

Structural Equation Model on Awareness of Right to Information

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ABSTRACT

The Right to information Act, 2005 which came fully into effect on 12 October, 2005 and this is one of the most significant legislation enacted by the Parliament of India. This Act enables the establishment of an unprecedented regime of right to information for the citizens of the country. It overrides the 'Official Secrets Act' and similar laws/rules. It strikes at the heart of the paradigm long practiced by Government officials and public functionaries that 'confidentiality is the rule and disclosure is an exception'. The Act seeks to establish that "transparency is the norm and secrecy is an exception" in the working of every public authority. It aims to ensure maximum openness and transparency in the machinery and functioning of Government at all levels: Central, State and Local. This article is to study on the awareness of RTI Act through media.

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Introduction

The Press Council on March 2001, had stated that the Right to Information Legislation as very vital for the media. It stated that- "At present, one of the stumbling blocks in the path of investigative, analytical and popular journalism is the difficulty in getting access to the official information. The bureaucracy, the police the army, judiciary and even the legislature guard information regarding even the most mundane subjects with astonishing zeal. Few journalists are able to break this iron curtain of the official non-cooperation. The right to Information will encourage journalists and society at large to be more questioning about the state of affairs and will be powerful tool to check the unmitigated goings-on in the public realm and will also promoter accountability. No longer will scribes have to depend on conjecture, rumour, leaks and sources other than knowledgeable sources. The legislation when enacted will pose an antidote to vested interests which try to conceal or misinterpret information or which try to manipulate media directly or indirectly to plant misinformation. Through this legislation, transparency in public, professional, social and personal sphere can be achieved."

Literature Review

Shukla Ashutosh (2011) in "RTI applicant to pay for getting informational" found that It is really surprising that such an accurate evaluation by the Press Council was not give any importance by most of the media. The media could not even find time to welcome the implementation of the Information Act officially. This was just believed to be the matters related to the farmers of Rajasthan and of the people of the slums of Delhi or thought as the matter related to the NGO type people. Its use was far away from question. It was completely ignored by the media. While, on the other hand few people who used it as a weapon in journalism had an interesting experience and showed new path as well.

Ved Kishorekumar (2012) in "RTI query reveals dire facts on private banks" narrates that Under section 19(1) (a) of the Indian constitution, the citizens of India have been given the right to freedom of speech and expression. But without

access to information, this right was incomplete. Right to receive and right to impart information have been held to be a part of freedom of speech and expression guaranteed by sub-clause (a) of clause (1) of Article 19 of the Constitution subject of course to the reasonable restrictions, if any, that may be placed on such right in terms of and to the extent permitted by clause (2) of the said Article. It has been held by the Supreme Court in Secretary, Ministry of I & B, Government of India v Cricket Association of Bengal ((1995) 2 SCC 161) that: "The freedom of speech and expression includes right to acquire information and to disseminate it. Freedom of speech and expression is necessary, for self-expression which is an important means of free conscience and self-fulfillment. It enables people to contribute to debates on social and moral issues. It is the best way to find a truest model of anything, since it is only through it that the widest possible range of ideas can circulate. It is the only vehicle of political discourse so essential to democracy. Equally important is the role it plays in facilitating artistic and scholarly endeavors of all sorts. The right to communicate, therefore, includes right to communicate through any media that is available whether print or electronic or audio-visual such as advertisement, movie, article, speech, etc. That is why freedom of speech and expression includes freedom of the press. The freedom of the press in turn includes right to circulate and also to determine the volume of such circulation. This freedom includes the freedom to communicate or circulate one's opinion without interference to as large a population in the country, as well as abroad, as is possible to reach."

In 'The Cricket Association of Bengal' case, it was held that the right to impart and receive information from electronic media is a part of the right to freedom of speech and expression. In Bennett Coleman, the right to information was held to be included within the right to freedom of speech and expression guaranteed by Article 19 (1) (a). In Raj Narain, the Court explicitly stated: 'The people of this country have a right to know every public act, everything that is done in a public way by their public functionaries.'

They are entitled to know the particulars of every public transaction in all its bearings. Gangan Surendra (2011).

Evaluation of the public authorities and the governance is impossible without factual, current/updated and primary information. The public authorities always kept guard on each information. The tragedy was that the bureaucrats were having the weapon of Officials Secret Act, which played over the right of speech and expression, and the some constraints lay down by the constitution. Therefore, the rights of the citizens remained confined. Similarly, the judiciary has the Contempt of Court provisions and the legislature have the parliamentary privileges. It was impossible for the journalist to go into the depth of any matter properly under these constraints. Now, with the legislation of the Right to Information, it has become a tremendous weapon for the common people and the media as well.

Saraph Anupam (2011) in “Delivering an effective RTI” found that The government was forced to withdraw its decision of privatizing the Delhi Jal Board. This is one of the major achievements of Right to Information. This episode has cleared as to how the government bent before the World Bank to fulfill the interests of the multinational companies. The workers of Right to Information evaluated the documents containing more than four thousand pages carefully and exposed a frightening truth. This is an example for the media to learn and understand it. The media may hardly have its own such example.

Choudhary Sunetra (2011) in his article on “This weekend, get ready to wish Happy RTI Day” says that in 1998, secretly the privatization of the Delhi Jal Board was started with the help of the World Bank. The Parivartan’s team scrutinized the documents, which contained more than four thousand pages, carefully. The facts indicated a frightening truth. It was revealed that in order to provide the tender to the multinational company Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC) the World Bank had forced the Delhi Jal Board and the Delhi government to agree on disgraceful terms. Other concerning facts also came out. The cost of the water would have risen by six times if this plan has been implemented. The water would have been provided to only those areas where people would voluntarily agree to lay down the pipelines at their own expense.

3. Research Methodology

The methodology adopted for this study is SEM model.

Introduction on SEM:

Structural equation modeling or SEM is a very general statistical modeling technique which is widely used in behavioral science. It can be viewed as a combination of factor analysis and regression or path analysis. The interest in SEM is often on theoretical constructs, which is represented by regression or path coefficients between the factors. The structural equation model implies a structure for the covariance between the observed variables, which provide the alternative name covariance structure modeling. However, the model can be extended to include means of observed variables or factors in the model, which makes covariance structure modeling a less accurate name. Many researchers will simply think of these models as 'Lisrel-models', which is also less accurate. LISREL is an abbreviation of Linear Structural Relations, and the name used by Jöreskog and Sörbom (1994) for one of the first and most popular SEM programs. Nowadays structural equation models need not be linear, and the

possibilities of SEM extend well beyond the original Lisrel program. (Hox, 2003)

Structural equation models go beyond ordinary regression models to incorporate multiple independent and dependent variables as well as hypothetical latent constructs that clusters of observed variables might represent. They also provide a way to test the specified set of relationships among observed and latent variables as a whole, and allow theory testing even when experiments are not possible. As a result, these methods have become ubiquitous in all the social and behavioral sciences (MacCallum & Austin, 2000).

Structural equation modeling provides a very general and convenient framework for statistical analysis that includes several traditional multivariate procedures, for example factor analysis, regression analysis, discriminant analysis and canonical correlation, as special cases. Structural equation models are often visualized by a graphical path diagram. The statistical model is usually represented in a set of matrix equation. In the early seventies, when this technique was first introduced in social and behavioral research, the software usually required setups that specify the model in terms of these matrices. Thus, researcher had to distill matrix representation from the path diagram, and provide the software with a series of matrices for the different sets of parameters, such as factor loadings and regression coefficients. A recent development is software that allows the researchers to specify the model directly as path diagram. This works well with simple problems, but may get tedious with more complicated models. For that reason, current SEM software still supports the command or matrix style model specifications too. Browne (2003)

The variables used in the structural equation model are

I. Observed, endogenous variables

- 1. Observation of RTI
- 2. Awareness of RI
- 3. Effectiveness of RTI

II. Observed, exogenous variables

- 1. Frequency of watching television
- 2. Frequency of reading newspaper
- 3. Frequency of using Internet

III. Unobserved, exogenous variables

- 1. e1: Error term for observation on RTI
- 2. e2: error term for awareness on RTI
- 3. e3: Error term for effectiveness on RTI

Hence numbers of variable in the SEM are

Number of variables in your model:	9
Number of observed variables:	6
Number of unobserved variables:	3
Number of exogenous variables:	6
Number of endogenous variables:	3

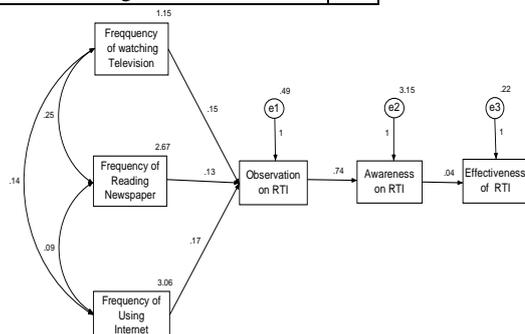


Fig. Structural Equation Model on effectiveness of RTI.

Table Variables in the Structural Equation Model Analysis.

Variable		Unstandardised co-efficient	S.E	Standardised Co-efficient	t value	P value
Observation of RTI	<--- Frequency of watching television	0.154	0.030	0.200	5.179	<0.001**
Observation of RTI	<--- Frequency of reading newspaper	0.134	0.019	0.265	6.875	<0.001**
Observation of RTI	<--- Frequency of using Internet	0.169	0.018	0.360	9.385	<0.001**
Awareness total	<--- Observation of RTI	0.738	0.096	0.324	7.653	<0.001**
Obtaining information	<--- Awareness	0.041	0.011	0.162	3.656	<0.001**

Note: ** denotes significant at 1% level

Here the coefficient of Frequency of watching television on observation of RTI is 0.154 represents the partial effect of frequency of watching television, holding the other variables as constant. The estimated positive sign implies that such effect is positive that observation of RTI increase by 0.738 for every unit increase in frequency of watching television and this coefficient value is significant at 1% level.

The coefficient of frequency of reading newspaper on observation of RTI is 0.134 represents the partial effect of frequency of reading newspaper on RTI, holding the other variables as constant. The estimated positive sign implies that such effect is positive that observation of RTI would increase by 0.134 for every unit increase in frequency of reading newspaper and this coefficient value is significant at 1% level. The coefficient of frequency of using Internet on observation of RTI is 0.169 represents the partial effect of attitude towards frequency of using Internet on RTI, holding the other variables as constant. The estimated positive sign implies that such effect is positive that observation of RTI would increase by 0.169 for every unit increase Internet and this coefficient value is significant at 1% level.

The coefficient of observation of RTI on awareness of RTI is 0.738 represents the partial effect of attitude towards observation of RTI towards observation of RTI, holding the other variables as constant. The estimated positive sign implies that such effect is positive that observation of RTI would increase by 0.738 for every unit increase in awareness on RTI and this coefficient value is significant at 1% level.

The coefficient of awareness on obtaining information is 0.041 represents the partial effect of awareness of RTI towards awareness of RTI, the other variables as constant. The estimated positive sign implies that such effect is positive that awareness would increase by 0.041 for every unit increase in obtaining information and this coefficient value is significant at 1% level.

Model Fit Summary

S.No	Variable	Value
1.	Chi-Square value	11.538
2.	P Value	0.117
3.	GFI	0.988
4.	AGFI	0.963
5.	CFI	0.951
6.	RMR	0.087
7.	RMSEA	0.058

From the above table it is found that the calculated P value is 0.117 which is greater than 0.05 which indicates perfectly fit. Here GFI (Goodness of Fit Index) value and AGFI (Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index) value is 0.988 which represent it is a good fit by 90%. The calculated CFI (Comparative Fit Index) value is 0.951 which means that it is a perfectly fit by 90% and also it is found that RMR (Root Mean Square Residuals) value is 0.087 and RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) value is 0.058 which is less than 0.10 which indicated it is perfectly fit.

Conclusion

Only about 10 per cent of over 300 million populations of the poor are aware of the RTI, as a tool for reaping the benefits of assured entitlements. It, therefore, calls for making concerted efforts by the Government, NGOs and media for creating mass awareness among the people, particularly to educate them, as to how to seek information and how to make the best use of such acquisitions of wealth of knowledge in every day's life. The role of NGOs is critical in respect of both to constantly exert pressure for maximum disclosure of information relating to public activities and to participate in designing and implementation of socio-economic programmes. The task is challenging but easy to cope with provided of course mass media like radio and TV channels are utilized to reach the target population.

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