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ASSESSMENT OF SERVICE QUALITY OF URBAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN BANGLADESH: THE CASE OF
PABNA MUNICIPALITY

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Abstract

The issues government authorities face in delivering adequate municipal services while also considering the rapid growth of urban populations exacerbates the needs of their constituents. For sustainable urban management, it is crucial to understand the quality of urban services from the citizen's point of view and, consequently, to close the satisfaction gap. This study aims to assess the service quality of urban local government in Bangladesh with special reference to Pabna municipality. Both interviews and structured questionnaires were used to collect data from five wards of Pabna Municipality, and 150 respondents were surveyed. The performance was measured through Citizen Report Card (CRC) and The Urban Governance Initiative index. The finding shows that citizens ranked the disaster management and mosquito control service as poor, while certification service was identified as good and sensation service as fair. Our findings reveal the perspectives of both the citizen and the public service providers, suggesting that satisfaction and service quality levels are reasonably low. There is an urgent need to improve the quality of basic services by integrating people and employees in the planning of the service delivery process.

Keywords: service quality; municipality; city governance; citizen report card; Bangladesh.

1. INTRODUCTION

The quality of service is of the utmost importance in all service sectors. One of the most significant challenges businesses that provide services are currently up against is providing services of a consistently high standard. Consumers are becoming increasingly particular in the goods and services they seek, and they also have steadily increasing standards of quality in terms of the customer service they anticipate receiving (Flynn, 2007; Nwankwo, 1995; SÁ & Sintra, 2011). For many, service denotes ensuring that the customer is satisfied with the product or service, delivering that service, maintaining a relationship with the customer, etc. There is a strong interest in controlling the quality of services with the maintenance

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of widespread public demand. It comprises establishing goals for customer service based on the weights assigned to various aspects of that service. Similarly, when setting customer service goals based on performance levels, service companies need to figure out how important things like consistency, sensitivity, assurance, compassion, and tangibility are (SÁ & Sintra, 2011).

The contemporary personification of service quality in public organizations may be positioned as a part of the Total Quality Concept, which originated in Japan during the post-war restoration in the 1940s thanks to the assigned tasks of the Japanese Union for Scientists and Engineers and the Japanese Standards Association (Al-Ibrahim, 2014). The implementation of this strategy ultimately resulted in formulating the Total Quality Management (TQM) ideology and forming quality management inside various businesses. The Total Quality Management (TQM) approach began to generate amazing results inside the hierarchical and organized world of Japanese business, with its devotion to a quality-led manufacturing environment and strong work ethic. When it comes to the public sector, this is one of the most important factors determining whether or not clients realize the financial gains of the service being offered. As public administration reforms have taken place worldwide, they have always focused on improving the quality and efficiency of the public sector. The development of modern welfare states has resulted in an improvement in the quality of life for its citizens as a result of the expansion of public services. These services have progressed from regulation and essential security services to even more value-added services such as individualized social welfare services. Local governments are typically responsible for providing individualized welfare services since they can better relate to the day-to-day activities of the people in their jurisdictions. Because of this, the problem of quality control in the public sector mostly manifests itself in the services provided by local governments (Rhee & Rha, 2009). Some of the same challenges that apply to business service providers are also felt by public-sector service providers, particularly those operating at the local government level in urban areas. Rapid urbanization on a global scale induces the migration of people from rural to urban regions by enhancing the civic infrastructure and quality of life in municipalities. Following this enduring pattern, 55 percent of the globe's population presently resides in city regions, which is anticipated to surpass 68 percent by 2050 (Afroj et al., 2021). Urbanization is fuelling rural-to-urban migration, resulting in an ever-growing metropolis. The rapid advance of the urban population could profoundly affect the local atmosphere in today's cities. The city administration faces a huge task in improving municipal services to keep cities liveable (Afroj et al., 2021).

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The beginning of urbanization in Bangladesh can be traced back to when the country was still under British colonial rule (1757-1947). During the time of British colonial rule, the urbanization rate in Bangladesh remained fairly low, yet the expansion of certain cities and towns significantly impacted the country as a whole. The Bengal Municipal Act of 1864 marked the beginning of municipal government in Bangladesh with the formation of one of the earliest municipalities in the area, now Bangladesh in Dhaka, in 1864 (Panday & Panday, 2008).

However, the Bengal Municipal Act of 1932 was a watershed piece of legislation because it allowed for more involvement of elected representatives in the municipal bodies and too helped broaden the supremacies and roles of municipal organizations. It was an important step forward in the history of Bengal. The system was in place well through the initial millennium of the Pakistan timespan; however, after the formation of Military Rule by General Ayub Khan in 1958 and his advent of Basic Democracy, changes were made to the way municipal governance was carried out. These changes were analogous to the ones made to basic democracy. In place of a system of direct elections to fill the positions of municipal councillors, an indirect system with step-by-step representations was instituted (for example, through Ward Committees and Union Committees). Following Bangladesh's declaration of independence in 1971, a series of subsequent reforms took place, initially giving a higher priority to associates of the State Parliament, formerly to administrators in the government, and finally to elected representatives of local communities between 1972 and 1976.

Between 1975 and 1990, Bangladesh was under the rule of military rulers. After a protracted and contentious political fight, parliamentary democracy was successfully reinstated in 1991. In Dhaka, the democratic system of choosing the Mayor and Ward Commissioners via popular elections did not emerge as a practice before 1994, with Mohammad Hanif elected Mayor through the Local/Government Act 1993. Before this election, the Mayor had been elected indirectly through the Dhaka City Corporation. A progression analogous to this occurred in the various other city corporations and Pourashavas (municipality). In 1999, democratization progressed even further with the introduction of direct elections for women commissioners to fill reserved seats. It was a landmark toward full equality. In 2008, all Chairmen of Pourashava were given the title of Mayor, similar to that of City Corporation Mayors, while Ward Commissioners were given the title of Councillors (Panday, 2017).

In Bangladesh today, 12 city corporations for large cities and around 330 municipalities for small-medium cities or towns govern urban areas around the nation. Municipal areas are divided into several wards for

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better efficiency of service delivery. These institutions function through government officials, administrators and elected representatives (One Mayor, one male councillor for each ward, and women councillors for one-third of wards). Some of the largest city corporations or municipalities have populations much larger than any district. The population of an electorate for a seat in the Parliament is significantly less than that of the mayors of Dhaka, Chittagong, or other local governments. The service quality of these sizable municipal governments becomes quite important from a political and administrative standpoint (N. Islam, 2013).

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Local government is the level of government closest to the people and is responsible for various essential services for people and enterprises in specific areas. In Bangladesh, urban local governments have played an important part in the nation-building process by ensuring that the inhabitants have access to the basic services they require since independence (Ahsan et al., 2021). For the government to better serve the people living in smaller and medium-sized cities and those living in urban areas, the Parliament approved several regulations that would lead to forming of Pourashavas and city corporations. Municipalities are required to provide a wide range of services, such as building roads, bridges, and culverts; removing, collecting, and disposing of trash and garbage; providing water; providing and maintaining street lighting; registering births, marriages, and deaths; providing and maintaining graveyards and cremation grounds; getting rid of mosquitoes; giving out different kinds of certificates; and providing and maintaining parks and playgrounds (Panday & Panday, 2008). As a result, quality is a significant issue that needs to be addressed by the municipal administration in urban areas. The municipalities must make certain that the criteria for the services provided by the public organizations are met to attain the desired level of satisfaction in the community. However, as the population and urban economy have grown quickly, social life has become more complicated, making it harder to govern urban areas. Despite significant accomplishments, municipalities are currently facing a widespread allegation for failing to act in a manner that is responsive and accountable; delaying, corrupting, and inefficiently delivering services; providing poor quality services; and lacking the capacity to respond to the diversified views and expectations of people (Ahsan et al., 2021). Therefore, there is a need for a proper investigation of the quality of services that are widely granted to city dwellers by municipal bodies.

Moreover, assessing the service quality of urban local government in Bangladesh is limited, mostly concerning city corporations of big cities (M. S. Alam & Mondal, 2019; Kabir et al., 2018; Parvin & Shaw, 2011). Empirical research based on direct and indirect observation or experience of general citizen is

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extremely rare. Very few studies have been made on the service quality of the grass-rooted stratum of urban local government in Bangladesh (O. Alam & Qiao, 2020; Hossain et al., 2013; M. Islam et al., 2013). In this regard, this study intends to explore the service quality of the municipal government's basic services and contribute to filling the existing knowledge gap.

4. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to assess the service quality of urban local government in Bangladesh from the citizen perspective. Numerous studies have been conducted on the various services that municipal governments provide in urban areas (Afroj et al., 2021; Masiya et al., 2019). However, few studies use the viewpoints of urban residents as a metric for evaluating the efficiency of municipal governments (Akther et al., 2009; Sekhar et al., 2005). In the case of Pabna City in particular, there has yet to be any research that focuses on city residents' perspectives on urban services. As a result, the research has contributed to this untouched field.

4.1 Study Area

This study is conducted at Pabna municipality. Pabna is located on the southeast side of the Rajshahi division of Bangladesh, 153km from the capital, Dhaka. It is one of the fastest-growing cities in Bangladesh. According to the population census in 2011 by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), the Pabna city population was 144,442. The urban population growth in Bangladesh is 3.5% per year (Statistics, 2011). The municipality contains 15 wards and many roads, drains and construction sites around the city. The main city is labelled under ward number 06. It is a bustling location, and most of the factories, businesses, markets, and numerous professions operate in the main city. As a result, the demands placed on municipal services and infrastructures are higher in the main city and the wards that are immediately close to it. Therefore, the main city and only neighbourhood wards (Wards 3,4,5,6,7) are taken into consideration for the study area.

4.2 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire for the study was created after much research and brainstorming. Based on the observation and insight gained from previous studies and research area, the study developed a questionnaire comprised of three sections. The first section acquires socio-demographic information about the respondents, such as age, gender, education, and occupation. The second and third sections comprised factors related to the prior experience of municipal service and evidence of the basic service

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quality, respectively. Respondents' responses on service quality were recorded through a range of scales. The levels of each factor ranged from poor to excellent and were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, as shown in Table 1 (Sözen & Guven, 2019).

TABLE 1 – THE LIKERT SCALE USED IN THE STUDY IS A 5-POINT SCALE

Rating Option	Score	Range
Strongly disagree/very dissatisfied/never	1	1.00-1.80
Disagree/dissatisfied/ rarely	2	1.81-2.60
Neutral/never/sometime	3	2.61-3.40
Agree/satisfied/most of the time	4	3.41-4.20
Strongly/very satisfied/always	5	4.21-5

Public Affairs Center (PAC), a pioneer surveyor of city service in India, developed the term 'Citizen Report Card (CRC)' as an evaluation tool. They introduced different indicators and metrics for measuring the service quality of urban local government. They used CRC as a system to push the city administration to improve the quality of services it offers (Akther et al., 2009; Sekhar et al., 2005).

Since the study gauges the service quality based on citizen perspective before evaluating the specific service quality, it is important to uncover their prior experience from the municipality. Customers prior experiences and expectations shapes the performance level and overall service quality (M. S. Alam & Mondal, 2019; Ghobadian et al., 1994; Luo et al., 2019). According to Luo et al., (2019) prior experience has a significant impact on the response of service quality and act as a co-creator of service value. Therefore, the prior experience of respondents on six items was chosen in the study based on the view of CRC. These six items include i) accessibility of the municipal service; ii) cost-effectiveness in the provision of various goods and services to the people; iii) Timeliness in providing prompt service; iv) competence to municipal authority in providing services; v) speed of delivering services; vi) accuracy of services with the standards. Similarly, the municipality provides a wide range of services, most of which are accessible to all. We selected some of the most basic services offered by the municipality from the comprehensive menu of options available to evaluate the degree of their quality. The study chose four main basic services provided by the municipality: i) Certification, ii) Disaster management, iii) Sanitation, and iv) Mosquito control.

Furthermore, the interview questionnaire was prepared to collect data from government officials, municipal authorities, civil society, community leaders and stakeholders. Interviews have long been acknowledged as a valuable data collection method in social science research. For instance, interviewing has typically been regarded as a crucial aspect in designing research work since qualitative researchers provide extensive descriptions of individuals and events in the natural environments in which they occur (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Even though the study is primarily based on citizen perspective, we selected

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interview method to collect a richer source of information from a small number of people. The interview method aimed to find expert opinions on the underlying challenges in delivering quality service.

4.3 Data Collection

The data used in this study were obtained using interviews and structured questionnaires. In this study, the sampling method should be purposive sampling or judgmental sampling. As this study will try to find the service quality of the municipality, the researcher should collect information on who is used to accessing services for their different purposes. In this regard, the survey respondents should be chosen by the researcher's judgment or purpose (Fahim et al., 2022). Using the purposive sampling methods, the surveyors collected from September 01, 2022, to September 30, 2022, maintaining a one-week interval. Overall, 150 respondents (125 questionnaires and 25 interviews) out of 144,442 populations were considered for selecting the sampling size.

4.4 Data Analysis

In primary survey-based research, evaluating the items' validity and reliability is critical to ensure they can reflect the real situation and cover the complete spectrum of topics. Based on the results of 20 pilot questionnaire surveys, the reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha method in SPSS. When determining how well elements within a set are positively associated to one another, one of the dependability coefficients used to do so is called Cronbach's alpha. Higher consistency to reliability is indicated by Cronbach alpha values that are nearer to one (Bearden et al., 1982). The questionnaire items were determined to have a satisfactory level of reliability with a Cronbach's alpha rating of 0.79.

Data were analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. First, frequency distribution of respondent's socio-demographic information was performed to provide a clear understanding regarding the respondent's representation and background information. Analysing socio-demographic questions in surveys helps to know if all the subgroups in the target population are fairly represented in the data collection process. Then, descriptive statistics of respondents' prior experience were performed to understand the user's expectation and perception regarding the service quality. Comparisons between perceived experience and expectations were also performed to identify the satisfaction gap. In the following section, The Urban Government Initiative (TUGI) index was used to gauge basic service quality (Akther et al., 2009). The index is calculated as a percentage of the respondent's total points divided by the highest possible score. Concerning the Likert 5 scale point system, the highest score is given on a scale of five, the lowest score is given on a scale of one, and the intermediate values are four, three, and two for good, fair, and poor, respectively. The TUGI index is calculated using the following mathematical expression:

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$$\text{TUGI index} = (\sum(l_i * n) / (5 * n)) * 100$$

Where l_i is the service's given scale value by respondents, and n is the total number of respondents. The TUGI index classifies services into five categories. A detailed classification of TUGI index is given Table 2.

TABLE 2 – INTERPRETATION OF TUGI INDEX

Value	Label
85%-100%	Very good. (Keep it up)
65%-84%	Good. (But still room to improve)
50%-64%	Fair. (Can do much better)
35%-49%	Poor. (More commitment and effort needed)
Below 35%	Very poor. (Something is drastically wrong)

Source: The Urban Government Initiative, (nd)

5. RESULTS

5.1 Socio-Demographic Information

Descriptive statistics, that is, the mean or the average value of the responses involving the index of the socio-demographic variables and their indicators, have been presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3 – SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	70	56.00
Female	55	44.00
Age		
20-30	35	28.00
31-40	30	24.00
41-50	27	21.60
51-60	19	15.20
<61	14	11.20
Literacy		
Illiterate	17	13.60
Primary	21	16.80
SSC	27	21.60
HSC	34	27.20
Undergraduate or above	26	20.80
Income		
>5000	18	14.4
5000-9999	29	23.2
10000-14999	34	27.2
15000-19999	23	18.4
<20000	21	16.8

Source: research results, November 2022

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According to the data presentation, out of 125 respondents, 55 (44%) were females, while 70 (56%) were males. Following the statistics, the data was taken from a sample with a suitable distribution of males and females in the appropriate proportions. The majority of the participants were between the ages of 20 and 50 (73.6%), with the following largest age group being between 51 and 60 (15.20%) and those beyond 61 (11.20%). The study reveals that the majority of respondents (27.20%) have completed their Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC), while the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) represents the second-best majority of literacy groups (21.60%). Also, although the overwhelming of Bangladesh's residents lives below the country's official poverty line - defined as a daily income of less than one dollar or the equivalent in Bangladeshi Taka, BDT - the situation is different in Pabna. The results found that more than 50% of the city's population has a monthly income of more than ten thousand Bangladeshi takas.

Moreover, the features of ward wise income category reveal that wards 4, 6, and 7 have the city's lowest income group, ward 5 has the highest income group, and ward 3 has a mixed-income group with the biggest variance.

5.2 Prior Experience

With a mean value of 4.25 for accessibility, Table 04 demonstrates that most inhabitants benefit from a high level of access to municipal services. They have an easy access to most of the urban services. However, Timeliness, Cost-effectiveness, Speed, and Accuracy fall within the range of 1.81 to 2.60, which, according to the interpretation of the Likert scale, indicates that the dissatisfied statement is valid in each of these instances. In addition, the value of the indicator Competence is 3, which indicates a neutral evaluation of the municipality's competence and capabilities in providing services. More specifically, it is reasonable to anticipate that the municipal authority and government will provide appropriate and good-quality services (Afroj et al., 2021).

Most items have been met with high expectations from the citizens. Speed and Accuracy have the highest priority for expectations, each receiving a score of 4.56 and 4.83, respectively. Nevertheless, in most instances, there is a significant disparity between what is expected and what occurs. A gap scores of more than 2 exists in Timeliness, Cost-effectiveness, Speed, and Accuracy. Accuracy has the second-best gap score and the greatest expectations, while Timeliness has the highest gap score and the third-best expectations. Accessibility and Competence are the aspects that performed better and scored much higher than the rest of the items.

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TABLE 4 – DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF PRIOR EXPERIENCE TOWARDS SERVICE QUALITY

Indicators	Expectation			Perception			Gap Score
	High	Low	Mean	High	Low	Mean	
Accessibility	5	3	4.27	5	3	4.25	-0.02
Timeliness	5	3	4.30	4	1	1.85	-2.45
Competence	5	3	4.02	4	2	3.00	-1.02
Cost-effectiveness	5	3	4.39	4	1	2.21	-2.18
Speed	5	3	4.56	4	1	2.40	-2.16
Accuracy	5	3	4.83	5	1	2.55	-2.28

Source: research results, November 2022

5.3 Quality of Basic Service

5.3.1 Certification Service

Pabna Municipality Office (PMO) is responsible, among other things, for issuing various certificates required by its residents for various purposes. Citizens are particularly interested in obtaining a birth certificate and a nationality certificate. PMO also offers legal documents such as marriage licenses, divorce decrees, and succession certificates. Out of a total sample size of 125, about 82% had gotten a certificate from the municipal authorities. More than 90% of respondents agreed that they would use the service again and recommend it to others, and over 79% of those who received the service felt that the service providers were responsive and friendly. Even though the certification service is either completely free of charge or charges a very minimal fee, most of the people who responded to the survey said they were required to pay for it anyhow (Akther et al., 2009). In addition, several respondents assert that they must make repeated trips to the municipal office to acquire the certificates. From the official perspective, they assert that they offer the service under the requirements and on schedule, which is their perspective as municipal officials. One respondent from the Certification unit highlights that while contrasting the current quality of service with that of the previous experience,

"...the service quality is currently superior to that of the past. In 2020, the unit became digitalized. Therefore, we can deliver services quite quickly, and citizen satisfaction is higher than in the past (government official, interview 3, September 2022)."

Another respondent said,

"...the service is maintained through an online system. There is a need for the authentication of the certification through the city mayor. Although the previous mayor was regularly absent from office, the

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current mayor is proactive and rarely misses office days. We can now provide certification without hassle (elected representative, interview 2, September 2022)."

However, the department occasionally has to deal with many customers, which can cause services to take longer than usual because there are only so many resources available. According to the comment made by a respondent,

"...the majority of job openings are temporary. Only three people are doing the task of fifteen. The government hires fewer people than we require. Therefore, it becomes extremely difficult for us to maintain accuracy and timeliness if the number of service recipients increases (government official, interview 5, September 2022)."

Furthermore, the trade licensing department is responsible for issuing trade, property, and company licenses and recruiting new markets. Representatives from the relevant department assert that they can maintain a near-perfect level of service reliability. However, a coordination limitation exists in preserving service quality. One respondent from the Trade License Unit asserted,

"...there is a magistracy problem associated with the unit. We have to rely on the DC (District Commissioner) office to enlist new markets and provide proper local licensing. In this case, the DC office does not properly coordinate with the trade licensing unit, which affects our ability to maintain actual service quality (government official, interview 6, September 2022)."

Despite this, certification is still regarded as one of the best services PMO provides its consumers. The cumulative record of the ward has a TUGI index of more than 71%, indicating high-quality service (see Table 05). Even in the worst-case situation, the TUGI index is greater than 64% (i.e., it is positive), while in the best-case scenario, it is 85%. (i.e. very good).

TABLE 05 – TUGI INDEX INTERPRETATION OF CERTIFICATION SERVICE

Ward No	Percentage	TUGI Index Interpretation
3	67.31%	Good
4	64.54%	Fair
5	79.22%	Good
6	66.43%	Good
7	85.65%	Very Good
Overall	71.43%	Good

Source: research results, November 2022

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5.3.2 Sanitation

The delivery of a wide variety of sanitation services, including water supply, food, waste management, and trash disposal, is under the scope of PMO's responsibilities. The quality of sanitation service is found to be fair, with an overall TUGI index score of 50.23%, immediately above the poor range. The maximum score is 59.87% in ward 6, and the lowest score is 39% in ward 5, which reflects the next-highest level of service quality following certification. The sanitation service has the highest fluctuations compared to other services (Figure 1). Two wards (3 and 7) were found to have moderate service quality among all factors, while just one ward (ward 6) was determined to have good service quality. The remaining wards were found to have poor service quality.

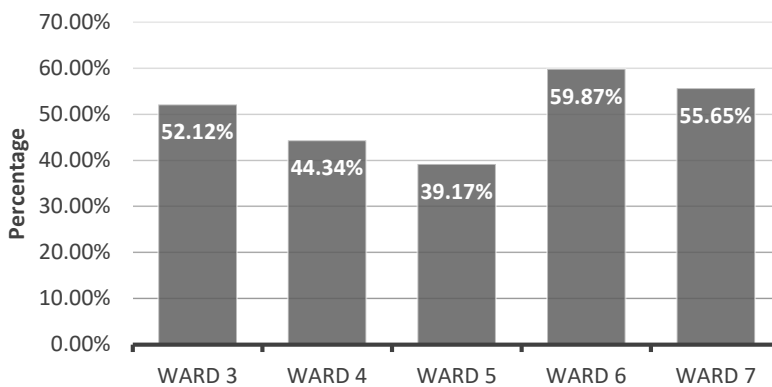


FIGURE 1 – TUGI INDEX INTERPRETATION OF SANITATION SERVICE

Approximately 66% of respondents believe the sanitation unit is not responsive enough to provide basic services. Most of the allegations come from the public latrines and water supply unit. Despite the best efforts of numerous government and non-government organizations, the city's sanitary situation remains dire (M. S. Alam & Mondal, 2019). Furthermore, some respondents assert that there are irregularities in sanitary services, particularly in waste management. They faced a delay in waste management and accuracy provision. In this view, the municipality argues that they are doing its best to provide services, even though there are fundamental problems with municipal capacity. The respondent from the sanitation unit argues that,

"...waste management, disposal, and water supply are conventional municipal responsibilities. Even if there is a problem with municipal capacity, we are handling the assignment adequately. The sanitation unit is comprised of numerous duties and responsibilities. It takes a substantial amount of resources and workforce that we currently lack (government official, interview 7, September 2022)."

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In addition, the reaction of an official from the water supply unit revealed that the water supply unit, in particular, has been dealing with a wide range of problems for a long-time time. According to his account, *"...water supply department is one of the important and neglected departments at the same time. The department has remained the same since its establishment. Little change and innovation have happened. Representatives are busy maintaining public support by not raising taxes as people, the regardless value of water. However, the reality is that water should be the primary focus of attention. As a result of global climate change, the water layer is decreasing daily. The public health and sanitation unit will be doomed whenever a calamity occurs. There is a need for a comprehensive plan and policy regarding water waste and pollution (government official, interview 8, September 2022)."*

5.3.3 Mosquito Control Service

Mosquito control is one of the most criticized functions of PMO (Akther et al., 2009; F. Islam & Yeasmin, 2015). Dengue fever outbreaks occur in the city nearly every summer. Dengue virus is transmitted via mosquitoes. Consequently, mosquito control is a necessary service for citizens. More than 22 percent of respondents reported that mosquito control efforts in their area were irregular or non-existent in the previous year, proving that the PMO needs to carry out its responsibilities. The TUGI index clearly illustrates PMO's low performance in terms of mosquito control (see Table 6).

TABLE 6 – TUGI INDEX INTERPRETATION OF MOSQUITO CONTROL SERVICE

Ward No	Percentage	TUGI Index Interpretation
3	22.54%	Very Poor
4	16.37%	Very Poor
5	25.40%	Very Poor
6	28.78%	Very Poor
7	19.23%	Very Poor
Overall	22.46%	Very Poor

Source: research results, November 2022

The greatest value of the TUGI index is approximately 28%, while the lowest value is approximately 16.54%; both of these values fall under the category of "extremely poor." The overall index value is 22.46%, which is categorized as extremely poor. The overwhelming majority of responders expressed frustration that more initiative must be taken. According to a startling 86% of the respondents, the relevant authority neither listens to nor acts upon concerns about the provision of mosquito control. However, the government needs to be held responsible for adequate resources. They both acknowledge that their efforts fell short of what was needed and that the average citizen could have been more pleased. Consistent with assertions made by the respondent, such as,

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"...the city continues to expand, and the demand for the service continues to rise, but we cannot regulate total mosquito protection. Funding and adequate resources are the greatest challenges (government official, interview 8, September 2022)."

The statement concurred with the audit department's assertions, and in response to the financial matters, the official of the municipality stated that,

"...the municipality is a large institution. It operates on a minimal budget. The same level of cash resources accompanies the day-to-day expenditures increase. With such limited funding, it becomes more difficult to operate a range of services. Consequently, public complaints continue to evolve, and they are never satisfied (government official, interview 9, September 2022)."

Consequently, due to many legal and institutional constraints, the quality of the mosquito control system is collapsed, and people have become utterly dissatisfied. As one respondent asserted,

"...the activity is inconsistent. The initiative is restricted, and the quality is appalling. The equipment needs to be updated and adequate for good service. The municipality is failed to meet our expectations with this particular service (key informant, interview 1, September 2022)."

Another respondent said,

"...i have not discovered any major task undertaken by the municipality for many years. They ignore mosquito prevention practices (key informant, interview 2, September 2022)."

5.3.4 Disaster Management

The Social Safety Net (a government program to help the poor and disadvantaged) department of the municipal government is responsible for several core functions, including disaster management. In the event of a natural disaster, such as a flood, cyclone, earthquake, epidemic, inflation, etc., the local government must take charge and provide the necessary aid to the affected population by issuing warnings, raising public awareness, opening emergency shelters, and distributing relief supplies. Furthermore, the city government is accountable for handling man-made disasters and safeguarding the city from deteriorating regulations. Unfortunately, as shown in Table 7, most respondents needed to agree that the quality was sufficient to satisfy the norm. The overall TUGI value is at 47%, indicating that the municipality provide poor service as a whole. Two wards (6 and 7) were within a reasonable range (i.e. fair) for identifying the service.

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TABLE 7 – TUGI INDEX INTERPRETATION OF DISASTER MANAGEMENT SERVICE

Ward No	Percentage	TUGI Index Interpretation
3	48.98%	Poor
4	39.55%	Poor
5	46.32%	Poor
6	53.46%	Fair
7	50.71%	Fair
Overall	47.80%	Poor

Source: research results, November 2022

Most respondents stated that the service provider needed to be more responsive and equipped to handle catastrophe organizational challenges. The expert's judgment accompanies the assertion. A key informant claims the local government has inadequate resources for emergency preparedness. He asserted,

"...the city is regularly inundated owing to cyclones, floods, or heavy rain, but the authorities have failed to provide adequate support through a drainage system. Urban residents bear the brunt of the city's inefficient administration (stakeholders, interview 1, September 2022)."

Similarly, another respondent highlighted that,

"...every year, we contact the local authority about the water blockage issue, but they rarely respond to our complaints. As a result, we frequently resolve the issue through our combined initiatives (community leader, interview 1, September 2022)."

However, some of this evidence and arguments does not qualify the statements of concerned municipal officials. They assert that the municipality consistently provides essential disaster management services. For instance, one respondent argues that,

"...Pabna city is situated in a geographically advantageous position. Infrequently have, life-threatening natural disasters occurred here. Despite this, we have an efficient disaster management team to provide adequate service (elected representative, interview 1, September 2022)."

Another respondent commented that,

"...we can respond to both natural and artificial catastrophes. We have a comprehensive plan and policy for disaster management. In a natural disaster, we would operate a disaster relief effort with caution to mitigate the loss of life among the general population. (government official, interview 3, September 2022)."

6. DISCUSSIONS

Based on the study's findings, it is clear that the vast majority of residents are aware of the diverse range of services the local municipality offers. They perceived that providing these services constituted a routine obligation of the municipality to ensure the city's security and well-being. However, there needs to be more experience in the areas that are being measured, such as timeliness, cost-effectiveness, speed, and accuracy. These are the most important matrices to consider service responsiveness while attempting to preserve a high level of service quality. According to the findings, the timeliness, cost-effectiveness, speed and accuracy with which the municipality has provided services have yet to be up to the standards, which has further been reflected in the degree of satisfaction. The municipality needs to show a greater concern for developing sustainable city planning based on the residents' perceived experiences and democratic participation (M. S. Alam & Mondal, 2019; Amoah et al., 2016). The provision of urban services is becoming increasingly restricted in order to incorporate them while preserving the appropriate level of quality in all facilities. When there is a persistent discrepancy between the perceptions and expectations of current residents on various parts of services, the severity of such circumstances might be expected to worsen. When residents are extremely dissatisfied with the arrangements, it might lead to a further decline in the overall quality of life in the community (Afroj et al., 2021).

Public employees in municipal organizations are reluctant to take the risk of providing services that are outside of their sphere of influence or making decisions that fall outside of the jurisdiction of the institution's head, reflecting the culture of strict rule-following and regulation-enforcement that permeates the country's local government institutions (Mahmud, 2021). There is a lot of bureaucratic red tape and questionable practices within local municipalities that are part of local government, which has a negative effect on morale and cost-effectiveness. These findings are comparable with those of Afroj et al. (2021) who also found the competency and organizational capacity are the major barriers in city corporation level. Considering that the municipalities are responsible for providing a wide range of goods and services to the public, it follows that the price at which these are made available to the public should be fair and reasonable.

For the certification service, the study's findings demonstrate that municipalities have successfully preserved the quality of certification services. The findings are comparable with Akther et al. (2009), who similarly discovered a high range of positive feedback in certification in a study based on Dhaka city corporation. However, the certification process is carried out by a few employees, and only limited resource is available to ensure the timely delivery of the service. The certification process cannot be made

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more efficient, and the service cannot be provided on time since more appropriate technical equipment must be needed. Because certification is one of the basic services, the local government needs to ensure that it has sufficient human and technology resources to meet the rising demand for services brought on by the expansion of the urban population.

Mosquito control services, on the other hand, are consistently recognized as one of the most unpopular offerings provided by the local government. An invasion of dengue fever can be expected in the city throughout the summer months on a nearly annual basis. The transmission of the dengue virus typically occurs through mosquito bites. Consequently, mosquito control is an important service for the general public. Nevertheless, mosquito control in Pabna Municipality may be problematic due to a lack of funding, a lengthy bureaucratic process to get mosquito control supplies, and a lack of public response. People strongly perceive the service quality as low, and they have a long list of allegations on the initiatives that are insufficient. Consequently, the service quality has been steadily declining over the past few years, which has led to a significant increase in residents' discontentment with the municipal service linked to mosquito control. Sharmin et al. (2015) find that public health surveillance, citizen awareness and proper initiatives are some key policy implications in optimising mosquito control service quality.

It is no wonder that Bangladesh is a nation that is susceptible to natural disasters and is struck by various catastrophes annually, including floods, cyclones, Ayla, Nargis, Sidor, and others. During times of natural disasters and man-made catastrophes, the urban government authority is responsible for providing appropriate assistance in the form of food, accommodation facilities, drinking water supplies, and health facilities. Since climate change is happening on a transnational level worldwide, every government needs to have a good initiative to struggle with the disastrous battle for the future (F. Islam & Yeasmin, 2015). Based on the results of this study, the quality of the municipal services connected to disaster management may be poor. Most people believe that the quality needs to come closer to meeting the requirements set forth. They feel that the quality of the disaster management services the municipality provides could be better. The problems include a lack of financial resources, ineffective service capacity, a lack of initiative, inadequate coverage, and so on.

In addition, one of the most important responsibilities for providing sanitation services in the city falls on the municipality. In the case of Pabna, it is the municipality's responsibility to provide various routine sanitary services such as waste management, food health, vaccination, water supply, etc (M. S. Alam & Mondal, 2019). According to the findings of this research, the quality of the sanitation service is currently at a modest level (neutral). The quality is neither good nor awful; rather, it falls somewhere in the middle. On the other hand, the quality cannot be considered sufficient to satisfy the requirements of the citizens.

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There is still room for improvement in this regard. The majority of people's complaints concern the timely delivery of the service as well as the capability of the response. Particularly with the water supply and waste management system. Even with significant participation from the private sector, the administration of the drainage system continues to be a significant obstacle for the municipality. When it rains, the drainage system becomes disorganized. When that happens, the local authority cannot take immediate action to ensure that garbage and water can freely flow through the system. There is a need for proper maintenance, consistency, and an adequate supply of service-related modern equipment.

Overall, following the findings of the study, the quality of the service had a substantial impact on the level of satisfaction felt by citizens. The respondents' expectations regarding the basic amenities still need to be met, which is disappointing. Citizens were extremely dissatisfied since most of their received services needed better quality. According to Van Ryzin (2004), the performance of metropolitan governments concerning the quality of essential services affects the citizens' satisfaction. This effect might be positive or negative. The results of this study make it abundantly clear that municipalities are responsible for delivering high quality basic urban services to the residents of urban areas.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The urban local government is equipped with a wide range of functions to ensure the continued viability and stability of urban regions in Bangladesh. It takes on the role of a caring parent in resolving issues relating to the growth and development of a city. This study aimed at gauging the quality of basic services in the urban local government of Bangladesh with a special reference to Pabna Municipality. It was recognized from the beginning that the quality of the service is a massively essential component in determining the level of satisfaction felt by citizens. The discovery is that the municipality could deliver essential services such as sanitation, mosquito control, and disaster management more effectively. The level of service could have lived up to expectations in any way. The consumer wanted a higher level of service than they received. The real service quality promised to them has yet to be delivered by the municipality, which is a failure on their behalf.

In the capacity of an urban local government body, the municipality of Pabna has a vast list of responsibilities. However, it can only fulfil a select few of them due to various constraints, including financial, administrative, personnel, and others. However, the services supplied by the municipality are absolutely necessary to conduct a normal life. Moreover, the municipality plays a significant role in providing good urban services. When addressing poverty and inequality, municipal administrations play an essential role. Access to safe and secure housing, infrastructure, services, and other resources is

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essential for preventing poverty in urban areas where a considerable percentage of the population lives in poverty due to low incomes.

Since the country's independence, Bangladesh has been going through a protracted urbanization process. As a result of the local government ordinance act, the urban government was structured with a two-tiered structure, consisting of the city corporation and the municipality, to which they have delegated roles and responsibilities. The urbanization process started at a slow but consistent rate in its early stages. In contrast, the country is experiencing a rapid urban boom alongside an increasing population. In this modern age of rapidly advancing technology and innovative behaviours, the nation is working toward developing a city that is both environmentally friendly and technologically savvy from the grass-root. It plays a significant part in making the city more convenient and bringing the most modern goods and services to the area. As a result, maintaining a high level of service quality to attain a high level of citizen satisfaction is one of the most important responsibilities the municipality must fulfil.

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