

PEOPLES' PARTICIPATION AND PERCEPTION TOWARDS URBAN GOVERNANCE: A STUDY OF BARDDHAMAN MUNICIPALITY, WEST BENGAL

Dr. Chhanda Karfa*Assistant Professor in Geography, Dr. Gour Mohan
Roy College, Monteswar, Purba Bardhaman,***ABSTRACT**Article DOI URL: <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra2817>

In urban areas the gap between the resources and expenditure has increased every year. As a result, urban amenities and services have started deteriorating in their standard. Civic life in urban areas has become, on many occasions, painfully intolerable and people have become relatively less involved in matters of urban governance. As a result, the unfulfilled aspirations have kept the citizens and the municipal governments as alien entities to each other in some cases. All-round development of urban space is not possible in such a socio-political situation. So it is essential for urban geographers to study the state-people interrelationship in urban areas to help both the policy-makers and the city-dwellers in a comprehensive way. The municipal government may be viewed as an instrument of institutional interference upon the selectivity of the citizen and also a logical necessity emerging from the incapability of individual citizen to regulate the affairs of the large community. The main focus of this study is to analyse the awareness of the citizens regarding their urban governance as well as to enquire the perception of the city dwellers regarding their municipal governance. This paper is based on the empirical survey done with the help of both qualitative and quantitative methods. The data used in this paper are collected from both the primary and the secondary sources.

KEY WORDS: *Urban governance, Perception, Transparency, Awareness, Efficiency***INTRODUCTION**

Basiston (1986) described the history of evolution of local self government in India with particular reference to Orissa. Koushik (1986) studied the perceptions of the citizens' towards their urban local governance. Mishra (1979) analysed the behaviour of municipal councillors of Goya in Bihar and the relationships with parties, constituents and city governments executive. Sahay (1991) highlighted the state municipal relationship in Bihar. He tried to explain the nature and extent of state control which hedges our right of self government at local level. Mohanty (1993) studied different aspects of local government and also analysed citizens' awareness, participation and evaluation of municipal performance of Bhubaneswar municipality in Orissa. Pinto (1984) also studied the role of councillors and citizens' participation in urban local Governance in Bombay. He also examined a theoretical perspective and a historical back drop in the four metropolitan cities of Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata and Mumbai in a comparative frame in 2000. He also placed local government in its federal setting, especially in the light of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act. Datta (2001) focused his attention on the role of local government in managing

urban environment in India. He also studied the role of municipal government in Chaina, Uganda and Bolivia. Jalal (2001) explained how the state people interaction contributes to a sustainable improvement in urban service delivery with particular reference to two cities, Calcutta and Bangalore in India. Harris (2005) described the patterns of political participation, focusing in particular on ways in which poorer social groups organise and obtain political representation to solve collective social problems in some sample communities in Delhi. Ball (2002) described about citizens' participation in governance and analysed how does civil society participate in governance to help in meeting people' basic needs. Robinson (1995) noted that the quality of governance depends on legitimacy, respect for human rights, accountability, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness, decentralization, sustainability, equity and participation.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study are :

- (a) To analyse the awareness of the citizens regarding their urban governance;
- (b) To enquire the perception of the city dwellers regarding their municipal governance; and

(c) To investigate the state-people interaction in Burdwan town due to rapid urbanization;

METHODOLOGY

This is a micro level empirical study which makes extensive use of field survey techniques on the basis of in-depth interviews conducted by questionnaires survey. The respondents are selected by Simple Random Sampling methodology with the consideration of voter list of the municipal office.

STUDY AREA

Barddhaman is one of the oldest towns of West Bengal, older even than Kolkata. The town Barddhaman (23°12' N to 23°15' N and 87°49' E to 87°53' E) is located almost at the heart of the district Purba Barddhaman. Presently it is the most important town of south Bengal in the view of economy

Table No. 1: Sex-wise awareness of the respondents about the Ward Numbers

Sex	Know (No.)	%	Don't Know (No)	%
Male	49	98	1	2
Female	34	68	16	32

$$\chi^2 = 15.95, df = 1, P < 0.0001$$

From the table no. 1 it is clear that the awareness of the male respondents in Barddhaman Municipality is greater than the female respondents. This may be due to the fact that

and communication system of the state. Being located on the north bank of the River Damodar, the town was a nodal point from the early period and was a centre of administration in the period of mediaeval India. The local self government of the town in the form of Barddhaman Municipality was established in 1865, when it covered an area of 8.4 Square Miles. Now the municipal boundary covers an area of 13.20 square miles with a population of 2, 86,038 people (Census, 2011) distributed in 35 wards.

SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The various surveys conducted to judge the perceptions of citizens about the awareness, efficiency, transparency and accountability of the urban governance in Barddhaman municipality are as follows :

women become very much involved with their family affairs and become unconscious about their ward numbers.

Table No. 2: Age-wise awareness of Female Respondents about the Ward Numbers

Age in Years	Know (No.)	%	Don't Know (No)	%
18-34	10	66.67	5	33.33
35-51	18	90.00	2	10.00
52 and Above	01	10.00	9	90.00
Total	34	68.00	16	32.00

$$\chi^2 = 9.87, df = 2, P < 0.01$$

Table no. 2 shows that the middle aged women seem to have much higher degree of awareness (90.00%) than the young (66.67%) and old aged (42.86%) women. Female respondents in lowest and highest age group discloses lower

rate of awareness than the middle age group. The highest (90.00%) awareness is found in age group of 35-51. The Chi-square test also shows that the two factors age and awareness are significantly associated ($P < 0.01$).

Table No. 3: Income-wise awareness of Female Respondents about Ward Numbers

Individual Income/Month (Rs.)	Awareness About the Ward Number			
	Know (No.)	%	Don't Know (No)	%
Nil	4	80.00	1	20.00
Below 10,000	8	80.00	2	20.00
10,001-30,000	7	87.50	1	12.50
30,001-50,000	13	92.85	1	27.14
Above 50,001	2	50.00	2	50.00
Total	34	68.00	16	32.00

$$\chi^2 = 24.28, df = 4, P < 0.01$$

Table No. 3 analyses the relationship between the rate of awareness about their respective ward number and the individual income of the female respondents in Barddhaman town. Generally the rate of awareness increases with the increasing individual income though it drops (50.00%) in the highest income group. The cause of this less awareness is

mainly because of their busy life. The highest awareness (92.85%) is found among the female respondents whose monthly income lies between Rs. 30,001 to Rs. 50,000. The Chi-square value shows a significant relationship between the individual income and the awareness of the female respondents of the surveyed town.

Table No. 4: Education-wise awareness of Female Respondents about Ward Numbers

Education	Awareness About the Ward Number			
	Know (No.)	%	Don't Know (No)	%
Male	49	98.00	1	02.00
Primary Education I to V	3	27.27	8	71.42
Secondary Education V to X	2	33.33	4	66.67
Higher Secondary X to XII	8	80.00	2	20.00
Under Graduate	13	92.86	1	07.14
Post Graduate & Others	8	88.89	1	11.11
Total	34	68.89	16	34.00

$$\chi^2 = 31.75, df = 4, P < 0.001$$

Results of Table No.4 shows the variation of political awareness of the female residents with the increase or decrease of education. Today women cross the formidable barrier of illiteracy, and they are able to transcend the limitations of their traditional social role and can possess a higher (68.00%) degree of consciousness about their respective ward boundary. The graduate level women respondents have the highest (92.86%) degree of awareness while (71.42%) of female

respondents having primary education are not aware about their ward number. So it may be concluded that education plays an important role in deciding the role of awareness of the female respondents in Bardhaman Municipality. The Chi-square value also shows a significant association between the level of education and the level of awareness about the respective ward number of the female respondents in Barddhaman town.

Table No. 5 (a): Awareness about the profile of Councillors: Male Respondents

Response	Awareness About the Profile of Councillors											
	Name (No.)	%	Sex (No.)	%	Age (No.)	%	Caste (No.)	%	Occupation (No.)	%	Party (No.)	%
Correctly Stated	49	98.00	49	98.00	46	92.00	47	94.00	40	80.00	49	98.00
Incorrectly Stated	01	02.00	01	02.00	04	8.00	03	6.00	10	20.00	01	02.00

Table No. 5 (b): Awareness about the profile of Councillors: Female Respondents

Response	Awareness About the Profile of Councillors											
	Name (No.)	%	Sex (No.)	%	Age (No.)	%	Caste (No.)	%	Occupation (No.)	%	Party (No.)	%
Correctly Stated	36	72.00	36	72.00	36	72.00	36	72.00	28	56.00	38	76.00
Incorrectly Stated	14	28.00	14	28.00	14	28.00	14	28.00	22	44.00	12	24.00

Table 5(a) and (b) show that the awareness of the male respondents about the profile of councillors is greater than their female counterparts. About 98.00% of the male

respondents are aware about the name, sex, age and the party to which their respective councillors belong.

Table No. 6: Interaction between the Citizens and Elected Representatives

Sex of Respondents	Frequencies of meeting with their Councillors							
	Everyday		Once a Week		Occasional		Rarely	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	7	14	6	12	27	54	10	20
Female	1	2	4	8	13	26	32	64

$$\chi^2 = 21.32, df = 3, P < 0.001$$

Table No. 6 shows that the interaction between the respondents and their respective councillors is not so frequent in Barddhaman Municipal town. The Chi-square values of the data indicate a significant association between the opinion of male and female respondents. 54% male respondents stated that there is occasional interaction with their commissioners or councillors. But 64% female respondents are dissatisfied

about the interaction with their respective councillors. So the opinion of male respondents significantly differs from that of their female counterparts. The Chi-square value shows a significant difference among the male and female responses about the visit of the respective councillor of their jurisdiction. Most of female respondents are dissatisfied than their male counterparts.

Table No.7: Citizens' Satisfaction and Effectiveness regarding elected representatives

Variables of Respondents		No. of Respondent Saying 'Yes'		No. of Respondent Saying 'No.'	
		Number	%	Number	%
Sex	Male	32	62.00	18	38.00
	Female	25	50.00	25	50.00
Age (in years)	18-34	10	33.33	20	66.67
	35-51	26	65.00	14	35.00
	Above 51	21	70.00	09	30.00
Income (in Rupees)	No Income	03	16.67	15	83.33
	Below 10,000	09	40.91	13	59.09
	10,001-30,000	17	73.91	06	26.09
	30,001-50,000	18	75.00	06	25.00
	Above 50,000	10	76.92	03	23.08

Here the question "Do you feel he/she (councillor) looks after this constituency adequately? This is a dichotomous one leaving no scope for the respondents to give any dubious answer or to avoid the question. The data presented in Table No.7 shows that the level of satisfaction of citizens about their respective councillors' effectiveness depends upon

gender, age and income of the respondents. In general female respondents are more dissatisfied than the male respondents. The satisfaction level of the respondents is inversely related to the age. Here in the lowest age group the level of satisfaction is only 33.33 %, where as the aged (51 and above) people are satisfied up to 70%. Table No. 7 also shows that citizens'

satisfaction about the effectiveness of the councillors is independent of sex ($P > 0.05$) while age of respondents have significant contribution ($P < 0.01$). The same is true for different levels of income ($P < 0.01$). The satisfaction level regarding

the councillor's effectiveness also depends upon their income level. People who belong to poor income group are less satisfied (only 16.67%).

Table No. 8 : Perception about Transparency of the State's Representatives

Description	No. of Male Respondents	%	No. of Male Respondents	%
Honest	15	30	9	18
Moderately Honest	21	42	17	34
Dishonest	00	00	02	04
Don't know	14	28	22	44

$$\chi^2 = 5.7, df = 3, P > 0.05$$

From the Ttable No. 8 it is evident that 30 % male and 18 % female respondents have no dissatisfaction regarding the honesty of their respective councillor. 42 % male and 34 % female respondents opined that their state's representatives are moderately honest. Only 4 % female respondents directly stated about the dishonesty of their respective councillor.

Majority of the respondents (28 % male and 44 % female) avoided the sensitive issue. The Chi-square value shows no significant difference between the opinion of the male and female respondents regarding the transparency of the councillors.

Table No. 9 : Age and Level of Satisfaction of the Respondents

Age in Years	Level of political Satisfaction of the Respondents									
	Very Good		Good		Fair		Poor		Very Poor	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
18-34	6	20	4	13.33	3	10.00	16	53.33	1	3.33
35-51	9	22.5	9	22.5	5	12.5	16	40.00	1	2.5
> 51	11	36.67	10	33.33	6	20.00	2	6.67	1	3.33

Data presented in Table No. 9 shows that in the highest age group (>52 years) there is a relatively greater tendency of satisfaction regarding the running condition of their town. The young people of the study reveal lesser degree of satisfaction. 53.33 % of this young people have poor level of

satisfaction in this regard. The Chi-square test shows there is association between the age group and the degree of satisfaction of the respondents. This means the level of satisfaction differs in accordance with the age group of the respondents.

Table No. 10 : Income and the Level of Satisfaction regarding the Running Condition of the town

Income /Month (in Rs.)	Level of political Satisfaction of the Respondents							
	Very Good		Good		Fair		Poor	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Nil	1	6.66	1	6.66	1	6.66	12	80.00
Below 10,000	3	11.54	3	11.54	7	26.92	1	50.00
10,001-30,000	2	25.00	8	33.33	2	8.33	3	33.33
30,001-50000	12	48.00	8	32.00	3	12.00	8	8.00
Above 50,000	4	40.00	3	30.00	1	10.00	2	20.00

$$\chi^2 = 34.75, df = 12, P > 0.01$$

Table No. 10 shows meaningful relationship between individual income and the level of satisfaction of the respondents about the present condition of their town. Here

level of satisfaction and level of income are significantly associated ($P < 0.01$)

Table No. 11 : Education and the Level of Satisfaction regarding the Running Condition of the town

Education	Level of political Satisfaction of the Respondents							
	Very Good		Good		Fair		Poor	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Primary Education (I-V)	1	6.25	1	6.25	3	18.75	11	68.75
Secondary (V-X)	1	6.25	1	6.25	4	25.00	10	62.50
Higher Secondary (X- XII)	8	38.1	7	33.33	2	9.52	4	10.05
Under Graduate	10	31.25	10	31.25	3	9.34	9	28.13
Post Graduate	6	40.00	4	26.67	2	13.33	3	20.00

$$\chi^2 = 26.65, df = 12, P > 0.01$$

In examining the relationship between education and level of satisfaction of the respondents of Bardhaman municipality, there is a positive co-relationship. Table No. 11 shows that the level of satisfaction increases with the increasing level of education. In the lower level of education there we find maximum amount (68.75%) of dissatisfaction regarding the running condition of their town. On the other, the minimum level of dissatisfaction prevails among the higher secondary (10.05%) and post-graduate (20.00%) respondents. The Chi-square test shows a significant association between education and the level of satisfaction of the respondents regarding the running condition of their town. The null hypothesis has therefore been rejected here.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The study attempts to explore the impact of socio-economic variables on participation of the citizen of Bardhaman town and their perception towards their municipal governance. The main focus here has been on the gender differences. In cases, the sex related difference is prominent and sometimes there is no significant difference. In an attempt to find out the gender differences in Bardhaman town, it has been seen that there exists a significant differences in the level of awareness of the respondents towards their own ward number. On an average, females are less aware than their male counterparts. The extent to which individuals are aware and participate in urban governance depends to a large extent on the social variables and attributes such as sex, age, individual income and level of education. An examination of the survey data indicates that, on the whole, 22 % female respondents have a high participation rate while 30% male respondents have a high participation rate. Further study on the basis of age, education and income level suggests that the gender gap is gradually diminishing. Now, if we compare the level of satisfaction regarding the running condition of Bardhaman town between the male and female respondents, the study reveals that there is a wide gap between them. This hiatus further investigated on the basis of individual income and the level of education. All the socio-economic variables taken into consideration do not bear a positive association with all kinds of social orientations. Some are significant in selective cases, others do not seem to play a significant role.

This study reveals that the state-people interactions in Bardhaman town are quite well. Their attitude towards the state a facilitator is not so bad. Though any universal conclusion cannot be drawn from such a micro level study, yet it may be hoped that this study will serve to reduce the gender gap in our society. It may further be hoped that the study will contribute, at least to some extent, to the increasing participation of women in their local municipal governance.

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