

## **Right to Information Act: Perception and Exercise of Sub-Urban Journalists of Bangladesh**

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### **Abstract**

*The Right to Information Act (RTI) is a cornerstone for bolstering participatory democracy and fostering governance centered around the people. This research delves into the understanding and utilization of the RTI Act among sub-urban journalists in Bangladesh, aiming to uncover their knowledge and exercise levels concerning this pivotal legislation. Employing a surveys and the Knowledge Attitude and Practice (KAP) model, the study focuses on Khulna and Rajshahi districts, with a population of 900 journalists. Through purposive sampling, 100 sub-urban journalists were selected from various media categories, shedding light on their familiarity and comprehension of the RTI Act. The findings reveal a substantial awareness level, with 83% of respondents having heard of the Act, among whom 57% demonstrate a clear understanding, while 26% possess a partial grasp. However, challenges persist, including bureaucratic hurdles, political pressures, and a lack of awareness among information providers. This study underscores the pivotal role of the RTI Act in empowering journalists to access crucial information, thereby enhancing transparency and accountability in governance. It emphasizes the need for continued support and awareness initiatives to overcome existing challenges and maximize the Act's potential in ensuring a more informed and participatory society.*

**Key Words:** RTI, Perception, Sub-urban, Journalist, KAP, Information, Act.

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## **Introduction**

Right to information means the freedom of people to have access to government information. In other words, it means openness and transparency in the functioning of government (Kaushik, 2012). Right to information has been seen as the key to strengthen participatory democracy and ushering in people centered governance. Access to information can empower the poor and the weaker section of society to demand and get information about public policies and actions, thereby leading to their welfare. Right to Information Act makes information a right for the people a responsibility for the institutions. To ensure this right, the institutions need to be more responsible (Raihan, 2012). Without free flow of information, no number of developmental schemes can bring improvements in the quality of life of the citizen. In a fundamental sense, right to information is a basic necessity of good governance (Right to Information, 2006).

In Bangladesh, the Right to Information Act, 2009 has been enacted in National Assembly on 29 March, 2009 and came into effect in July the same year (Polash, 2010). RTI Act has enabled the citizen to become an active participant in discourses. The public can now understand how decisions are being made, how their tax money is being spent, whether public schemes are being implemented properly and also how government officials can be made accountable for their activities (Haque, 2016). Now RTI is considered a powerful tool for checking corruption, abuse of power and mismanagement among public bodies, contributing to advance the agenda on good governance (Hassan, 2011). Free flow of information is needed to maintain good governance, and in this process journalists or a press play a vital role. Telling the public, the truth of every event, issue and situation and not allowing any flowering to come in the way. This is social responsibility to the core. Failure of this will result in an inevitable 'culture death' (Uzuegbunam, 2013). A press has the right to criticize government and institutions but also has certain basic responsibilities to maintain the stability of society. It also has a responsibility to preserve democracy by properly informing the public and by responding to society's needs and interests (Postman, 1985). In the process of informing the public and responding to society's needs and interests the press needed the information from everywhere. And RTI gives more opportunity to pursue information to journalists as well as the people. Because of that a journalist need to have the knowledge of Right to Information Act properly. Also, they need to know how to exercise the Act usefully. Especially Sub-urban journalists need to know the Act properly because they are the one who works directly with the rural people and the governmental and non-government organizations.

This study is an attempt to identify the knowledge level of Sub-urban journalists about Right to Information Act after ten years of enactment of the Act. And also intend to draw a picture whether the Sub-urban journalists exercise the Act or not. Yet Bangladesh is trying to bring transparency in different sectors to fight against corruption. And journalism has more to do with that. Therefore, all the above discussion inclined the researcher to do the study on 'Right to Information Act: Perception and exercise of Sub-urban journalists of Bangladesh' where the research objective is to understand the perception and exercise rate of RTI of Suburban journalists of Bangladesh.

### **Objectives of the Study**

Main objective of this research is to identify the knowledge and exercise level of Suburban journalists of Right to Information Act. There are also some other objectives of this study, as follows;

- To find out awareness level of Sub-urban journalists;
- To explore attitude of Sub-urban journalists to the Act;
- To identify effectiveness of this Act in journalism;
- To find out obstacle of applying the Act in journalism;

### **Literature Review**

The Right to Information (RTI) Act serves as a crucial tool for transparency and accountability in democratic societies, enabling citizens, especially journalists, to access governmental information. In Bangladesh, the RTI Act is instrumental in strengthening press freedom, particularly in suburban areas where information access remains constrained. This literature review synthesizes existing research on RTI's role in journalism, its challenges, and comparative perspectives from other countries. Katende and Peter's (2014) study on Uganda's Access to Information Act (2005) identifies challenges such as limited awareness, procedural complexities, and resource constraints. Journalists cite inadequate government cooperation and prolonged response times as significant barriers. The study recommends increased public education, enhanced governmental commitment, modern record-keeping, and legislative reforms to align with international standards. Similarly, Thompson et al. (2021) highlight obstacles in Canada's Access to Information Act (ATIA), where journalists face bureaucratic delays and ideological resistance. Interviews with 17 journalists reveal that ATI is often a "last resort" due to inefficiencies, undermining journalistic quality and democratic engagement.

Zakaria and Othman (2013) explore Malaysian political blogs as alternative news sources. While mainstream media remains dominant, political blogs supplement information access, allowing readers to compare narratives and fostering a culture of free expression. In Lebanon, Hourani (2012) underscores the absence of robust access-to-information legislation, emphasizing the Lebanese Transparency Association's advocacy for legal reforms to enhance transparency and governance. Billah and Uddin's (2019) study on Bangladesh's RTI Act (2009) examines its role in promoting accountability in public services and NGOs. Applying the Agency theory framework, the research highlights how journalists use RTI to access vital public interest information. However, challenges such as bureaucratic reluctance, legal loopholes, and limited enforcement hinder its effectiveness. Panday and Rabbani (2017) trace the historical evolution of Freedom of Information (FOI) policies in Bangladesh, stressing the critical role of political will in ensuring RTI success. Drawing from scholars like Gill and Hughes, they argue that supportive political leadership is essential for effective information policies.

Demuyakor and Doe (2022) investigate social media's dual role in Ghanaian democracy. While enhancing citizen engagement and freedom of expression, social media also facilitates misinformation and political harassment. Their findings emphasize the need for national policies to regulate online discourse while preserving democratic values. In Bangladesh, Baroi et al. (2018) discuss RTI implementation challenges, noting that while the law guarantees information access, public awareness remains low. The study suggests an open-access approach to proactively disclose information, improving accountability and public empowerment. Islam and Rahman (2016) analyze press freedom in Bangladesh, using indicators from organizations like Freedom House. Their findings reveal that media ownership dynamics shape press freedom, with government and corporate entities exerting influence over journalistic content. Rahman and Rashid (2020) examine the Digital Security Act (2018) and its detrimental effects on investigative journalism. Their qualitative research highlights how fear of legal repercussions discourages journalists from pursuing critical stories, thus restricting access to vital information.

Abir and Shamim (2020) discuss journalist safety and media freedom in Bangladesh, noting the country's low ranking in the World Press Freedom Index. Physical threats, legal restrictions, and inadequate protective measures hinder journalistic work. Their study calls for legal reforms to ensure a safer media environment. Baroi's (2013) research on RTI implementation at the Union Parishad level in Bangladesh highlights grassroots challenges, including lack of public awareness and bureaucratic inertia. The study recommends targeted awareness campaigns to accelerate RTI adoption and improve governance.

transparency. Jamil (2020) explores journalism's role in sustainable development in Pakistan, emphasizing the need for unrestricted access to information. Pakistani journalists face legal and institutional constraints that hinder effective reporting on critical development issues. Utilizing thematic analysis, the study underscores the importance of journalist training in development communication to enhance public discourse on sustainability.

The reviewed literature underscores RTI's significance in fostering transparency, accountability, and press freedom. However, challenges such as bureaucratic resistance, low public awareness, and restrictive legal frameworks persist, limiting its effectiveness. While studies on RTI in Bangladesh provide valuable insights, the experiences of suburban journalists remain underexplored. Future research should focus on their perceptions and challenges in exercising RTI to inform policy reforms and strengthen grassroots transparency efforts.

### **Conceptual Framework:**

This study has considered the Knowledge-Attitude-Practice Model for conceptual design institutionalized by Schwart in 1976. This model originated from the Learning theory (Bandura, 1976) and the Diffusion of Innovation theory (Roger, 1995). The model considers the human behavior change process into three steps- acquiring knowledge, generating attitudes and forming practice during the respective time (Wang ed. al, 2020). Knowledge is mainly conscious and non-symbolic perception of meaning which derives from the understanding of information (Wessman, 2006). There are four types of knowledge in our society- scientific and social scientific knowledge, local knowledge, tacit knowledge and self-reflective knowledge (Hulme, 2018). Attitude indicates the level of evaluation on a specific subject (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000). Practice means the activities of responders on the respective issue considering socio-economic norms and values (Liao, Nguyen & Sasaki, 2022). This model is a standard tool for qualifying and analyzing the known, believed and done status with a specific issue (Nguyen et al., 2019). It also helps to identify knowledge gaps, attitudes barriers and practices patterns for better learning (WHO, 2008).

### **Methodology of the Study**

This study is quantitative in nature. The data was collected through survey method with a questionnaire.

### **Population**

The population for this study consists of 900 journalists working in different media houses across Khulna and Rajshahi districts. This figure is based on data from the Khulna Press Club and Rajshahi Press Club. These journalists represent various media categories, including print, broadcast, and online

platforms, forming the primary group from which the study draws its respondents.

### ***Sample Size Calculation***

A total of 100 suburban journalists were purposively selected from the study area. This sample includes representatives from three key media categories in Bangladesh: print media, broadcast media, and online media. Given the nature of the study, a purposive sample size of 100 was deemed appropriate to ensure in-depth insights while maintaining diversity across media platforms.

### ***Sampling Techniques***

The study employed purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method, to select participants who have direct experience with the Right to Information (RTI) Act. This approach ensures that the selected journalists possess relevant knowledge and engagement with RTI-related practices. By focusing on suburban journalists, the study aims to capture the specific challenges and experiences of media professionals operating outside major metropolitan areas.

### ***Data Collection Process***

The primary methods used for data collection were Survey: A structured questionnaire was developed, incorporating open-ended, close-ended, and structured questions to capture diverse perspectives. And Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) Model: This framework guided the survey design, ensuring that responses reflected journalists' awareness, perceptions, and utilization of RTI laws. The surveys and interviews were conducted in person and digitally, ensuring broad participation across the two districts.

### ***Data Management and Analysis***

The KoBo Toolbox application was used for data collection, allowing efficient organization and storage of responses. After cleaning and verifying the data, the researcher analyzed the data using Microsoft Excel, while responses were processed and interpreted using Microsoft Word. The combined analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of journalists' knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding RTI, ensuring a well-rounded examination of the research topic.

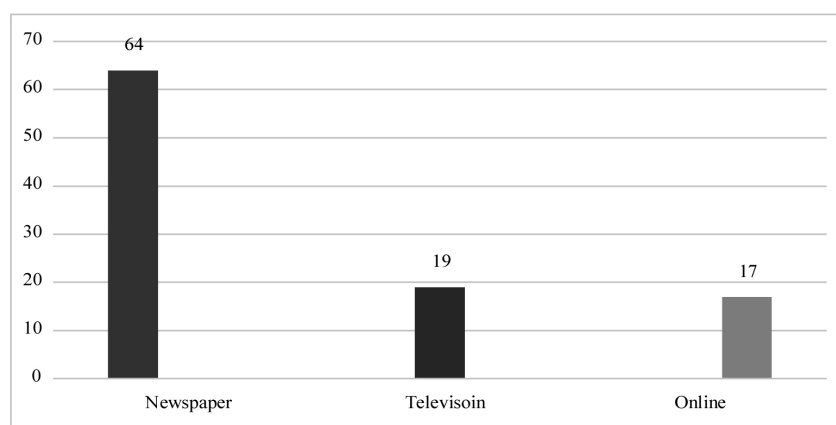
## Results and Data Analysis

### *Samples Description*

There was total 100 participants in this research (50 from Khulna and 50 from Rajshahi sub-urban areas). Among them 64 are from Newspapers, 19 from Television and 17 are from online media. Where only 1 woman participated in the survey and the average age of the participants is 37.58. In the case of experience, they have 13.90 years of experience.

Fig-01:Media Type of the Participants

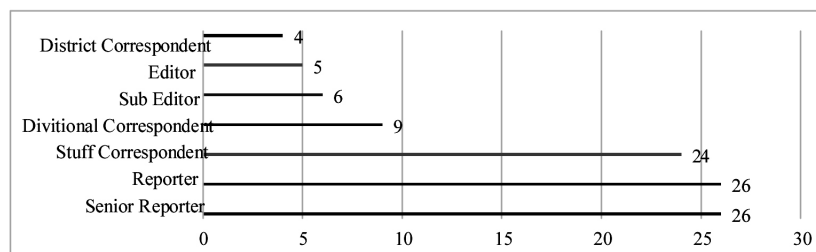
Fig-01:Media Type of the Participants



Source: Field Study

Figure-02 shows that the most participants are senior reporters and reporters, then stuff correspondents and the lowest participants are District Correspondents.

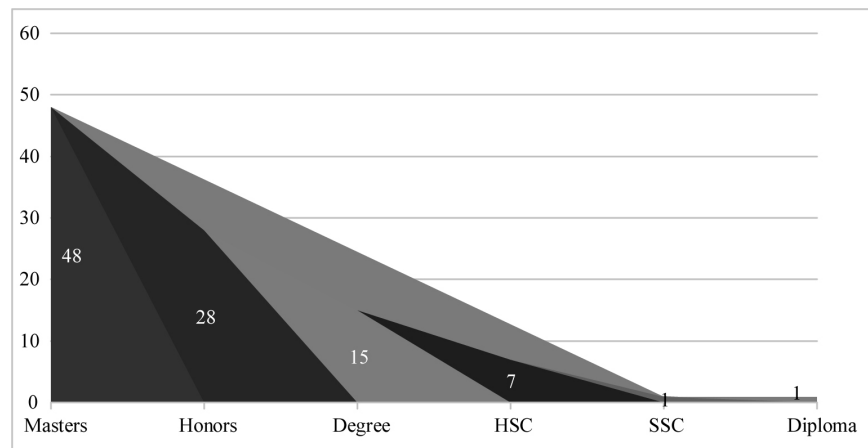
Fig-02: Designation of the Participants



Source: Field Study

It's been found that, most of the journalists from Sub-urban areas are higher educated. Where 48% journalists are Masters pass and the minimum educated are Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Diploma pass.

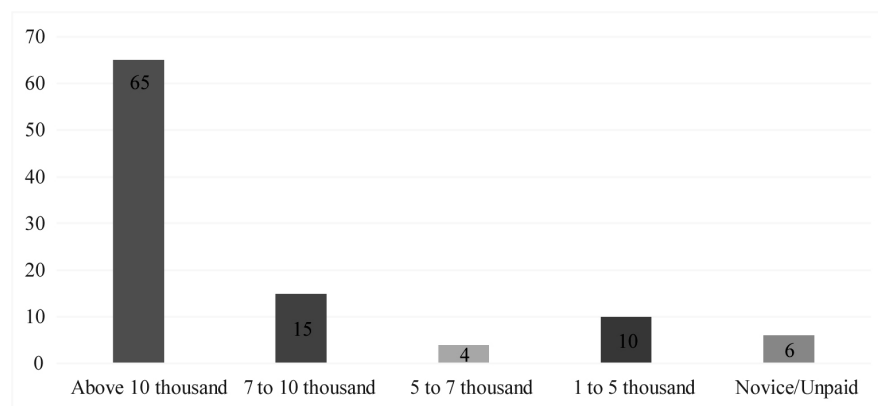
Fig-03: Education Status of the Participants



Source: Field Study

The notable percent (35%) of journalists get less than ten thousand salaries, 6% of total samples are unpaid/novice journalists.

Fig-04: Salaries of the Participants



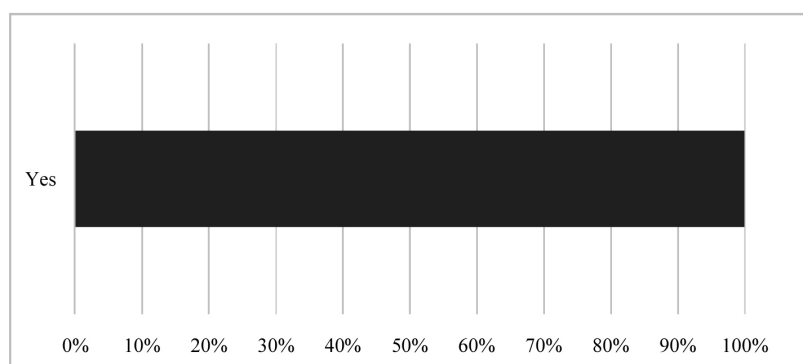
Source: Field Study



### ***Heard and Know about RTI Act***

The survey results show that 100% of the journalists surveyed in Khulna and Rajshahi had heard and know about the Right to Information Act. The Right to Information (RTI) Act is a law that allows people to access information held by public authorities. It is a transparency law that aims to empower citizens by enabling them to hold governments accountable.

Fig-05: Heard and Know about RTI Act

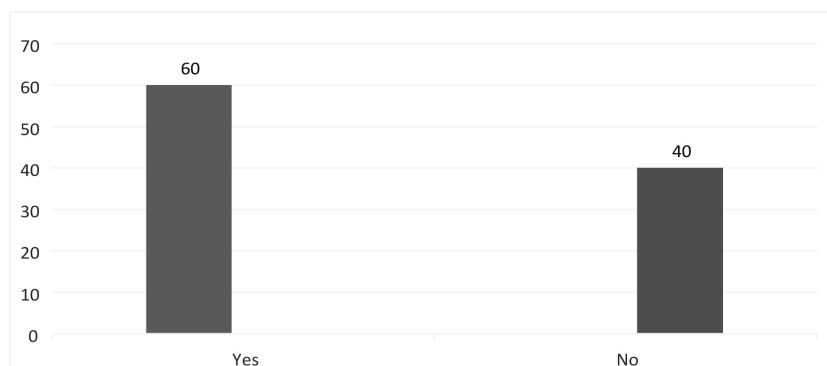


Source: Field Study

### ***Deadline Issue***

Results of the survey on journalists' opinions about a deadline for getting information. According to the survey, 60% of the journalists believe the deadline is appropriate, while 40% disagree.

Fig-06: Deadline Issue

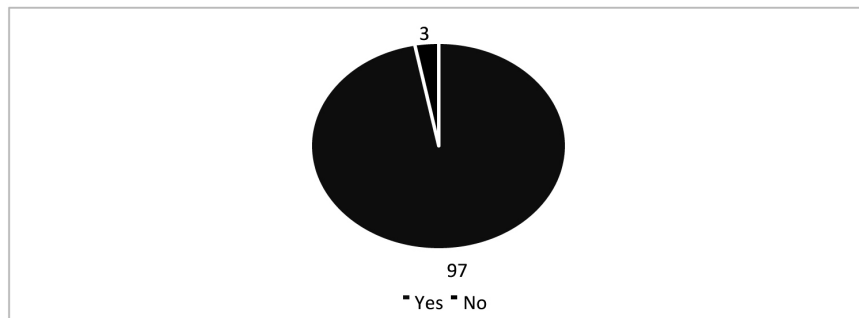


Source: Field Study

***Appealing to Authority***

The pie chart reveals a high level of awareness (nearly all at 97%) among journalists surveyed about their right to appeal for information. This suggests that journalists are equipped to navigate potential roadblocks when seeking information through official channels.

Fig-07: Appealing to Authority

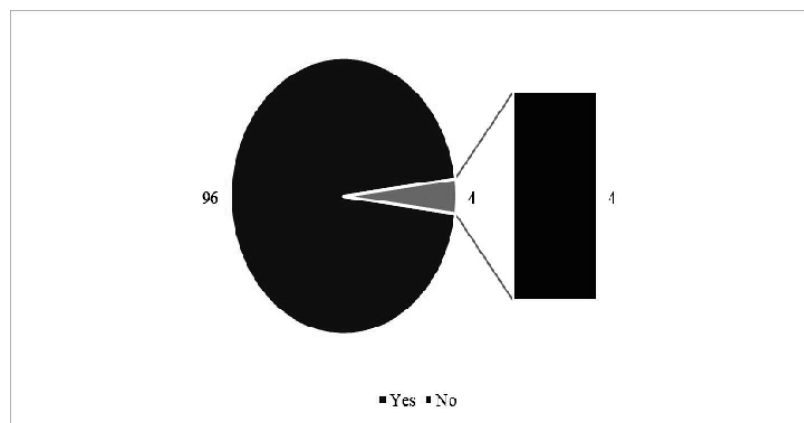


Source: Field Study

***Appealing to Information Commission***

The data indicates a high awareness (96%) among surveyed journalists regarding the appeal process for denied information requests. This suggests they're prepared to pursue information through official channels if needed. However, a small minority (4%) may still face challenges due to lack of knowledge about the appeal process.

Fig-08: Appealing to Information Commission

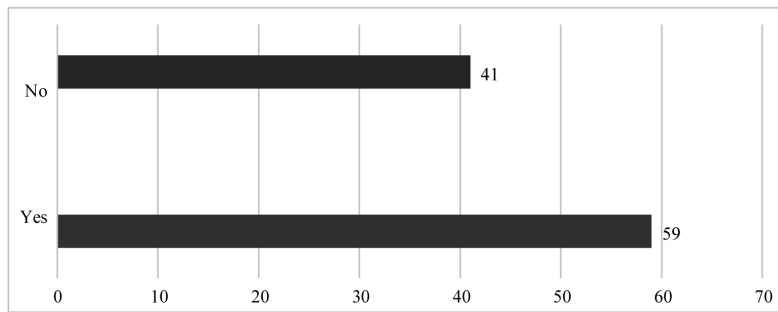


Source: Field Study

### ***Enough Timeline to Appeal***

Divided opinions emerge from this graph on appeal timelines for information requests. While a comfortable majority (59%) of journalists find the current timeframe adequate, a significant minority (41%) disagree. This suggests potential concerns about the efficiency of the appeals process, which could impact journalists' ability to meet deadlines.

Fig-09: Appealing to Information Commission

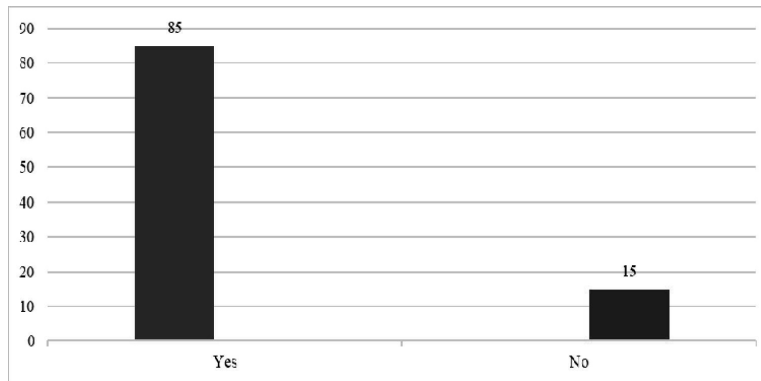


Source: Field Study

### ***Knowledge about the Officers***

85% of the journalists from sub-urban area of Khulna and Rajshahi know that, who are the officers to give essential information according to this RTI law. The blue bar represents the number of journalists who know the relevant officers, and the orange bar represents those who do not. This suggests a high level of awareness among journalists about who to contact for information under the RTI law.

Fig-10: Know about Information Officer

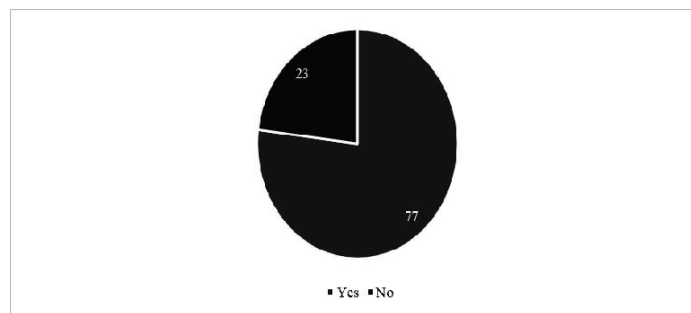


Source: Field Study

### ***Knowledge about Information Saving Process***

77% of the journalists surveyed know the process for saving information according to the Right to Information (RTI) Act. The RTI Act is a law that allows people to access information held by public authorities. The fact that a substantial majority of journalists are aware of the saving process suggests that they are equipped to preserve the information they obtain through RTI requests. However, the remaining 23% may not be following the proper procedures.

Fig-11: Know information saving process

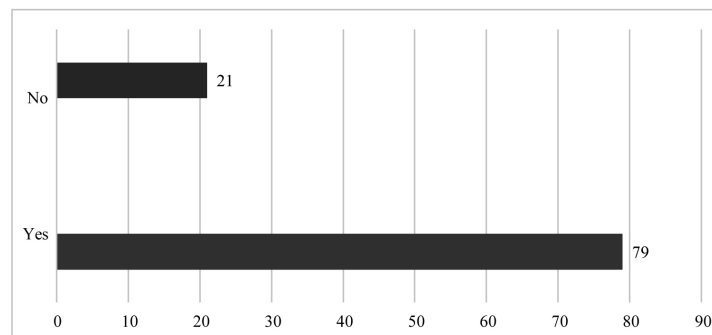


Source: Field Study

### ***Knowledge about Information Publishing Process***

The line graph shows that 79% of journalists surveyed are aware of the process for publishing information according to the Right to Information (RTI) Act. The RTI Act is a law that allows people to access information held by public authorities. This suggests that a large majority of journalists are familiar with the RTI Act's guidelines on information publication. However, the remaining 21% may be unaware of the proper procedures, potentially hindering transparency.

Fig-12: Knowledge about information publication



Source: Field Study

### ***Know the Way of Applying***

The graph shows that 93% of journalists surveyed in Khulna and Rajshahi know the procedure for applying for information under the Right to Information Act (RTI). This suggests a high level of awareness among journalists about the RTI application process. However, a small minority (7%) may still face challenges due to lack of knowledge about how to apply for information.

Fig-13: Knowledge about apply for information

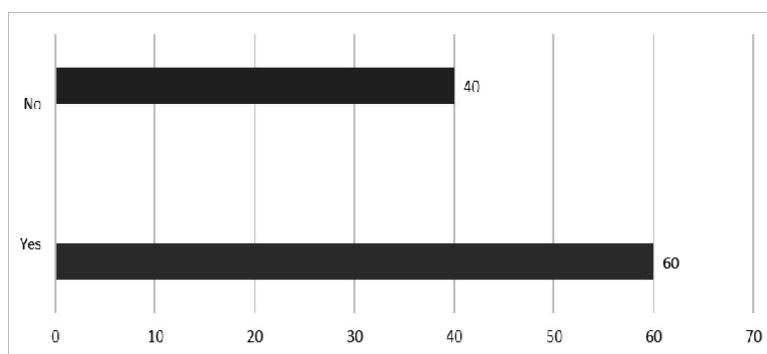


Source: Field Study

### ***Knowledge on Disables***

The awareness of special facilities for people with disabilities to access information is low among journalists. Only 60% of journalists surveyed said they were aware of these facilities, while 40% were not. This suggests that there may be a need for more education and outreach programs to inform journalists about these resources.

Fig-14: Knowledge about forbidden information



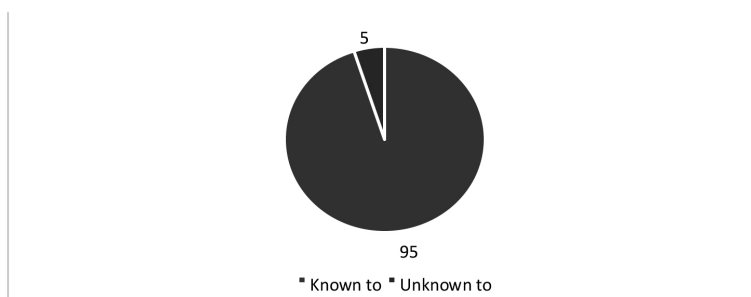
Source: Field Study

### ***Knowledge on Information Officers Punishment***

The punishments of Information Officers if they not provide necessary information is known by 95% of the respondents. The pie chart is blue and has a red arrow pointing to the top section of the pie chart. The text labels for the pie chart sections are “Known to 95%” and “Unknown to 5%”.

The pie chart indicates that a very high percentage (95%) of the journalists surveyed are aware of the punishments for information officers who do not provide necessary information. This suggests a high level of awareness among journalists about their rights under the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

Fig-15: Knowledge about punishment of officer

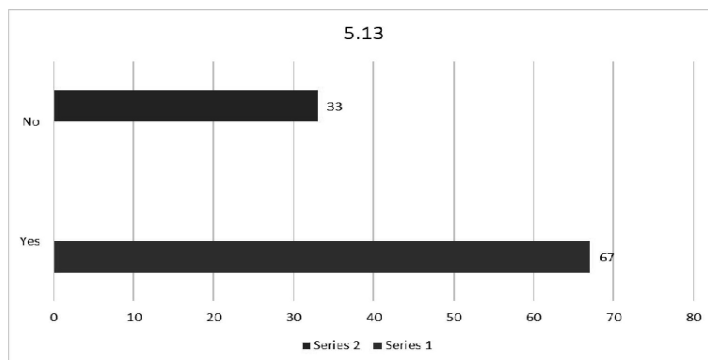


Source: Field Study

### ***Information Officers Punishment***

67% of the journalists thinks that the punishment for Information Officers if they not provide necessary information is fine. 33% feels that the fine is insufficient.

Fig-16: Agree or disagree on punishment of officer

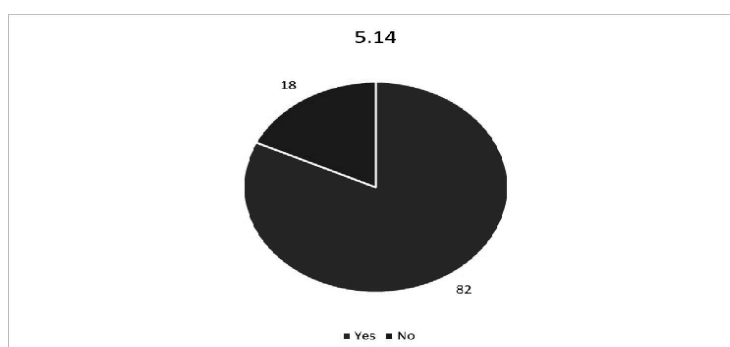


Source: Field Study

### ***Structured Information Commission Knowledge***

The pie chart reveals a high level of awareness (82%) among surveyed journalists regarding the existence of an Information Commission established under the Right to Information (RTI) Act. This suggests that a majority of journalists are familiar with the institutional framework for appealing denied information requests.

Fig-17: Knowledge about information commission

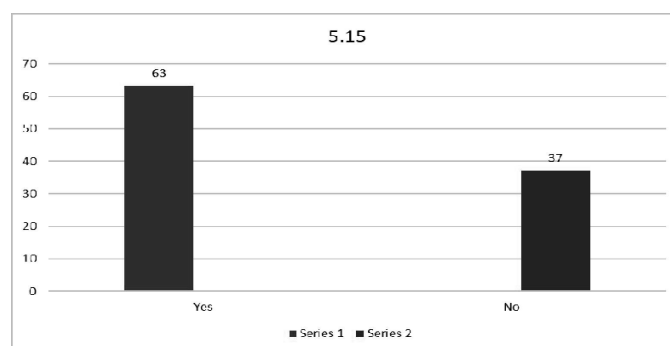


Source: Field Study

### ***Culture of Hiding Information***

Most (63%) of the journalists think that the culture of hiding information by the information officers has been removed. The graph shows the results of a survey on journalists' opinions about whether a culture of hiding information by information officers has been removed. According to the survey, 63% of the journalists believe this culture has been removed, while 37% disagree.

Fig-18: Culture of hiding information

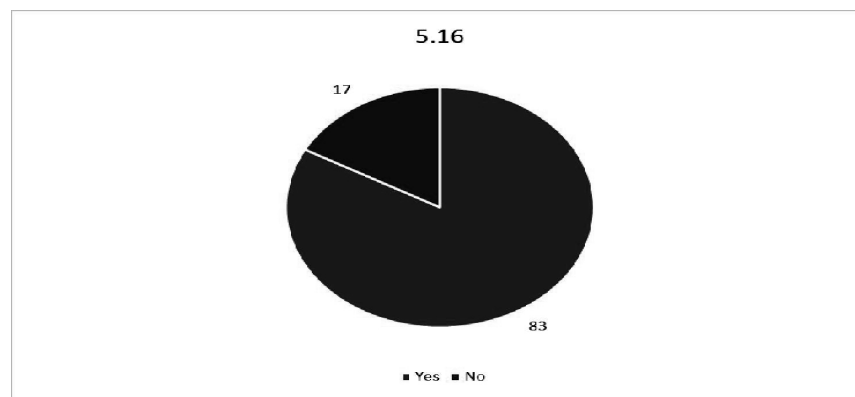


Source: Field Study

### ***Information Getting without Applying***

83% of the journalists know that they can get information even though not applied using RTI act for information.” [survey on journalists ON Seyfo Center seyfocenter.org]. The pie chart shows that a large majority (83%) of the journalists surveyed are aware that they can obtain information even without filing a request under the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

Fig-19: Gather information without applying

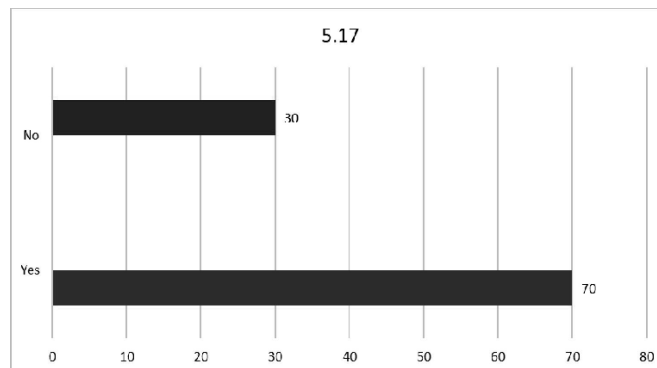


Source: Field Study

### ***Information Getting Became Easier***

The line graph shows a positive perception of the Right to Information (RTI) Act's impact. 70% of surveyed journalists agree that the RTI Act has made it easier to obtain information from government officials.

Fig-20: Information getting easier



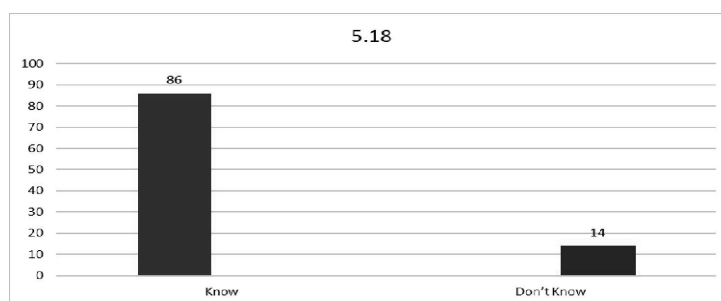
Source: Field Study



### Knowledge of Information Getting Time

86% of the reporters know the reasonable time of getting information after applying throw the RTI act. The graph displays the results of a survey on journalists' awareness of the timeframe for receiving information requests submitted under the Right to Information (RTI) Act. The RTI Act is a law that allows people to access information held by public authorities. According to the survey, 86% of the journalists reported knowing the standard time frame for receiving information through RTI requests. The remaining 14% were unsure of the time frame.

Fig-21: Knowledge of information getting time

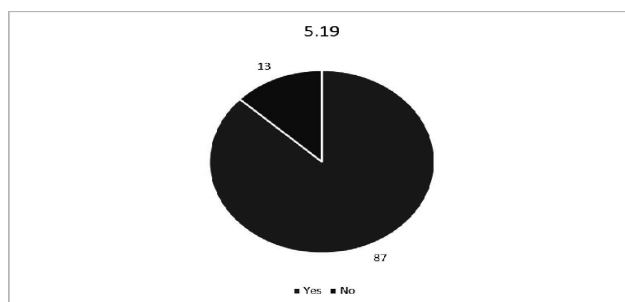


Source: Field Study

### Knowledge of Institutes under RTI Act

The pie chart shows the percentage of journalists familiar with the list of institutes covered under the Right to Information (RTI) Act. The blue section, labeled "Yes (87%)", is significantly larger than the red section, labeled "No (13%)". This indicates a high awareness (87%) among surveyed journalists about the institutes covered by the RTI Act.

Fig-22: Knowledge about institutions



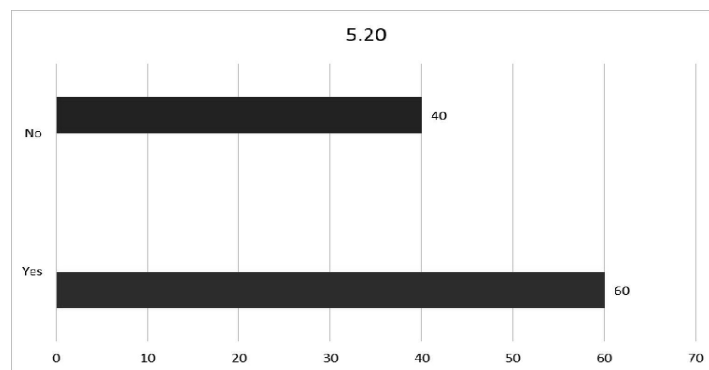
Source: Field Study

### ***Information Officers Appointment***

The line graph explores journalists' perceptions of information officer appointments within institutions covered by the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

According to the survey, 60% of journalists believe these institutions have appointed information officers, while 40% may be unsure or believe otherwise.

Fig-23: How to take appointment

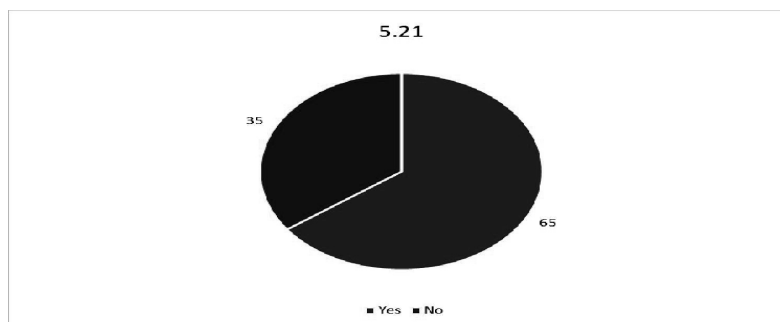


Source: Field Study

### ***Successful Use of RTI Act***

65% of the sub-urban journalists think that RTI act is being used in journalism successfully. The pie chart shows that a majority (65%) of suburban journalists surveyed believe the Right to Information (RTI) Act is being used successfully in journalism. The remaining 35% of journalists surveyed disagree or are unsure about the RTI Act's successful use in journalism.

Fig-24: Successful use of RTI

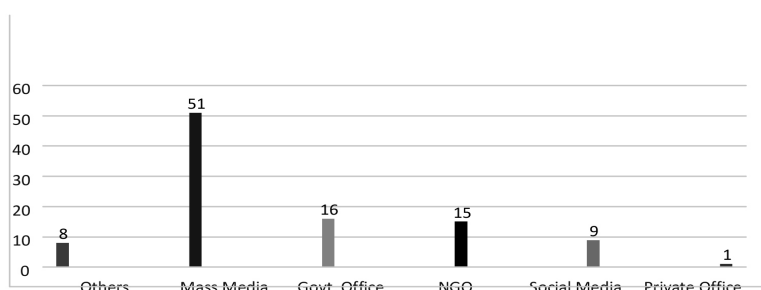


Source: Field Study

### Medium of RTI Act Knowledge

Most (51%) of the journalists have heard of the RTI Act in the different mass medias shows that journalists were surveyed about how they learned about the Right to Information (RTI) Act. The RTI Act is a law that allows people to access information held by public authorities. According to the survey, most journalists (51%) learned about the RTI Act through mass media. The remaining percentages (49%) learned about it through various sources, including government offices, NGOs, social media, and private offices.

Fig-25: How the know about RTI Act

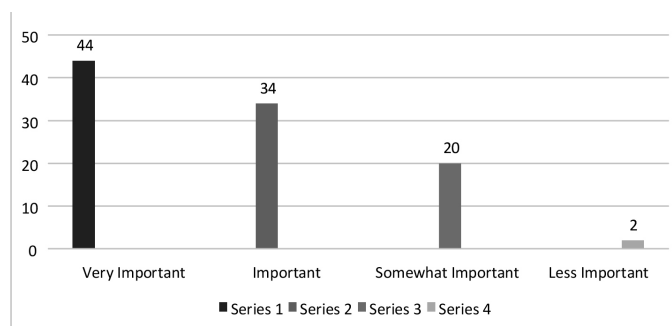


Source: Field Study

### Importance of RTI Act

44% of the sub-urban journalists think that RTI act has very importance in journalism then 34% of journalists thinks it has only importance. Where 20% of journalists found somewhat importance and only 2% found less importance of RTI Act in journalism.

Fig-26: Importance of RTI

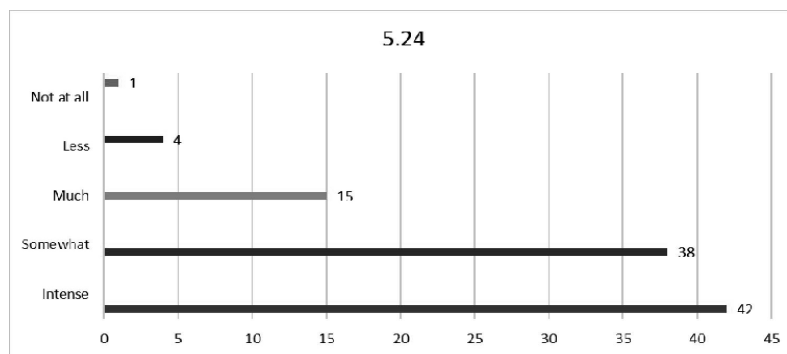


Source: Field Study

### ***Benefit of RTI Act***

42% of the sub-urban journalists think that RTI act has intense benefit in journalism then 38% of journalists thinks it has somewhat beneficial. Where 15% of journalists found much beneficial and only 4% found less beneficial of RTI Act in journalism. In the end only a percent of journalists found RTI Act beneficial.

Fig-27: Benefit of RTI

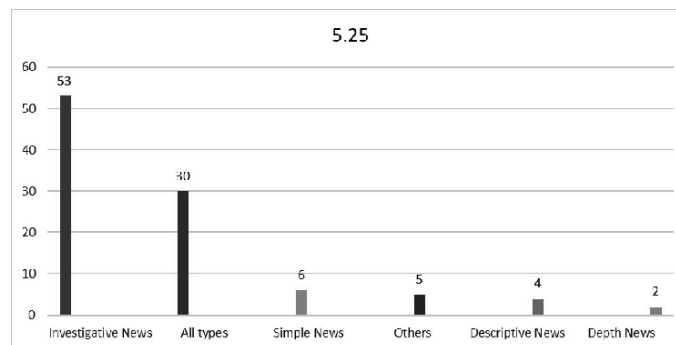


Source: Field Study

### ***Possible Type of Report Using Information through RTI Act***

Using the produced information by RTI Act can mostly (53% of journalists think) be used in writing Investigative type of news. Then 30% of sub-urban journalists think that information from RTI Act can use in all type of news. 6% of journalists gave their opinion on simple news, 5% others, 4% descriptive news and only 2% gone for Depth news.

Fig-28: Report types using RTI Act

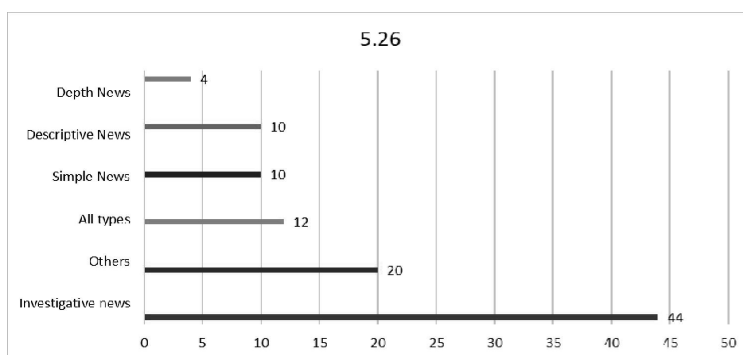


Source: Field Study

### Covered News Using RTI Act

44% of sub-urban journalists have already covered Investigative news using the RTI Act. After that 20 % mentioned other type of news. Then 12% of journalists covered all type of reports, 10% simple news, also 10% Descriptive news and only 4% sub-urban journalists covered Depth type of news.

Fig-29: Covered news types using RTI

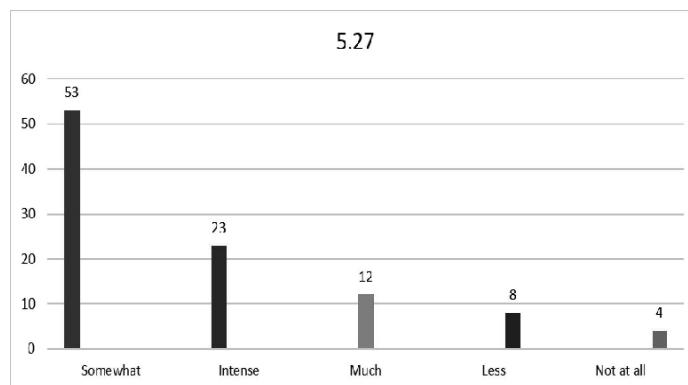


Source: Field Study

### Saves Reputation of House's and Reporter's

The sub-urban reporters found RTI Act helpful to save their and their media house's reputation. 53% of respondents think that the act has somewhat role in saving reputation. 23% think it has intense role, 12% think it plays a much role, 8% think it has less role and 4% of the journalists think the act do not have any type of role to save reputation.

Fig-30: How RTI make reputation

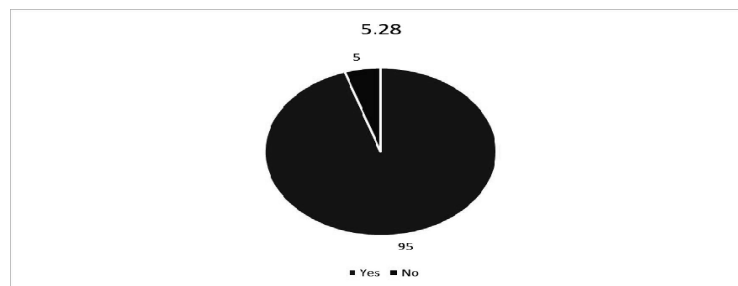


Source: Field Study

### ***Knowledge of Applying***

Most (95%) of the journalists have knowledge of where and how they can apply for information using RTI Act where 5% of journalists do not have any idea. The pie chart shows that nearly all (95%) of the journalists surveyed were aware of how and where to apply for information requests under the Right to Information (RTI) Act. Only a small minority (5%) of journalists did not know the application process.

Fig-31: Knowledge about applying

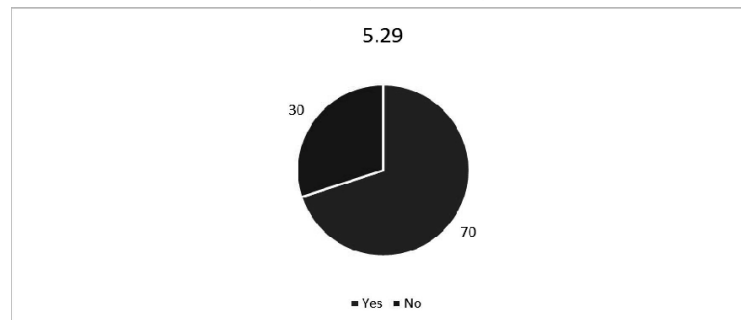


Source: Field Study

### ***Act Used By***

Most (70%) of the journalists have used RTI act to cover their news and 30% of suburban journalists have not used it yet. It shows that a significant majority (70%) of journalists surveyed reported using the Right to Information (RTI) Act in their news coverage. The remaining 30% of journalists have not yet used the RTI Act in their reporting.

Fig-32 Act used by

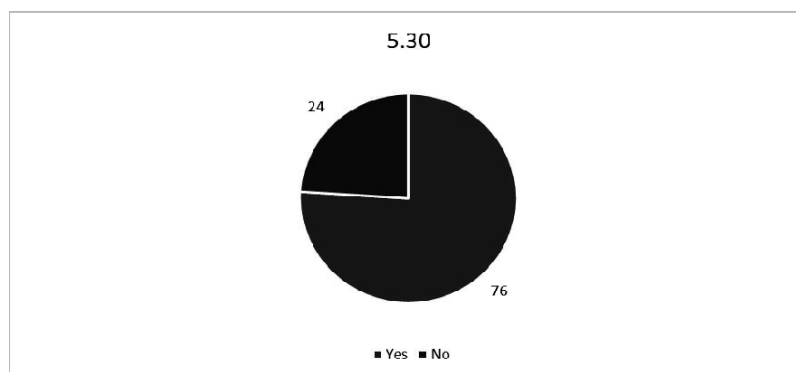


Source: Field Study

### *Applied by Known Persons*

76% of the journalists ensured that their known persons have applied the RTI Act to collect information where 24% of them could not mention if their known anyone applied this act or not.

Fig-33: Act applied by known person

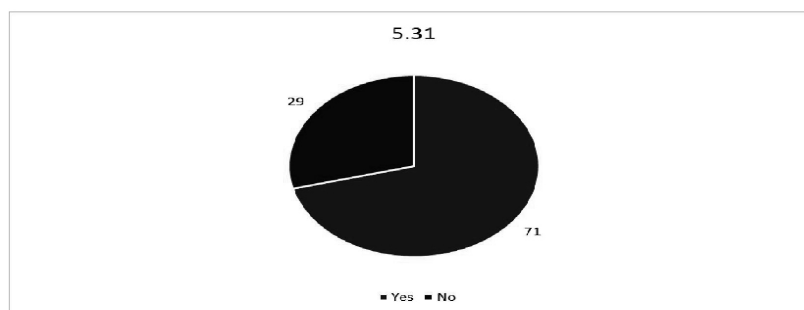


Source: Field Study

### *Participated in Seminars or Workshops*

Most (71%) of the sub-urban journalists have attended in seminars and workshops regarding the RTI Act on the other hand 29% of journalists did not participate in any seminars or workshops on the act.

Fig-34 Participated workshop or seminar about RTI

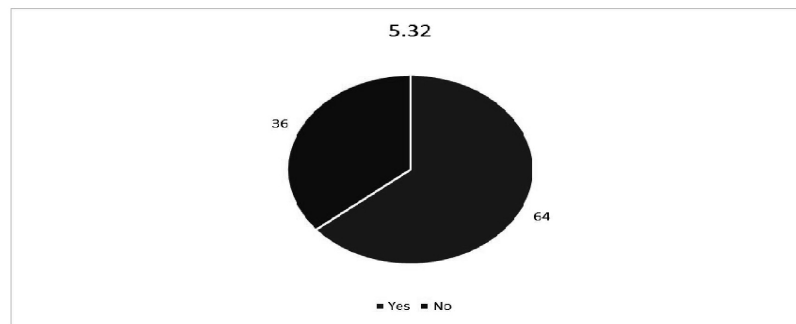


Source: Field Study

### ***Knowledge about fees***

Most of the sub-urban journalists have knowledge on the financial transaction regarding to the RTI Act and 36% of journalists are not acknowledged of this.

Fig-35: How to give fees for information

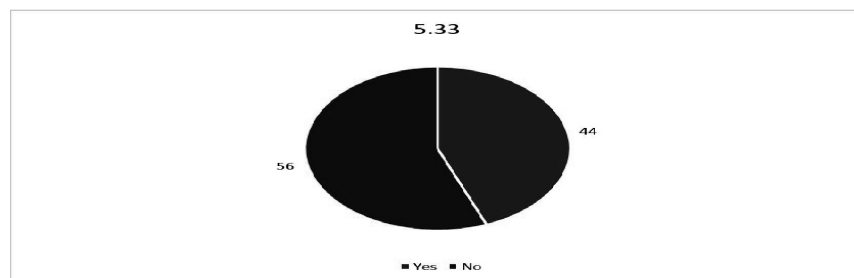


Source: Field Study

### ***Spend Money for Information***

Majority (56%) of the sub-urban journalists did not paid money using RTI act to get information but a remarkable number (44%) of journalists spend money for information. The pie chart indicates that a slight majority (56%) of journalists surveyed said they did not pay any money to use the Right to Information (RTI) Act to obtain information. However, a significant minority (44%) reported spending money to acquire information.

Fig-36 How much money they spend on RTI



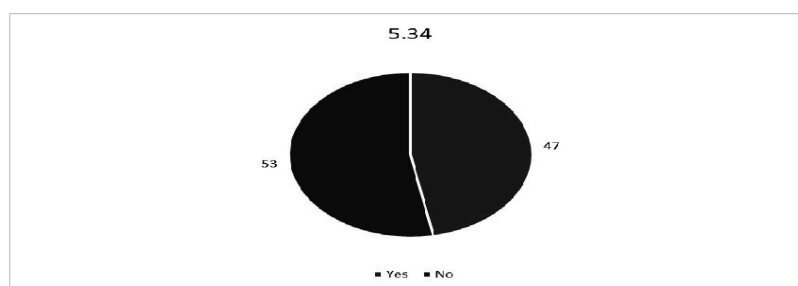
Source: Field Study



### Expenses Bear by

53% of the sub-urban journalists claimed that they bear the expenses to get information and 47% of journalists said that the expenses are bear by their media houses.

Fig-37: Who bear the expenses

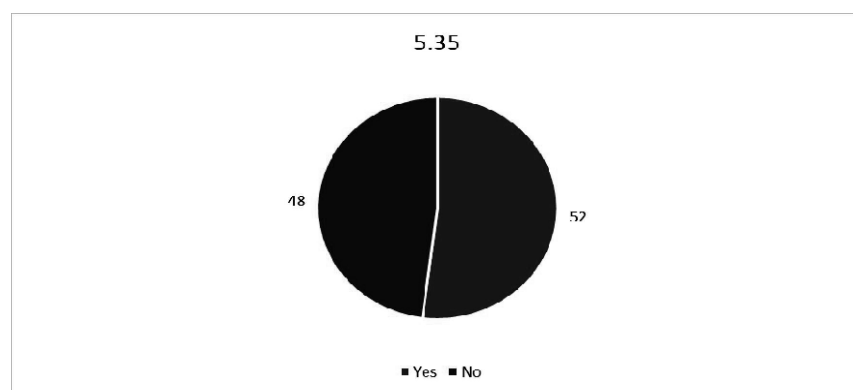


Source: Field Study

### Problem Faced

Most (52%) of the sub-urban journalists have faced problems while using the RTI Act and a notable number (48%) of journalists never faced any kind of problem using the RTI Act. It shows that over half (52%) of the journalists surveyed reported encountering problems while using the Right to Information (RTI) Act.

Fig-38 How much problems they faced



Source: Field Study

## **Discussion**

The study found that most of the sub-urban journalists (83%) had heard about the Right to Information Act, 2009. Among them, 57% had a clear understanding of the Act, while the remaining 26% had a partial understanding. Only 17% of the respondents had no understanding of the Act. The study revealed that most of the sub-urban journalists had a positive attitude towards the Act. They believed that the Act would help them to collect information, which would ultimately enhance their reporting quality. However, they also faced some obstacles, such as bureaucratic red tape, political pressure, and lack of awareness among information providers. The study also found that most of the respondents (72%) had used the Act in their reporting at least once in the past year. Among them, 49% found the Act helpful, while 23% found it somewhat helpful. Only 28% of the respondents reported no significant impact of the Act in their reporting.

Regarding the attitude towards the Act, the majority of the respondents (70%) had a positive perception of it. They believe that the Act promotes transparency and accountability, and can help to expose corruption and misuse of power. They also found many benefits to using the RTI act to obtain information. According to the participants, some of the main benefits are increased transparency and accountability, better access to information, the ability to hold officials accountable, increased public awareness and knowledge, and the ability to expose corruption and other malpractices. However, 25% of the respondents had a negative attitude towards the Act, stating that it is often difficult to get information from government officials, and that they fear reprisals for using the Act. Challenges faced by Journalists: Journalists have to face a lot of challenges to get information using the RTI act. According to the participants, some of the main challenges are a lack of cooperation from officials, lack of proper training and awareness among journalists, lack of access to information, slow and delayed information, and a lack of proper guidelines for the use of the RTI act.

In terms of the effectiveness of the Act in journalism, the majority of respondents (85%) believe that it has had a positive impact on their work. They reported that the Act has helped them to access information that was previously unavailable, and has enabled them to produce more accurate and well-researched stories. However, some respondents (15%) believe that the Act has not had a significant impact on their work, as government officials are often uncooperative and do not provide information in a timely manner. The obstacles faced by Sub-urban journalists in applying the Act were also explored in this study. The most common obstacles reported by respondents were bureaucratic hurdles, lack of cooperation from government officials, and fear of reprisals. Some respondents

also reported that they do not have enough knowledge of the Act and its provisions, and therefore do not use it to its full potential. Participants therefore suggested several recommendations to improve the implementation of the RTI act. These include increasing public awareness and education about the act, providing proper training and resources to journalists and information officers, creating a central body to oversee the implementation of the act, establishing a proper mechanism to monitor compliance, and ensuring the timely and efficient provision of information.

### **Conclusion and Scope of Future Research and Policy Implication**

Future research on the Right to Information (RTI) Act, specifically focusing on sub-urban journalists in Bangladesh, should aim to provide a comprehensive analysis of how the Act is perceived and utilized. Expanding the scope to include a wider range of sub-urban and rural areas will help uncover regional variations in the perception and application of the RTI Act. Including journalists from various media platforms—print, online, and broadcast—can offer a holistic view of the Act's impact. Detailed investigations into how different factors, such as years of experience and regional challenges, affect perceptions will be valuable. Additionally, in-depth studies on specific obstacles, such as bureaucratic red tape, lack of cooperation, and fear of reprisals, are crucial for understanding the practical difficulties journalists face. Evaluating the effectiveness of the RTI Act in terms of transparency and accountability, as well as measuring its impact on reporting quality and investigative depth, will provide insights into its true value. Comparative studies with RTI laws in other countries and historical analyses of RTI legislation's evolution will further contextualize the findings. Incorporating assessments of training programs and exploring technological innovations can also enhance the implementation of the RTI Act. Addressing these areas will lead to actionable recommendations for improving the Act's application and effectiveness in supporting transparent journalism.

The positive attitude towards the Act among Sub-urban journalists is encouraging, as it suggests that there is a strong belief in the importance of transparency and accountability in governance. However, the negative attitude among some respondents highlights the need for greater awareness-raising and training on the Act, particularly among those who fear reprisals for using it. The obstacles faced by Sub-urban journalists in applying the Act underscore the need for greater government support and cooperation. Bureaucratic hurdles and lack of cooperation from officials can hinder the ability of journalists to access information, which ultimately undermines the effectiveness of the Act. Therefore, it is crucial for the government to ensure that officials are aware of their obligations under the Act and are willing to cooperate with journalists in providing information. Overall, the Right to Information Act, 2009, has the

potential to significantly enhance the work of Sub-urban journalists in Bangladesh, and to promote greater transparency and accountability in governance. However, greater efforts are needed to address the obstacles and challenges faced by journalists in applying the Act, and to raise awareness and build capacity among journalists and government officials alike.

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