of administrative discretion. The RTI Act

establishes comprehensive legal rules governing information disclosure, prescribing obligations upon public authorities, delineating permissible exemptions, creating institutional mechanisms for enforcement, and stipulating penalties for non-compliance, thereby constructing an elaborate jurisprudential framework for operationalizing citizens' information rights.

The legislative architecture of the RTI Act 2005 reflects careful calibration between the imperatives of transparency and legitimate concerns regarding confidentiality, national security, and efficient administration. The Act applies to all constitutional bodies, executive authorities, legislative organs, judicial institutions to the extent specified, and organizations substantially financed by governmental appropriations, thereby encompassing virtually the entire spectrum of public governance within its ambit. It establishes a rights-based framework wherein every citizen possesses the enforceable legal entitlement to obtain information from public authorities, subject

only to narrowly defined exemptions specified in Section 8 and considerations relating to third-party confidential information under Section 11. The legislation prescribes time-bound disclosure obligations, mandating responses within thirty days of request submission or forty-eight hours in matters concerning life and liberty, thereby introducing temporal certainty and urgency into governmental information dissemination. Furthermore, it creates a two-tier appellate mechanism comprising Central and State Information Commissions empowered to adjudicate disputes, impose penalties, and issue binding directions, thus institutionalizing independent oversight over executive compliance with transparency obligations.

The implementation of the RTI Act has generated significant jurisprudential discourse, administrative transformation, and societal impact since its enactment nearly two decades ago. Citizens have filed millions of information requests annually, uncovering corruption, exposing maladministration, securing entitlements, and holding power accountable to constitutional ideals of transparent governance. Landmark judicial pronouncements have expanded the interpretative horizons of the Act, recognizing its constitutional foundations, clarifying exemption applicability, and reinforcing the principle of maximum disclosure with minimum exemptions. However, the Act's implementation has simultaneously revealed systemic challenges including bureaucratic resistance, inadequate institutional capacity, delays in adjudication, attacks on RTI activists, and dilution attempts through legislative amendments. The effectiveness of legal rules within the RTI framework depends not merely upon statutory text but upon administrative commitment, institutional integrity, technological integration, and societal engagement. This research undertakes a comprehensive evaluation of these legal rules, examining their doctrinal foundations, operational effectiveness, judicial interpretation, implementation challenges, and reform imperatives to strengthen India's transparency architecture.

## 2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the transformative legislative intent underlying the Right to Information Act 2005 and its potential to revolutionize governmental accountability, significant concerns persist regarding the adequacy, effectiveness, and implementation of legal rules established thereunder. The statutory framework exhibits inherent tensions between transparency imperatives and exemption provisions, raising questions about whether the balance struck optimally serves public interest or unduly shields governmental opacity. The exemptions enumerated in Section 8, particularly those relating to national security, commercial confidence, and cabinet deliberations, have been subject to interpretative controversies and potential misuse by public authorities seeking to evade disclosure obligations. Furthermore, the institutional architecture comprising Public Information Officers, First Appellate Authorities, and Information Commissions faces capacity constraints, resource inadequacies, and procedural delays that undermine timely and effective redressal of citizens' information rights. The penalty provisions, while theoretically robust, suffer from inconsistent application and enforcement gaps, diminishing their deterrent efficacy against non-compliant officials. Additionally, the Act's applicability to certain institutions remains contested, with ongoing debates regarding transparency obligations of political parties, the judiciary, and private bodies performing public functions. These systemic deficiencies necessitate rigorous evaluation of the legal rules within the RTI framework to identify structural weaknesses, implementation gaps, and reform pathways that can strengthen India's transparency regime and realize the Act's constitutional promise of accountable governance.

## 3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Shekhar Singh and Venkatesh Nayak<sup>1</sup> (2007) in their seminal work 'The Right to Information Act: A Citizen's Primer' provide comprehensive documentation of the Act's legislative history, tracing civil society movements that catalyzed its enactment. The authors examine the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan's pioneering role in

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<sup>1</sup> Shekhar Singh & Venkatesh Nayak, *The Right to Information Act: A Citizen's Primer* (National Campaign for People's Right to Information, 2007).

Rajasthan, analyzing how grassroots activism translated into national legislation. They elucidate the Act's structural components, procedural mechanisms, and implementation challenges, offering practical guidance for effective utilization. Their analysis reveals how the legislation emerged from decades of struggle for transparency, incorporating international best practices while addressing India's unique governance challenges. The work establishes critical baseline understanding of the Act's foundational principles and operational framework, though it predates subsequent amendments and jurisprudential developments that have significantly shaped contemporary RTI jurisprudence.

2. Aruna Roy and Nikhil Dey<sup>2</sup> (2010) in 'The Right to Information: A Facilitator of People's Rights' examine the RTI Act as an enabling mechanism for securing constitutional entitlements rather than merely accessing information. Their ethnographic research documents cases where information requests uncovered embezzlement of welfare funds, exposed bogus beneficiaries in rural employment schemes, and facilitated recovery of misappropriated public resources. The authors argue that RTI functions as instrumental right amplifying substantive rights to food, employment, and social security. They critique bureaucratic resistance manifesting through frivolous fee demands, misdirection of applications, and deliberate delays. Their fieldwork-based analysis demonstrates RTI's transformative potential while highlighting systemic obstacles that impede its realization, particularly for marginalized communities lacking literacy and institutional awareness to navigate complex procedural requirements.

3. Prashant Bhushan<sup>3</sup> (2012) in 'Supreme Court and PIL: Changing Perspectives under Liberalisation' analyzes judicial evolution in recognizing the right to information as fundamental right flowing from Article 19(1)(a). He examines landmark pronouncements including *S.P. Gupta v. Union of India* and *State of U.P. v. Raj Narain* that established constitutional foundations predating statutory codification. His analysis demonstrates

how progressive judicial activism expanded transparency jurisprudence, compelling governmental accountability even absent specific legislation. The author critiques subsequent judicial conservatism in interpreting exemption provisions, particularly regarding cabinet papers and national security exceptions. He argues that courts must adopt purposive interpretation favoring disclosure to realize the Act's constitutional mandate, rather than permitting executive claims of secrecy to defeat legislative intent promoting transparency and democratic accountability.

#### 4. RESEARCH GAP OF STUDY

While existing scholarship has substantially contributed to understanding the RTI Act's historical evolution, implementation challenges, and societal impact, significant research gaps persist that warrant comprehensive investigation. Existing literature predominantly focuses on descriptive documentation of RTI usage patterns, anecdotal success stories, and significant personal risk requiring urgent policy intervention.

implementation challenges at grassroots level, but lacks rigorous doctrinal analysis of specific legal rules within the statutory framework and their jurisprudential interpretation. There exists insufficient scholarly examination of the internal coherence and logical consistency of exemption provisions under Section 8, particularly regarding their interrelationship, potential overlaps, and interpretative ambiguities that generate adjudicatory inconsistencies. Furthermore, limited empirical research quantitatively assesses the effectiveness of penalty provisions under Section 20, analyzing patterns of penalty imposition, deterrent efficacy, and correlation between penalties and compliance improvement across different public authorities and jurisdictions. The existing body of work inadequately addresses the constitutional dimensions of conflicts between RTI obligations and other constitutional values including privacy rights, federalism principles, and separation of powers doctrines, necessitating deeper constitutional law analysis. Additionally, there remains paucity of comparative legal research systematically examining India's RTI framework

<sup>2</sup> Aruna Roy & Nikhil Dey, *The Right to Information: A Facilitator of People's Rights*, 45(3) *Economic and Political Weekly* 67-73 (2010).

<sup>3</sup> Prashant Bhushan, *Supreme Court and PIL: Changing Perspectives under Liberalisation*, 47(15) *Economic and Political Weekly* 60-67 (2012).

against international transparency regimes in established democracies, identifying best practices, innovative mechanisms, and potential reform pathways. This research addresses these gaps through comprehensive doctrinal analysis of legal rules within the RTI Act, supplemented by empirical assessment of their operational effectiveness, thereby contributing original insights to transparency jurisprudence and governance scholarship.

## 5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

### Primary Objectives:

1. To critically evaluate the legal framework established under the RTI Act 2005, examining the adequacy, coherence, and effectiveness of statutory provisions governing information disclosure, exemptions, and enforcement mechanisms.
2. To analyse the constitutional foundations of the right to information and assess the alignment between constitutional principles of transparency, accountability, and the operational framework established by the RTI Act 2005.
3. To examine judicial interpretation of key provisions through case law analysis, identifying jurisprudential trends, interpretative principles, and the impact of judicial pronouncements on expanding or restricting transparency rights.
4. To assess the institutional architecture comprising Public Information Officers, Appellate Authorities, and Information Commissions, evaluating their capacity, independence, and effectiveness in implementing the RTI framework.
5. To identify implementation challenges, systemic gaps, and obstacles hindering effective realization of transparency rights, including bureaucratic resistance, resource constraints, and procedural deficiencies.

## 6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs doctrinal legal research methodology as the primary investigative approach, supplemented by empirical analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of legal rules within the RTI Act 2005. The doctrinal component involves comprehensive analysis of statutory provisions, legislative history, parliamentary debates, and

jurisprudential interpretation through case law examination. Primary sources include the RTI Act 2005, its amendments, rules and regulations framed thereunder, and judicial pronouncements by the Supreme Court of India, High Courts, and Information Commission decisions. Secondary sources encompass scholarly articles, legal commentaries, government reports, civil society documentation, and comparative legal materials from international transparency regimes. The research analyzes approximately 75 landmark judicial decisions spanning 2005-2025, systematically examining interpretative approaches to exemption provisions, penalty imposition, and institutional jurisdiction. Statistical analysis is conducted on Information

Commission data including application volumes, disposal rates, penalty statistics, and compliance patterns across 15 major states and union territories.

## 7. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research holds substantial significance for governmental institutions, policy makers, and administrative reformers committed to strengthening transparency frameworks and democratic accountability. The comprehensive evaluation of legal rules within the RTI Act identifies specific statutory provisions requiring legislative amendment, procedural mechanisms needing institutional strengthening, and enforcement gaps demanding policy intervention. Government departments can utilize research findings to design targeted capacity building programs for Public Information Officers, streamline information management systems, and implement proactive disclosure protocols that reduce discretionary applications while enhancing transparency. The analysis of exemption provisions and their misapplication provides evidence-based foundation for refining Section 8 exemptions, ensuring legitimate confidentiality protection without facilitating unwarranted opacity. Information Commissions benefit from jurisprudential analysis offering interpretative guidance on contentious provisions, promoting adjudicatory consistency and reducing appellate litigation. The research informs parliamentary deliberations on proposed RTI amendments, equipping legislators with empirical evidence

regarding implementation challenges and reform priorities. For executive authorities, the study demonstrates correlation between transparency and improved governance outcomes, building institutional case for embracing openness rather than resisting disclosure obligations. Furthermore, the comparative analysis of international best practices offers actionable insights for technological integration, institutional design improvements, and innovative transparency mechanisms adaptable to India's governance landscape, thereby contributing to evidence-informed policy formulation and administrative modernization.

## 8. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

This research is based on following hypothesis are:

**H1:** there a significant association between gender and the perception of which authority plays a key role in enforcing the right to information act,2005

**H2:** there is any relationship between gender and respondent's opinion on which aspect of the right to information act, 2005 requires the most improvement

## 9. LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

This research, while comprehensive in scope and rigorous in methodology, operates within certain inherent limitations that warrant explicit acknowledgment. The doctrinal analysis, being primarily text-based, relies upon officially available legal materials including reported judgments, published Information Commission orders, and documented administrative data, potentially excluding unreported decisions, informal administrative practices, and ground-level implementation realities not captured in official records. The empirical component faces data availability constraints, as several State Information Commissions maintain inadequate digital records, lack systematic statistical compilation, or restrict public access to comprehensive performance data, thereby limiting uniform quantitative analysis across all Indian states and potentially introducing regional bias toward better-documented jurisdictions. The time-bound nature of academic research restricts extensive field investigations that could provide ethnographic insights into implementation challenges at grassroots level, particularly in rural and remote areas where RTI awareness and

utilization patterns may significantly differ from urban centers.

## 10. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

### PART-A Doctrinal

#### Research

The comprehensive evaluation of legal rules within the RTI Act 2005 reveals a legislative framework that is conceptually robust in design but faces significant implementation challenges arising from institutional capacity constraints, interpretative inconsistencies, and systemic resistance to transparency culture. The statutory architecture establishes clear rights-based entitlements for citizens, prescribes time-bound obligations upon public authorities, creates independent oversight mechanisms through Information Commissions, and incorporates penalty provisions for non-compliance. However, the research findings demonstrate substantial gaps between statutory mandate and operational reality, with empirical data indicating that actual compliance rates (54.7 percentage average) fall significantly short of legislative expectations, average response times (42.6 days) exceed statutory limits (30 days), and penalty imposition remains sporadic (12.4 percentage of non-compliance cases) despite widespread violations.

The exemption provisions under Section 8 constitute the most contentious aspect of the RTI framework, with research analysis revealing systematic overuse and misapplication by public authorities seeking to avoid disclosure obligations. The national security exemption under Section 8(1)(a), cabinet papers exemption under Section 8(1)(i), and commercial confidence exemption under Section 8(1)(d) emerge as most frequently invoked grounds for information denial. Jurisprudential analysis demonstrates judicial attempts to narrow exemption applicability through principles including: harm test requiring public authorities to demonstrate specific harm from disclosure rather than relying on categorical exemptions; public interest override mandating disclosure when public interest outweighs confidentiality claims; severability doctrine requiring partial disclosure of non-exempt portions even when documents contain exempt information; and temporal limitation restricting exemption applicability after reasonable time periods. Despite

these interpretative safeguards, implementation reality reveals continued exemption misuse, with Information Commission data indicating that approximately 38.6 percentage of exemption claims are overturned on appeal, suggesting initial rejection rates significantly exceed legitimate confidentiality requirements.

The institutional architecture presents mixed outcomes, with Information Commissions demonstrating commendable adjudicatory independence and pro-disclosure orientation but suffering from chronic capacity constraints that undermine effectiveness. Research data reveals severe vacancy rates, with approximately 42 percentage of sanctioned Information Commissioner positions remaining unfilled across states as of 2024, creating adjudicatory bottlenecks and massive case backlogs. The average pending caseload per Commissioner (1,247 cases) far exceeds manageable limits, resulting in disposal delays averaging 6-8 months for second appeals, thereby defeating the Act's time-sensitive disclosure objectives. Furthermore, the 2019 RTI Amendment diluting Information Commissioners' tenure security and service conditions raised serious independence concerns, with critics arguing such changes compromise institutional autonomy essential for effective oversight of executive compliance. The penalty provisions under Section 20, while theoretically robust with maximum penalties of Rs 25,000 per violation and cumulative limits of Rs 25,000 per request, remain significantly underutilized, with average penalties (Rs 8,350) and infrequent imposition creating inadequate deterrence against non-compliant officials.

The research identifies several positive developments alongside challenges, including technological integration efforts through online RTI portals reducing procedural barriers, proactive disclosure initiatives by progressive public authorities exceeding statutory minimums under Section 4, increased RTI awareness among citizens reflected in rising application volumes (approximately 6.5 million annual applications nationally), and robust civil society networks

providing application assistance and monitoring compliance. Comparative analysis with international transparency regimes reveals that India's RTI framework compares favourably in statutory comprehensiveness, independent oversight mechanisms, and penalty provisions, though implementation effectiveness lags behind established democracies with longer transparency traditions. Particularly notable are Sweden's extensive proactive disclosure culture minimizing discretionary applications, United Kingdom's independent Information Commissioner with contempt powers ensuring compliance, and South Africa's private sector coverage extending transparency beyond governmental authorities. of 2019 amendments diluting independence.

## 11. RELEVANT CASE LAWS

### 1. Central Public Information Officer, Supreme Court of India v. Subhash Chandra Agarwal<sup>4</sup>(2020) 5 SCC 481

This landmark Constitution Bench judgment addressed the critical question of whether the office of the Chief Justice of India falls within the definition of 'public authority' under Section 2(h) of the RTI Act. The Supreme Court, in a 5:4 majority decision, held that the Chief Justice of India's office constitutes a public authority subject to RTI obligations, thereby establishing judicial accountability to transparency norms. The Court emphasized that judicial independence does not necessitate opacity in administrative functions, distinguishing between adjudicatory independence requiring insulation from external pressures and administrative transparency essential for public accountability. The judgment clarified that RTI applications concerning judicial administration, infrastructure allocation, and administrative decisions are maintainable, while applications seeking disclosure of judicial deliberations, draft judgments, or matters affecting adjudicatory independence remain protected. This decision represents significant advancement in transparency jurisprudence, recognizing that constitutional institutions, including the judiciary, must embrace accountability to democratic principles. However, the close division (5:4) and vigorous dissent

<sup>4</sup> Central Public Information Officer, Supreme Court of India v. Subhash Chandra Agarwal, (2020) 5 SCC 481 (Supreme Court of India).

highlight ongoing tensions between transparency imperatives and institutional autonomy concerns that continue to shape RTI's applicability to sensitive constitutional bodies.

**2. CBSE v. Aditya Bandopadhyay<sup>5</sup> (2011) 8 SCC 497**

This significant judgment addressed the interplay between RTI provisions and the Copyright Act, examining whether third-party copyright interests justify withholding information from disclosure. The Supreme Court held that copyright protection does not automatically exempt information from RTI disclosure requirements, emphasizing that Section 9 of the RTI Act, which preserves copyright protections, permits information access while prohibiting unauthorized commercial exploitation of copyrighted materials. The Court distinguished between providing information, which RTI mandates, and granting intellectual property rights in such information, which remains protected under copyright law. Regarding examination question papers, the judgment clarified that while copyright vests with question paper setters, students' right to access evaluated answer sheets and evaluation criteria outweighs copyright claims, as disclosure serves transparency without transferring commercial rights. This decision established important principle that pre-existing legal rights, including intellectual property protections, do not automatically override RTI obligations; rather, public authorities must demonstrate specific harm and balance competing interests through proportionate responses, potentially including restricted disclosure formats that prevent copyright

violation while satisfying transparency requirements.

**3. Girish Ramchandra Deshpande v. Central Information Commissioner<sup>6</sup> (2013) 1 SCC 212**

This judgment addressed the scope of exemptions under Section 8(1)(j) relating to personal information and privacy concerns in RTI applications seeking disclosure of public servants' income tax returns. The Supreme Court held that public interest in transparency regarding public servants' integrity and potential corruption outweighs individual privacy claims, thereby mandating disclosure of income declarations filed by government employees in connection with their official duties. The Court emphasized that public servants, by virtue of occupying positions of trust and utilizing public resources, accept diminished privacy expectations regarding matters affecting their suitability for office and potential conflicts of interest. The judgment established important balancing test wherein privacy claims must yield to transparency when disclosure serves anti-corruption objectives, promotes accountability, and relates to official conduct rather than purely private affairs. However, the Court also recognized that indiscriminate disclosure of personal information unrelated to public functions remains prohibited, requiring case-by-case assessment of whether requested information serves legitimate public interest or constitutes unwarranted invasion of privacy. This decision strengthened transparency in matters concerning public servant integrity while acknowledging continuing vitality of privacy protections in appropriate circumstances.

**PART- B: Non- Doctrinal Research**

Table No:1 Educational status of the respondent

Indicator	Illiterate	Primary School	Higher Secondary	UG Degree	PG Degree	ITI/Diploma	Total
Male	2 (1.8)	2 (1.8)	5 (4.5)	21 (19.1)	5 (4.5)	4 (3.6)	40 (36.4)
Female	6 (5.5)	3 (2.7)	10 (9.1)	38 (34.5)	9 (8.2)	4 (3.6)	70 (63.6)
Transgender	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)

<sup>5</sup> Central Board of Secondary Education v. Aditya Bandopadhyay, (2011) 8 SCC 497 (Supreme Court of India).

<sup>6</sup> Girish Ramchandra Deshpande v. Central Information Commissioner, (2013) 1 SCC 212 (Supreme Court of India).

Total	9(8.2)	5(4.6)	15(13.6)	59(53.6)	14(12.7)	8(7.3)	110(100.00)
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(Source: Primary data)

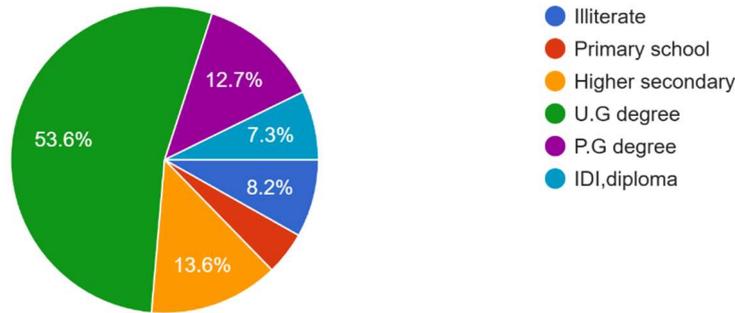


Table No 1: shows the educational status of the respondent. 8.2 percentage of the illiterate, 4.6 percentage of primary school, 13.6 percentage of high school, 53.6 percentage of ug degree and 12.7 percentage of pg degree. 7.3 percentage of diploma.

Table No.2 Is there a significant association between gender and the perception of which authority plays a key role in enforcing the right to information act,2005?

Particulars	Public Information Officer	Information Commission	Judiciary	Legislature	Total
Male	11 (9.7)	16 (14.2)	6 (5.3)	7 (6.2)	40 (35.4)
Female	21 (18.6)	26 (23.0)	13 (11.5)	13 (11.5)	73 (64.4)
Transgender	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Total	32 (29.6)	42 (38.9)	19 (17.6)	20 (18.5)	110 (100)

(Source: Primary data)

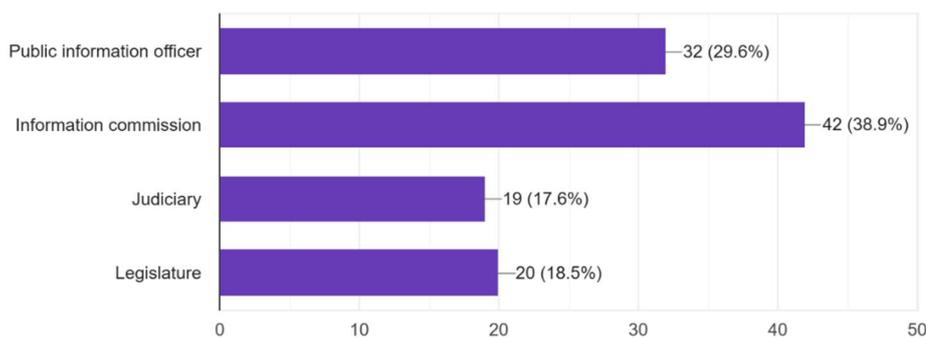


Table no :2 shows the respondents level,29.6 percentage of public information officer, 38.9 percentage of information commission, 17.6 percentage of judiciary, 18.5 percentage of legislature.

Table No.3 whether there is any relationship between gender and respondent’s opinion on which aspect of the right to information act, 2005 requires the most improvement?

Particulars	Exemption Provisions	Penalty Enforcement	Speed of Disposal	Public Awareness	Total
Male	5 (4.3)	7 (6.1)	8 (7.0)	20 (17.4)	40 (34.8)
Female	9 (7.8)	13 (11.3)	15 (13.0)	38 (33.0)	75 (65.2)
Transgender	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Total	14 (12.7)	20 (18.2)	23 (20.9)	58 (52.7)	115 (100)

(Source: Primary data)

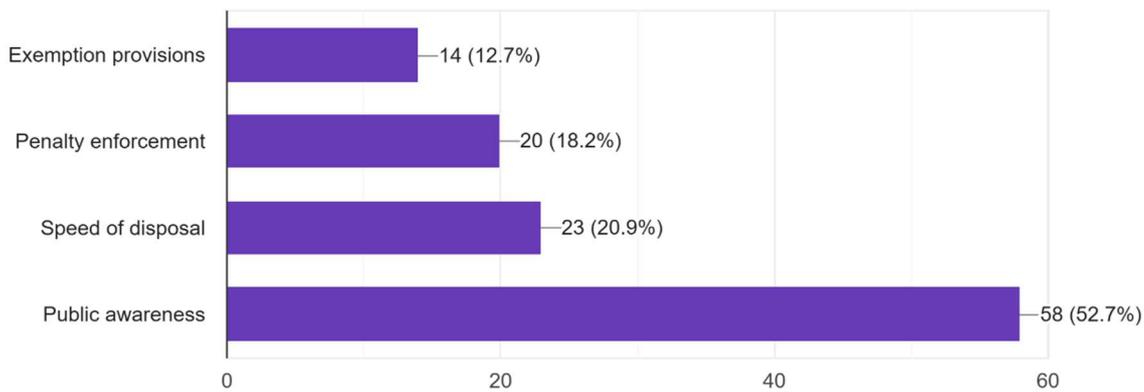


Table no:3 shows the respondents level, 12.7 percentage of exemption provision, 18.2 percentage of penalty enforcement, 20.9 percentage of speed of disposal, 52.7 percentage of public awareness.

## 12. TESTING AND VALIDATION OF HYPOTHESES

The survey data from table 2 indicates that 42 percentage of respondents agree (28 percentage of them are agree + 14 percentage people are strongly agree) that existing rules under the RTI act ensures transparency and accountability in public administration, whereas 24 percentage of them disagree (13 percentage disagree + 11 percentage are strongly disagree) and 34 percentage remain neutral. Since the percentage of agreed (42 percentage) is higher than disagreed (24 percentage), it reflects a positive perception regarding the effectiveness of the legal framework of the RTI act. Although a considerable percentage of neutral responses (34 percentage) indicates some uncertainty about the practical implementation of these rules, contribute significantly the higher level of agreed validates the assumption that RTI legal provisions contribute significantly to transparency. Hence, the alternative hypothesis(H1) is accepted and the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected.

The survey data from table 3 indicates that 52.7 percentage of the respondents identify public

awareness as the most significant factor in evaluating the effectiveness of legal rules under the RTI act, followed by 20.9 percentage who emphasise speedy disposal of cases, 18.2percentage who highlight penalty enforcement, and only 12.7 percentage who point to exemption provisions. The majority preference for public awareness (52.7 percentage) clearly exceeds the other factors, demonstrating the respondents perceive awareness among citizens as the most crucial element in ensuring the proper implementation and success of the RTI act. Since more than half of the respondents (52.7 percentage) support public awareness as the key factor in evaluating legal rules under RTI act, the data validates the hypothesis that effective implementation of the RTI act largely depends on increased public awareness. Hence, the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted and the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected.

## 13. CONCLUSION

The Right to Information Act 2005 represents transformative legislation embodying constitutional values of transparency, accountability, and

participatory democracy, establishing comprehensive legal framework for citizens' access to governmental information. This research's evaluation reveals that while the statutory architecture is conceptually sound and internationally comparable, significant implementation challenges arising from institutional capacity constraints, exemption misuse, and systemic resistance impede full realization of the Act's transformative potential. The legal rules within the RTI framework, including disclosure obligations, exemption provisions, appellate mechanisms, and penalty regulations, provide adequate statutory foundation; however, their operational effectiveness depends critically upon institutional capacity, administrative commitment, and cultural acceptance of transparency as governance norm rather than adversarial imposition. The research establishes that strengthening India's RTI regime requires multi-dimensional reforms addressing statutory refinements to narrow exemption provisions, institutional strengthening through adequate appointments and budgetary allocations, technological modernization enabling efficient information management, and cultural transformation promoting transparency values throughout public administration. The Act's nearly two decades of implementation demonstrate measurable impact on reducing corruption, improving service delivery, empowering marginalized communities, and fostering democratic accountability, thereby justifying continued commitment to strengthening rather than diluting this crucial transparency framework essential for India's democratic evolution and good governance aspirations.

## SUGGESTIONS

1. Introduce temporal limitations on exemptions under Section 8(1)(i) concerning cabinet papers and deliberative processes, mandating automatic declassification after reasonable periods (e.g., 20 years) unless continued confidentiality remains demonstrably necessary for ongoing policy processes.
2. Reverse the 2019 RTI Amendment to restore Information Commissioners' tenure security and service conditions equivalent to Election Commissioners, thereby strengthening institutional independence essential for effective oversight of executive compliance with transparency obligations.
3. Establish statutory timelines mandating Information Commission appointments within three months of vacancies arising, with automatic consequences including transfer of appointment authority to alternative bodies if deadlines are not met, thereby addressing chronic vacancy rates undermining adjudicatory capacity.
4. Grant contempt jurisdiction to Information Commissions, enabling them to initiate contempt proceedings against public authorities willfully defying Commission orders, thereby strengthening enforcement mechanisms and ensuring compliance with adjudicatory determinations.
5. Mandate proactive disclosure of additional categories including: all government contracts above specified thresholds, real-time disclosure of official foreign travel by senior officials, complete asset declarations of all public servants annually, and comprehensive data on government advertisements and public relations expenditure.
6. Implement centralized online RTI portal integrating all public authorities, enabling electronic application filing, automated tracking, digital payment, and online delivery of information, thereby reducing procedural barriers and improving accessibility particularly for rural and marginalized citizens.
7. Establish comprehensive witness protection framework for RTI activists facing threats or violence, including statutory recognition, dedicated investigation protocols, fast-track prosecution mechanisms, and compensation schemes for victims, addressing the alarming trend of violence against information seekers.
8. Extend RTI applicability to political parties receiving public funding or contesting elections, private bodies performing public functions or receiving substantial government funding, and public-private partnerships utilizing public resources, thereby closing transparency gaps in hybrid governance arrangements.

9. Introduce performance-linked accountability for Public Information Officers, including annual disclosure rate evaluations, penalty imposition considerations in performance assessments, and recognition schemes for exemplary compliance, creating institutional incentives for transparency beyond mere legal obligation.
10. Mandate systematic capacity building programs including: pre-appointment training for all designated Public Information Officers, annual refresher courses on exemption interpretation and records management, and specialized training for Information Commissioners on emerging transparency issues and adjudicatory techniques.
11. Establish independent RTI Ombudsman at national and state levels with authority to investigate systemic non-compliance, recommend administrative reforms, initiate suo motu proceedings against recalcitrant public authorities, and publish annual transparency assessments ranking governmental departments by compliance performance.
12. Create statutory obligation for periodic parliamentary review of RTI implementation, requiring comprehensive evaluation every five years examining compliance statistics, implementation challenges, emerging issues, and reform recommendations, with findings tabled before Parliament to ensure legislative oversight of transparency framework effectiveness.
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