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FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION: EXAMINING CITIZENS' ENGAGEMENT IN URBAN ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE IN RAJSHAHI AND BARISHAL CITY CORPORATIONS OF BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

With rapid urbanization, environmental issues have grown increasingly severe, and urban environmental governance requires public awareness and citizen participation. This study employs a convergent parallel mixed-methods design to explore the link between public awareness and citizen participation in two urban local government organizations in the country: Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) and Barishal City Corporation (BCC). Data were collected quantitatively from a survey of 410 residents (225 in RCC and 185 in BCC) and qualitatively through in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions. The survey results indicated that 84.9% of respondents recognized public awareness programmes, but only 29.0% had participated. Awareness levels differed significantly between the two city corporations ($\chi^2 = 43.455$, $p < 0.001$), with RCC showing a comparatively higher level. Qualitative results also highlighted the role of education, institutional communication, access to environmental information, and opportunities for public participation in shaping citizen participation. Together, the findings indicate that awareness does not necessarily lead to active participation. To strengthen participatory governance of the urban environment, the study proposes continuous community-level awareness-raising, open information exchange, enabling consultation processes, and enhanced cooperation among local authorities, civil society, and citizens.

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