

	<div><h1>GOMAL UNIVERSITY</h1><h2>JOURNAL OF RESEARCH</h2><p>Gomal University, Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan</p><div>ISSN:1019- 8180 (Print)ISSN: 2708- 1737 (Online)</div></div>					
Website	www.gujr.com.pk	HEC Recognized	Social Sciences	CrossRef	DOI:10.51380	


EXPLORING RIGHT TO INFORMATION AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN PAKISTAN: A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Muhammad Kamran¹, Irfan Ullah² & Muhammad Kaleem³

¹M.phil, Scholar, International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan

²Special Education Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

³Assistant Professor, Bacha Khan University Charsadda, Pakistan

KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Right to Information, Good Governance, Public Information Officers	The study attempted to analyze the role of right to information in ensuring good governance in Pakistan. The study objectives were to investigate the experiences of public information officers and civil society actors regarding the right to information contribution to good governance and to analyze the challenges in the implementation of right to information law. For the selection of sampling size, purposive sampling was used and data were collected from 11 ministries public information officers and 3 civil society actors through in depth interviews in Islamabad, Pakistan. Being qualitative study, data were analyzed by using thematic analyses. Jurgen Habermas theory of 'Public Sphere' was used to throw light on main theme of the study. The findings indicated that right to information is an effective tool in promoting good governance along with all its features like, accountability, transparency, mutual trust between the government and general public, common man facilitation, rule of law and corruption elimination. Study concluded that right to information would be an effective tool in promoting the good governance only when hurdles that prevent it from its true implementation were removed.
Article History Date of Submission: 15-08-2021 Date of Acceptance: 30-12-2021 Date of Publication: 31-12-2021	 2021 Gomal University Journal of Research
Corresponding Author	Irfan Ullah: irfanullah70@gmail.com
DOI	https://doi.org/10.51380/gujr-37-04-09

INTRODUCTION

The current study not only concentrates on function of RTI in guaranteeing good governance in Pakistan but also focuses on the main challenges that hinder it from its actual implementation. RTI is considered to be one of rights of citizens to have an access to government information. It can be defined as the right of people to know about public functionaries by accessing to all the relevant information and records kept by them. This right is recognized as a basic right of all humans. It is thought as a benchmark of all other human rights. In addition to this, Pakistan is

a participant in International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (which covers the freedom of speech), and as such is duty-bound to grant this right to its people. Furthermore, despite the fact that Article 19 granted freedom of speech, 1973 Constitution of Pakistan had no recognition of this right of its citizens to government information as a constitutional right. Thus, Pakistan was the first country in south Asia that enacted the freedom of information in 2002 (Sardar, 2018). In Pakistan, the history of its acknowledgment started in 2000 with the enactment of Freedom of Information Ordinance. In this regard, Provincial Assembly of Baluchistan approved this right in 2005, Sindh provincial assembly acknowledged this right in 2006. Punjab province and KPK provinces enacted this right later in 2013 when 18th Amendment in 2010, Article 19A was made part of constitution of Pakistan to provide right to information (Mehmmud & Yousaf, 2020).

As access to any system requires a proper channel to be followed, so Section 11 of Federal RTI legislation provides awareness about this procedure how to apply to the particular government organization for relevant information. Any citizen of Pakistan can submit information request on a prescribed form and by depositing the prescribed fee. Sections 13 and 14 of the Federal act provide information about the procedure of accepting or refusing requests and clear timelines for processing public requests (Center for Peace & Development Initiatives, 2017). The basic aim behind the right to information implementation is to achieve the goals of good governance. RTI is supposed to be crucial for good governance that helps control corruption and improve government efficiency (Sardar, 2018). Along with positive effects of RTI on good governance, there are some problems (lack of public awareness, inexperienced PIOs, poor record management) that hinder the act from its implementation (Ali, 2006). Good governance has always been a burning subject for discussion in Pakistan as the country has suffered from a lot of challenges like corruption, absence of proper check and balance and hidden and abstract policies without public involvement (Alam & Khan, 2020). In order to meet such problems, the country needs to enact the RTI law. In this connection, only an appropriate law is supposed to be vital for the freedom of the information as it builds up good governance and democracy in the state (Zinia, 2018).

Right to information and good governance are two main ways to the same target that ensure and stabilize democratic system, (Zinia, 2018). But good governance needs cohesive, effective policy based on mutual cooperation of the government and citizens. Good governance demands something more than the state power or the potency of political power as it relies upon the democratic principles, transparency, accountability, decency, fairness and efficiency (Goede & Neuwirthin, 2014). Democratic principles and governments have so far contributed a lot to the demands for transparency and accountability. It is a common practice of all democratic states to include in national constitutions 'right to know' provisions. It is needed to make government responsible for ensuring the transparency and accountability in line with its public officials and providing necessary information to public in timely and accurate manner (Zinia, 2018). As per to social scientists, right to information laws help explain how the government bodies work in a democratic system to ensure good governance which is the ideal of a democratic state. Right to information always demands from the citizens in democratic state to be aware about the doings of their elected officials. What is more, citizens feel confident to opine freely their ideas and are expected to implement autonomous verdicts if they have an access to relevant information of the government.

Right to information laws also ensures public policy making process based on the objective and reasonable reasons. It identifies need for legislative framework to facilitate right to information (Zinia, 2018). RTI legislation makes sure that the public officials are ready to need of providing information to people that allows them to challenge government decisions and in this way it makes government more trustworthy, accessible, responsible and crystal clear. The agreements between the people and their government are based on the standard that there is no room for secrecy in the affairs of government except in matters concerning the sovereignty and security of a country. In short, RTI is as necessary for a democratic system to ensure good governance as oxygen is for lungs (Singh & Karn, 2012). Contrary to this, a state without the law of access to information promotes culture of the secrecy in public sectors which results in corruption and distrust that not only discourages the system of democracy, but also affects good governance in that state (Mehmmmod & Yousaf, 2020). Being one of the basic human rights, RTI can serve as effective tool for addressing social issues and promoting good governance (Sardar, 2018). But, unfortunately, to study of social implications of this particular human right, sociologists have given very little consideration (Keen, 2019). Therefore, researchers felt the need to conduct this study.

Objectives of Study

To analyze the experiences of public information officers and the general public concerning the RTI's contribution to good governance:

To analyze the experiences of public information officers about the requests for the information

To analyze the experiences of the general public concerning obtaining the public information

To examine the key issues in the implementation of RTI law

Research Questions

What are the experiences of public information officers and civil society actors regarding RTI's contribution to good governance?

What are experiences of public information officers about processing of requests under RTI law?

What are experiences of the general public regarding obtaining of information under RTI law?

What are the key issues in the implementation of RTI law?

LITERATURE REVIEW

We live in this modern era of technology and information, an age that has seen a technological change that allows information to be communicated fast and smooth across the world. In spite of that, over the last few years, there has been an increasing need for greater accessibility to the information, mostly with a view to eliminate corruption and promote greater accountability of government agencies towards the general public. Right to information has changed the abstract policies and decisions into its more practical form for mutual/shared understanding of both the government and its citizens. Right to information encompasses all the underlying features of good governance such as, indication of social issues and evaluation and action for the system to be functional in balanced manner (Singh & Karn, 2020). In this connection, being globally acknowledged by name of freedom of information, RTI has been regarded an important means for socio-economic growth and good governance (Ali & Shafique, 2016). Historical importance of RTI has been accredited to the Sweden which was the first country in the world that passed the freedom of information act in 1766. Similarly, according to the UN, over 80 countries have

constitutional provisions that granted their people the right of access to information (Zinia, 2018).

It was later that when the federal Freedom of Information (FOI) Ordinance of 2002 was passed on 26th October 2002 during reign of Pervaiz Musharraf, Pakistan became the first in South Asia that passed freedom of information. On 18th June 2004, the cabinet division sketched the procedure on FOI for its practicality. But unluckily this law had never executed in true sense (Sardar, 2018). However, its most effective form was implemented with the 18th amendment, a new Article 19-A was included in 2010 in the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan about the transparency and right to information. The 18th Amendment in the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan has not only made the provinces more autonomous and self-governed, but also has broadened the guarantee of basic civil and political rights (i.e. freedom of gathering, freedom of association, freedom of expression and right to know). It was this amendment that promoted the participatory culture to some extent. According to the transparency international perception index of 2019, Pakistan is positioned 117/180 countries with score of 33 out of 10028 regarding transparency and corruption. The effective shape of freedom of information (i.e., right to information) was enacted later in 2013 after 18th amendment. By August 2013, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa rose to be first province to enact Khyber Pakhtunkhwa RTI Act, while Punjab province later enacted Punjab transparency and RTI Act in December 2013 (Ali, Saleem & Shuib, 2015).

The Federal Freedom of Information Ordinance 2002 did not exist in Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa and Punjab prior to these legislations (Sardar, 2018). In March 2017, the Sindh government enacted the Sindh Transparency and Right to Information Act. Sindh has already approved a legislation allowing approach to government particulars in 2006 that was a copy of the Federal Freedom of the Information Act of 2002, as well as legislation in 2015 named as the Sindh Freedom of Information Bill. However, as per delimitations, the Sindh Transparency and Right to Information Act 2017 were compensated (Sardar, 2018). The National Assembly enacted the Right to Access to Information Act on October 16, 2017, at the federal level. The act's goal is to make the government more accountable to the public and to minimize government corruption and inefficiency (Sardar, 2018). Balochistan rose to be the first province to pass the Balochistan Freedom of Information Act 2005 in 2005. This law has a limited reach because it only applies to a few governmental agencies. It does not apply to the private sector, and it has not made significant progress in comparison to the RTI Act (Sardar, 2018). Thus, an ideal system with good governance can be acquired only through RTI and the elimination of its challenges (Zinia, 2018).

RTI & Good Governance

Good governance plays an important role in elevating and improving the standard of living of every citizen. But, unfortunately, it has been affected very badly by the non-effective policies in Pakistan since her beginning. The ineffective democratic system, lack of answerability, corruption, and lack of rule of law have been major obstacles in way of good governance in Pakistan. Good governance demands the active participation of people as it is not a one-way process. Similarly, Sebina (2005) is of the view that the information is at the centre of the relationship between government and the public it governs. She further says that right to information is vital to good governance as it replicates government activities and processes. It is the enactment of RTI that introduces an open and transparent government and gives every citizen the right to seek and receive information to make administration more responsible and transparent which means good

governance. Transparency in turn causes the free flow of relevant information of government to citizens and the citizens easy access to it (Schudson, 2015). Both of the findings are on par with each other on this point World Bank has rightly said that right RTI is an vital part of good governance (Borah, 2013). Good governance is only path, which can guarantee better lifestyle of citizens.

The good governance is backed by political accountability, availability of freedom, bureaucratic accountability, availability of the information, effectiveness, efficiency, law abiding citizen and cooperation between government and society. As such Right to information is natural corollary of good governance. Important function of RTI is to make basic elements of good governance more effective and efficient. In addition to this, components (i.e., accountability, transparency, efficiency, participation, predictability and human rights create institutional setting in which people communicate among themselves and with the government. In this connection, in order to make ourselves more assured about transparency, accountability and anti-corruption activism, it is handy to take recourse to literature which discovers the daily association between people and the government (organizational meetings, and communication as well as practices of the brokerage & corruption) (Webb, 2013). In this connection, society where there is no corruption is the indicator of good governance because corruption is a worst societal problem that always challenges it. RTI plans a definite policy to fight against corruption and guarantees rule of law by ensuring clarity, accountability, participation of citizens and devolution of power (Singh, 2017).

Accountability is the fundamental element of good governance. All the organizations should be answerable to those people who are influenced by their dealings and verdicts. On the contrary, all citizens must make state, public sectors, private sectors and other institutions answerable for their actions. However, a record may be created of such actions and decisions because only through the evidential, secured and permanent records there is answerability of government. Transparency can survive only when all actions and verdicts are taken democratically about human rights under the rule of law. Right to information law assists and appreciates common person's participation which ensures good governance and function of democracy to promote equality, justice for every citizen regardless of their race and class (Singh, 2017). By addressing these actions, it is possible to have open and direct accessibility to the information about the verdicts made for the people. Only through effective techniques the records can be kept precise, incorporated, authentic and accessible (Dikopoulou & Mihiotis, 2012). As per to transparency international granted in 2021, Pakistan positioned 124 out of 180 (Transparency International, 2021).

Challenges to RTI

There are some challenges to the implementation of RTI. The first problem is that though approximations show that over 75 percent of the world's population lives in countries with RTI laws, yet less than one-half of the world's countries have adopted it. There are campaigns for the implementation of RTI laws in many countries. Countries with formal drafts in advanced stages of completion have done very little effort to implement it in its true sense. In other countries, the politicians are the main obstacle to its implementation, and the smaller island States cannot afford its adaptation (Mendel, 2015). Secondly, many nations with RTI laws have clearly created a major policy-practice gap, in sense that these nations have failed to effectively execute their rules. This is unavoidable to some extent, as enacting these legislations requires time and work (Mendel, 2015). If applied properly, the RTI has the potential to alter the nature

of governance. It has potential to develop explicit and all-encompassing governance process that gradually transforms democracy from representative to participatory. Nonetheless, various researches have shown significant issues that obstruct RTI's successful applicability (Mallick, 2012). Moreover, In Pakistan, Right to information has been facing several issues since its very inception.

According to the findings of SSDO research, only 36 out of 194 applications for the information received responses, similarly, in 20 cases, the feedbacks were got within 14 days, and the rest 16 feedbacks were got after instituting compliant (Imran, 2019). Other problems faced by the RTI are the poor record management and the inexperienced public information officers that lead to inapt collecting and processing of information (Roberts, 2010). Because of mismanagement of record, the claimants of the requests cannot get the necessary information within due time. The record keeping plays an important role in the good governance as citizens can only estimate governmental planning when authentic record is available (Sharma, 2012). Due to the newness of this study in Pakistan, certainly limited research work is done in this area as compare to other studies (Omotayo, 2015). After the critical analysis of the above literature, we found that some identified issues like public unawareness, poor record management, inexperienced PIOs and Mismanagement of record (Omotayo, 2015; Roberts, 2010; Sharma, 2012; Imran, 2019). But here the matter does not end; a number of issues may still be expected to implementation of RTI. The importance of this study lies in the fact that it explores some of the hidden issues that have not been so far discussed in the above literature i.e. poverty, illiteracy, misuse of the information which are main issues and challenges in implementation of RTI to promote good governance.

Theoretical Framework

The sociological justification of this study lies in Jurgen Habermas's theory: The public sphere, which is defined by him as, "network for communicating information and points of view, the streams of communication are, in the process, filtered and synthesized in such a way that they coalesce into bundles of topically specified public opinions." The phrase "Public sphere," means a realm of social life where public opinions are shaped. Public sphere is a space of exchanging of thoughts and opinions on issues that originates from the society and presented to the policy makers for the reformation of society. An open and democratic public sphere depends upon lawfully guaranteed civil rights, most significantly freedom of expression, opinion, and meeting for the exchange of information, as well as access to information laws. Such laws will only be effective in culture of openness. That means that public officials should feel honest to public's right to know, not to the organizational secrecy. The media regulation should warranty that the media can accomplish its democratic roles and should not be under the political or economic pressures.

According to Habermas, one of the most important goals of the bourgeois public sphere was to make political and administrative decisions transparent (Habermas, Lennox & Lennox, 1974). The discussion in public sphere has always been influenced and enhanced by the information that flow from the state to the general public .The media has always been a strong source to provide information for free discussion about the issues of the general public in light of state policies and decisions, and the same is case with RTI (Splichal, 2006). As far public awareness, literacy and education is required to promote a citizenry that is interested in public affairs and that is willing as well as able to participate in governance. The policies should target these main

factors to promote public sphere that enables good, democratic, and accountable government. The public realm is indispensable for good governance as it serves as link between government organizations and public (Castells, 2008). The public sphere is to be found between state and its citizens.

It is an arena “where citizens come together to share information, to debate, to discuss, or to think on common issues. The study of public sphere focuses on public participation on equal footings in which they somehow indirectly manipulate the doings of the government (Goede & Neurwith, 2014). Right to information is supposed to be one of the five organs of Public sphere as it enables the citizens to promote their social life and uphold the appropriate performance of a state (Splichal, 2006). In democratic public sphere government institutes pay attention to the public and find out their determinations and intentions, exchange with them own problems, information about their decisions and actions for the well fare of the state (Odugbemi, 2008). It is clear that two extremely useful complements to ensure the good governance in a state are power of informed and considered public opinion as the critical force for good governance and the power of democratic public sphere as fundamental part of construction of good governance. It is clear that these boons will not, on their own, descend from the heavens. They ought to be vital parts of any serious agenda for social and political change and good governance (Odugbemi, 2008).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is conducted under qualitative research design. Qualitative research design is the textual presentation of the information and it focuses especially on thorough investigation of a problem.

Locale of Study

The locale of the study was the capital city Islamabad, Pakistan. There are 32 ministries and the study was conducted in sixteen federal ministries. Civil society actors who had experiences of the Right of access to government information in Islamabad, were part of this study. This study aims to find out as to what extent general public settled in federal area and the federal public information officers are satisfied with implementation of RTI law and its role in ensuring good governance.

Sampling & Sampling Size

The sample of this study was constituted of federal public information officers and civil society actors. The data were collected from federal ministries and civil society actors in federal area of Islamabad. The purposive sampling technique was used for selection of sampling size. purposive sampling is non probability sampling technique which is based on the characteristics of population and objectives of study. In conjunction with Federal Information Commission, researcher aimed to select 16 Ministries with the goal of receiving the most requests from the public. 5-10 civic society actors were intentionally chosen. However, the interview process was carried on until point of saturation was reached at (same responses occurred frequently from respondents).

Data Collection

The tool used for data collection is interview guide. An interview guide includes question and topic area for interviews. The researcher structured two interview guides, one for government officials and the other for civil society actors. In order to obtain detailed information, a thorough

interview were carried out with the study's participants. In addition to this some follow up the questions were also asked from the respondents/participants for purpose of making study more authentic.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis technique was employed to analyze the data. Thematic analysis is process to identify, analyze and interpret pattern of meaning or themes within qualitative data. All the responses and ideas with in interview were ordered, and then the related responses were coded and patterned into the meaningful theme. Lastly relevant themes were developed from related ideas.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Good Governance

[Sardar \(2018\)](#) said that RTI's laws have become a sign of country's loyalty to good governance. RTI is closely connected to the good governance as it strengthens all the principles of good governance (accountability, transparency, equality and rule of law). Moreover, the reliability of good governance can be known from the decisions and policies that are made and implemented effectively. One of the respondents shares his view about the link of RTI and good governance as:

"Communicating government information directly promotes good governance. He explained that good governance is the process of decisions making and the putting of those decisions into actions, but he further argued that good governance is sure only when there is a concept of answerability".

Another respondent argued that:

"The accessibility to government relevant record not only allows citizens to perform their active roles for wellbeing of state but also makes the government officials play roles in ensuring good governance".

The above results align with previous findings of [Sebina \(2004\)](#) that information is at center of the relationship between government and the public it governs. She further says that Right to information is vital to good governance as reflect government activities and processes. Further more good governance can be ensuring only when the decisions are implemented effectively. The more public public participate, the more effective will be government. So, good governance can only be insured in a state where the citizens have a direct access to the government relevant information.

Transparency

Transparency is considered as one of main aspects of good governance surefire by RTI, which eliminates the culture of secrecy. Public requests are carefully scrutinized before their delivery. One of respondents said that:

The way we handle the requests makes the citizens felt satisfied about the clarity of the system. In addition to this, the law also opens the vast array of opportunities of the transparency and answerability. Handling the citizen's requests is a hard nut to crack, but we try hard to make the citizens satisfied. First and foremost, we carefully analyze the applications from the citizens for the purpose of the knowing the nature of the demands for the information, only then we respond and share the relevant information as there can be a threat of divulging or distorting of the information.

Another respondent argued that:

By no means has the government hidden the relevant record as secret from the citizens so far. However, if an official tries to change or conceals the relevant record from the citizens, then his superiors stop him by taking a disciplinary Action against him.

The above arguments indicate that transparency is a perfect tool used to abolish the culture of secrecy and build mutual trust between government and its citizens. The findings of [Schudson \(2015\)](#) reveal that transparency causes the free flow of relevant information of the government to the citizens and the citizen's easy access to it. Both of findings are on par with each other on this point. This study finds that handling of request of the citizens is a difficult task, because understand the mindset of the people is not an easy job. This finding of the study reveals that the officials very carefully deal with the requests of the public in order to ensure transparency and avoid doubts and mistrusts of citizens upon them. The mindset of citizens unconsciously reveal their mistrust on government organization as they have been socialized in that manner, however, the situation has changed considerably so far due to the implementation of the RTI in Pakistan.

Accountability

Accountability means that government officials are responsible and answerable to its citizens for their actions. Being key element of good governance, accountability is the powerful weapon for the RTI's law to keep proper check and balance on government organizations. Some of the respondents opined that accountability is based on degree of familiarity with RTI's nature and function. As one of the respondents said that:

The more they inquire, more they make officials answerable to themselves. If they understand the true spirit of RTI, then the answerability is liable to be in practice.

Another respondent said that:

"It depends upon the citizens' wakefulness to evil practices, if they can rise against the wrong actions of the wrongdoers, then it is certain that social problems can easily be eradicated and openness and answerability be emerged successfully".

It is clear from the above arguments that accountability has key role in stability of a system but it can be ensured only by asking relevant questions. As among the previous findings, finding of [Singh \(2017\)](#) reveals that, all organizations should be answerable to people who are influenced by their dealings and decisions. RTI provides an opportunity to citizens to keep proper check and balance on policies of their government. In addition to this, relevant inquiries on the part of the citizens regarding the government information can ensure the answerability on the part of government officials. This would not only make public officials responsible to provide the relevant information, but would also make the citizens aware of and vigilant to doings of the government. This would create a bridge of mutual trust between the government officials and citizens.

Social Evils

Social evils refer to a number of issues that are considered to be disruptive to society. Few of the respondents are of view that RTI still needs to be exercised fully so that to eliminate evils from society. If RTI is not implemented in its true sense then social evils cannot be eliminated. One of respondents of this research claimed that all social evils cannot be eliminated through RTI.

Below are his arguments:

“There are a number of social problems, but RTI addresses only a few of them. The key function of RTI is to eradicate corruption and absence of rule of law”.

Another respondent argue

According to my opinion, till now, the right to information law has proved to be the best tool in eliminating corruption and ensuring transparency.

The above arguments show that corruption is the worst social evil in organization and the law of right to information proves to be effective instrument to eliminate it. [Singh \(2017\)](#) was of the same view that RTI plans a definite policy to fight against corruption and guarantees rule of law and insures clarity, accountability and participation of citizens. It is fact that RTI cannot eliminate each and problem and we know that every state in world faces numerous problems, but law is supposed to eradicate main issues first and smaller last. Pakistan is one of those countries that suffered lot from corruptions. So, RTI is concerned, it has helped lot to eradicate social problems like corruption to a great extent and proven instrumental in ensuring good governance in the state.

Common Person Facilitation

Some of respondents said that common man's facilitation and equal treatment is considered as significant feature of RTI in making government more democratic and trustworthy. Obviously, it provides to citizens best opportunity of building trust over government organizations. One of the respondents argued that:

“Any Pakistani citizen regardless of his/her social class, has any right to question organization about its doings. The law holds the officials answerable to the general public as well as to their superiors”.

Another respondent argued that:

“RTI promotes freedom of expression and motivates the citizens to be aware of what they need to know. What is more, to great extent, issue of injustice has been addressed with introduction of RTI legislation.

The trust that has been built up between government officials and general public ensures equality and the practice of justice in a society. As one of the respondents said that:

“RTI serves as a link between government and its citizens as it fosters mutual trust between them. What is more, it eliminates citizen's uncertainty over whether or not to address relevant topic with a government institution”.

Another respondent argued that:

“I have observed that the government is more cooperative than it used to be. If the matter is identified more complicated then the information commissioner summons the applicant for hearing. Here both the PIO and the information commissioner talk about the issue with the applicant”.

The above finding of this study aligns with the finding of [Bhadauria et al. \(2017\)](#). The finding reveals, RTI encourages common citizens to ask for any relevant information that influences their lives in one way or the other and makes public officers accountable to them. RTI ensures the accessibility of the common man to the relevant record of the government. Only informed citizens can question the wrong doings that affect their lives directly or indirectly. In addition to this, RTI promotes the equality of citizens by providing opportunities to hold government official accountable to them. RTI facilitate the common person regardless his race, class and

caste. Hence, this result in good governance where justice prevails everywhere and common person feels more satisfied with the functions of the government organizations under the RTI law.

Unawareness

The unawareness regarding RTI law is serious hurdle in way of RTI that disconnect government and citizens relations and block the free flow of information. One of the reasons behind their unawareness is their non-accessibility to media because of their living in backward areas. The respondents were in favor of arranging educational programs in the backward areas specially. A few of their responses are presented below:

Some of our citizens are so ignorant of rules that they have no idea whether there is a law that allows the citizens to keep the elected officials responsible to them. It ensures that the citizens' awareness of the law of right to know can be spread widely, including by lectures and visits to public places to create awareness.

The people specially living in the backward areas lack the proper resources (electronic media, internet availability) to be aware of such laws. [Bharathi \(2014\)](#) said that lot of the citizens are so ignorant that they do not even know the basic concept of RTI. In this connection, in addition to this, the study finds that most of the people, despite their qualification to some extent, are still unaware of their basic right to information, and consequently, what is more, they are careless and consider it to be a more complex process to go through to get to the relevant government information.

Illiteracy

Illiteracy is one of the main issues which is new finding this study. The lack of this can hinder specially the rural people from getting information from government organizations. Besides, illiteracy is one of the reasons behind the lack of the people' interest in access to government information and they, therefore, willy-nilly ignore right to information regarding. A respondent said that:

"How are then the people to get advantages from the right to information when they cannot even read their own constitution? Our general public's illiteracy traps them in the conservative mindset".

It is clear from the above arguments that most of the rural people are conservative minded and they do not try to embark upon the process of getting access to information. Here it is one of the hurdles to good governance and the implementation of RTI. It is the illiteracy ratio that makes people' mindset conservative and, therefore, they cannot understand even their basic rights.

Poverty

Most of the poor people don't have the facilities of getting even the basic education. This may also be one of the reasons that they are deprived from getting information. In this connection, one of the respondents creates link between illiteracy and poverty, he claims that:

"Unluckily, larger proportion of our citizens is so much poverty-stricken that they cannot even get basic primary education, let alone their understanding the law of right to know. This is also one of the reasons why they are unaware of the basics of human right".

The illiteracy and poverty block the ways of some citizens to take interest in such laws. Here the finding of this study has no equal counterpart in previous studies as it reveals that the poverty and illiteracy is root cause of public unawareness. When a man cannot even get the basic needs

of living, how is then he/she expected to participate/keep abreast of government information. The government is supposed to provide people with their basic facilities of living, only then they may get opportunity to concern themselves about RTI law. In this way good governance can be ensured.

Lack of Training

Another issue related to proper training of PIOs and good record management always emerges as a challenge to RTI Act. Sometimes public information officers cannot handle the requests properly due to their newness in field. PIOs are assigned with double responsibilities, perhaps, that may be the reason of their non-expertise in either of the two jobs. Below is an extract from responses:

“There should be an appropriate management for handling the citizens’ requests. What’s more, PIOs should primarily receive adequate instructions about the public request management and record organization to ensure timely answers to appropriate requests. One respondent has also proposed that new PIOs who are entrusted with a single responsibility can easily speed up the handling of the general public requests as compare to those who are charged in with the double responsibilities”.

The above finding of this study is aligned with finding of the [Omotayo \(2015\)](#). It clearly reveals that the problem of poor record handling and as well as the inexperienced PIOs leads to the collecting and processing of information in an inappropriate way. Furthermore, the study finds that when an educated person perform his duty like ignorant, then how can RTI be promoted in a state like Pakistan? It is the duty of government to give training to every new selectee before serving as an information officer in the government organization.

Information Irrelevancy

An atmosphere of confusion is created, when public information officer cannot recognize the nature of information and its relevancy to particular wing of an organization. Thus, circulation of requests across organizations creates the distrustful environment. In this regard, respondent argued that:

“There might be confusion between the citizens and public officials. If a citizen inquires about any relevant facts, then one wing says to him, “It is the responsibility of another particular wing in the organization and not ours,” so the request circulates among the wings and takes a long time to be eventually delivered to the applicant. In this regard, it is because of this mistreatment and mismanagement that mistrust is created between information seekers and us in diverse contexts”.

It is clear from above statement that mismanagement of information creates an atmosphere of mistrust between the officials and citizens. In other words, when official cannot differentiate the request as to what is it for and to which wing does it belong then it would surely delay the response to the applicants. This is the issue which may create the gap of mistrust between the citizens and the officials. In order to remove this problem the government should educate the general public to understand the procedure to demand for the relevant information on the one hand and public officials should be trained to recognize which request demands what kind of information.

Misuse of Information

Procedure of request clearly defined confidential and non-confidential information. Tactlessly, one category of the people who send the requests cannot differentiate between confidential and

non-confidential information. When they do not get the responses for their irrelevant requests, they blame the particular organization for unhelpful and obstructive attitudes toward them. In this connection, one of the respondents said that:

“About 2% of the applicants ask for sensitive information for which no one has the authority to disclose that particular record to the public. What is more, they do not know that how harmful it is to the state security. This is why some applicants blame us for not responding to them or treating their application biasedly”.

Information is power. It can be used for different purposes. The misuse of the information is considered a heinous crime almost in every society. One of respondents in this regard claimed that:

“Some of the information seekers ask for the irrelevant and sensitive information and justify their demand for it. Some information seekers want to use information for illegal or political purposes which may cause a serious threat to the state security and trust”.

Another respondent claimed that;

“Some of the officials use the information as a tool against each other to settle their personal rivalry”.

According to [Kedia \(2016\)](#) Right to information has exempted the confidential information for the sake of state security. However, the new findings reveal that despite such check and balance on information, there are certain officials who use it as a tool to settle their own scores with one another. Moreover, there are people who ask intentionally for irrelevant information and the leaking of such sensitive information may be a threat to the state security. Such people should be discouraged from asking such type of information for the benefit of the state. The study also finds that often people distort even the relevant information in order to achieve their political ulterior purposes. Such people should also be identified and discouraged from doing such heinous act.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to examine: ways through which right to information (RTI) promotes good governance and issues to implementation of this law in Pakistan. True implementation of RTI is a significant step toward promoting good governance in state. There is close relationship between RTI and good governance, in other words, they foil each other. RTI is significant step towards promoting good governance as it promotes accountability, transparency, and common person facilitation, builds mutual trust, discourage the culture of secrecy, eliminate corruption and ensures rule of law. But the study also focuses on the main issue to the implementation of the RTI law. Thus the study reveals that the lack of trained officials, unawareness, and poor record management are the key challenges to the implementation of the RTI law. The above mentioned factors that are promoted through RTI and the challenges that are faced by it to its implementation have been identified by the previous studies as well as this study. In this regard, in a nutshell, both this study and previous studies are on par. However, the differences lie in identification of challenges that are not identified by previous studies which the present study has identified such as, misuse of information, irrelevancy of information, illiteracy and poverty.

First and foremost is the unawareness of the general public, the degree of unawareness varies from urban to rural areas. The main reasons behind it are poverty and illiteracy which previous studies have not identified. Most of the people belong to the backward areas, where they live

below the poverty line, let alone getting even the basic education. Moreover, some citizens who ask for information are unaware of the criteria to be followed before submitting the request. About 2% of the applicants demand for the sensitive information and blame the government organizations for not responding to them. Second problem is misuse of information. Findings of the new study reveal that in some cases the information is used by the public officials as a tool against each other and even they distort that information for the sake of their own interest. Third, an atmosphere of confusion is created, when public information officer cannot recognize the nature of information and its relevancy to a particular wing of an organization. Thus, the circulation of requests across the organizations creates the distrustful environment. In some cases the PIOs unwillingly deliver the irrelevant information. Thus, these are the hurdles, the elimination of which can pave way to the implementation of RTI to achieve the goal of good governance.

REFERENCES

- Ali, M., & Shafiq, M. (2016). Redefining Right to Information, Federalism and Decentralization Mechanism in Pakistan: Post 18th Amendment perspective. *Journal of Mass Communication Department, Dept of Mass Communication, University of Karachi*, 14. Retrieved from: <http://jmcd-uok.com/index.php/jmcd/article/view/47>.
- Ali, M. A. (2006). Transparency and freedom of information in Pakistan: An analysis of government policy and practices, and realistic options for reform. <http://pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00002851/>.
- Ali, A., Saleem, M., & Shoib, M. (2015). An analysis of right to information laws of Pakistan and India. *Journal of Applied Environmental and Biological Sciences*, 5(4), 121-127.
- Bharathi, T. (2014). A Study on the Non-Awareness and Impact of Right to Information Act Among People in Tamil Nadu Region Using Neutrosophic Cognitive Maps. *International Journal of Computing Algorithm*, 3(2), 158-160.
- Castells, M. (2008). The new public sphere: Global civil society, communication networks, and global governance. *Annals of American academy of Political & Social Science*, 616(1), 78-93.
- Center to Peace and Development Initiatives. (2017). Right to access information on Federal level Retrieved from <http://www.cpdi-pakistan.org/rti-laws>.
- De Harpe, S., Rijken, C., & Roos, R. (2008). The Good Governance. PER: The Potchefstroomse *Elektroniese Regsblad*, 11(2), 2-15.
- Dikopoulou, A., & Mihiotis, A. (2012). The contribution of the records management to good governance. *The TQM journal*, 24 (2), 123-141.
- Goede, M., & J. Neuwirth, R. (2014). Good governance and confidentiality: a matter of the preservation of the public sphere. *Corporate Governance*, 14(4), 543-554.
- Habermas, J., Lennox, S., & Lennox, F. (1974). The public sphere: An encyclopedia article (1964). *New German Critique*, (3), 49-55.
- Imran, M. (2019, June). Right to Information Law faces implementation challenges. The News International. Retrieved from <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/479489-rights-to-information-law-faces-implementation-challenges>.
- Keen, M. F. (2019). The freedom of the information act and sociological research. Springer, 23(2), 43-51.
- Kedia, S. (2016). The Right to information and good governance. *International Journal of Commerce and Management Research*, 2(3), 158-162.

- Khan, M. M. A., & Alam, I. (2020). Good Governance in Pakistan: Parameters, Causes and Measures. *Pakistan Vision*, 21(1), 319.
- Lata, K. (2016). A Comparative Analysis of Awareness about RTI Act among College Students: A Study of Gurgaon. *International Journal of Scientific Development and Research*, 1(5), 1-7.
- Mallick, S. K. (2012). The Right to information in India. *The Stamford Journal of Law*, 1(3), 106-129.
- Mehmmod, K., & Yousaf, A. (2020). To What Extent Pakistani Citizens are Enjoying the Right of Access to Information? An Exploratory Study. Library Philosophy and Practice. Retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Khalid_Mahmood22/publication/346267921_To_What_Extent_Pakistani_Citizens_are_Enjoying_the_Right_of_Access_to_Information_An_Exploratory_Study/links/5fbd5373299bf104cf740dc2/To-What-Extent-Pakistani-Citizens-are-Enjoying-the-Right-of-Access-to-Information-An-Exploratory-Study.pdf.
- Mackenzie, N., & Knipe, S. (2006). Research dilemmas: Paradigms, methods and methodology. *Issues in educational research*, 16(2), 193-205.
- Mendel, T. D. (2015). Right to information, recent spread of legislation. World Bank Group, 1, 1-12.
- Odugbemi, S. (2008). The Public opinion, the public sphere, and quality of governance: An exploration. Governance reform under real-world conditions. *Citizens, stakeholders, and voice*, 15-37.
- Roberts, A. (2010). The first four years of India's Right to Information Act. *Public Administration Review*, 70(6), 925-933.
- Sardar, R. (2018). Governance and the right to information law in Pakistan: A gender perspective. *Pakistan Administrative Review*, 2(2), 255-265.
- Sharma, P. (2012). The right to information act in India: the turbid world of transparency reforms. The London School of Economics and Political Science. Retrieved from <http://etheses.lse.ac.uk/579>.
- Sharma, M., & Bhadauria, S. S. (2017). Right to Information: Pros and Cons. *International Journal of Advance Research and Innovative Ideas in Education*, 3(6), 609-620.
- Schudson, M. (2015). The rise of the right to know: Politics and the culture of transparency. Harvard University Press. Retrieved from: <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=JaDXCgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=transparency++proper+disclosure+of+information+and+right+to+know&ots=FwUQrHvm01&sig=hUlWJwFyCbYlB3672YRikd2-Fok>.
- Sebina, P. M. I. M. (2004). Freedom of Information, Records Management and Good Governance. Any Symbolic Relationship?. *Esarbica Journal*, 23, 45.
- Singh, Y. (2017). Right to Information Act: a vital Tool to Fight against Corruption. *Research Review International Journal of Multidisciplinary*, 2(11), 1-3.
- Singh, S., & Karn, B. (2012). "Right to Information Act"—a tool for good governance through ICT. *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society*, 10(4), 273 – 287.
- Splichal, S. (2006). In search of a strong European public sphere: some critical observations on conceptualizations of public and the (European) public sphere. *Media, culture & society*, 28(5), 695-714.
- Transparency International. (2021). Retrieved from <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/pakistan>
- United Nations Economic and Social Commissions for Asia and the Pacific. (2006). Retrieved from: Good Governance. https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_st=

o%2C5&q=ESCAP%2C+U.+%282006%29.+What+is+good+governance.+United+Nations
+Economic+and.&btnG=

Webb, M. (2013). Disciplining the everyday state and society? Anti-corruption and Right to Information activism in Delhi. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 47(3), 363-393.

Khan, M. M. A., & Alam, I. (2020). Good Governance in Pakistan: Parameters, Causes and Measures. *Pakistan Vision*, 21(1), 319.

Zinia, J. (2018). Right to information and good governance in Bangladesh: A Sociological Analysis. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 6(4), 817-829.