



THE STATUS OF CITIZEN CHARTER IN THE RANGAMATI AND NANIARCHAR UPAZILA IN BANGLADESH: AN INSIGHT FROM SERVICE RECIPIENTS' POINT OF VIEW

Tanima Howlader¹

Affiliations:

¹Department of Public Administration,
University of Dhaka, Bangladesh

The Corresponding Author's Emails:

¹tanima-2016017797@dpa.du.ac.bd

Abstract

This research explores the citizen charter's dynamic circumstances from the perspective of the citizen in the Rangamati and Naniarchar Upazilas. Citizen charter, a key element of administrative changes, seeks to improve the delivery of public services and facilitate citizen participation. This study aims to get an in-depth understanding of respondents' awareness levels, satisfaction with the quality of the services they receive, and effects on their well-being. Using a mixed-methods approach, 200 respondents from both Upazilas were questioned using structured questionnaires. The results show various degrees of awareness, satisfaction, and effect. The conclusions reached here contribute to the continuing conversation on citizen-centric government.

Keywords: Citizen Charter, Public service, Awareness, Bangladesh, Governance

Introduction

The idea of citizen charters has become more prevalent recently as a way to improve governance and a stronger public administration. The goal of successful governance has expanded beyond the confines of bureaucratic procedures to incorporate citizen-centric paradigms in the contemporary context of public administration. Given that providing services is one of the most important duties of the modern state, the government has mostly concentrated its efforts on improving the service quality system. The effectiveness of the government is mostly determined by how satisfied the citizens are with service delivery (Panday & Chowdhury, 2023). One noteworthy shift in the government service delivery is the citizen charter - a mechanism created to promote openness, accountability, responsibility, and responsiveness in the area of providing public services. The citizen charter serves as an official declaration outlining the entitlements granted to residents as well as the standards of service that individuals might anticipate from governmental organizations. The citizen charter is a key instrument that guarantees not only successful service delivery, but also acts as a bridge between the principles of democracy and actual governmental operations in a changing global scenario where the connection between state and citizen is altering.

In 1991, the United Kingdom's John Major administration introduced and executed the citizen's charter as an initiative, aiming to further elevate the governmental service quality provided to the citizens (Sharma & Agnihotri, 2001). The citizen charter idea swiftly spread to other nations after being introduced in the UK. This led to a variety of measures in numerous nations to protect the citizen rights in public services and respond to their needs and complaints (Kamrul Ahsan & Shafiqul Huque, 2016). Through this



multidimensional involvement, the government is made sure to be really representational of the common will and not just for an exclusive few. Furthermore, Citizen Charter is one of the methods that foster people's engagement and empowers individuals with a voice (Panday & Chowdhury, 2023). Bangladesh, like many other countries, has embraced the Citizen Charter as a strategic solution to improving the quality of government services. In this context, this study seeks to unravel the current circumstance based on the findings of the research of Rangamati Sadar Upazila and Naniarchar Upazila.

Objective and Methodology

The objectives of the current study are as follows:

- To examine the extent of citizen charter awareness exists among the citizen of the two Upazilas.
- To assess service recipients' satisfaction with service quality.

The study will conduct a mixed-methods strategy that combines quantitative and qualitative analysis to achieve the objective. A comparative analysis will be conducted between the two Upazilas. A combination of primary and secondary sources has been used in this study. For the purpose of gathering primary data, 200 respondents were selected and 100 from each Upazila sequentially have been chosen. The age group is divided into four categories, with 50 respondents from each group. A structured questionnaire was used to survey the respondents. A purposive sampling method was employed to determine the sample because respondents with direct experience with these services can provide information which is aligned with the objectives of research. A secondary source of data has been collected from books, journal articles, reports, and websites. The reason behind selecting these areas for research is these areas geographically stay in a distant area, several indigenous and marginalized communities live there so the research wants to find out how the people of that areas are keeping pace with the initiatives taken by the government. Due to its diversified population, cultural dynamics, and socioeconomic circumstances, the area makes a perfect location for research on how citizens perceive the citizen charter. Because of time and budget constraints, it is not possible to select every Upazila in the Rangamati districts, so the focus has lied on only the Sadar Upazila and Naniarchar Upazila. In order to analyse the data the results are presented in pie charts, charts, and tables using various software tools.

Literature Gap

Despite the fact that citizen charters have been the subject of several studies, Bangladesh in particular lacks studies that concentrate on particular districts or areas. By providing an in-depth study of the status of citizen charter implementation in the Rangamati and Naniarchar Upazila and the viewpoints of the service receivers, this research project aims to close this gap.

Citizen Charter in Bangladesh

The citizen charter is a tool for effective governance that teaches the values of transparency, accountability, and responsiveness in public service by giving service consumers all pertinent information (Gupta & Laxmi Shrestha, 2021). A change in attitudes regarding the role of citizens has resulted from the considerable changes in public administration in the past decade. Citizens are increasingly regarded as significant social actors who are at the core of current administrative reform services, as opposed to being seen as passive participants in traditional administration (Nikos, 2014). Bangladesh, like many other



nations, has realised the value of citizen-centric governance and, in 2007, the fourth caretaker administration initiated the citizen charter. This initiative was developed in direct response to the suggestions made by the Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC) (Jahan, 2006). Although the citizen charter was first implemented in Bangladesh via a top-down method, it has now developed into an essential foundation for local government and service provision (Kamrul Ahsan & Shafiqul Huque, 2016). The Ministry of Public Administration piloted the second-generation Citizen Charter as part of the Civil Service Change Management Programme (CSCMP), providing citizens and civil servants with a platform for interaction and democratically determining what services are needed and how the civil service can best fulfil those (Panday & Chowdhury, 2023).

The citizen charter is governed by rules set forth by the Ministry of Public Administration (MoPA), which are applicable to all associated ministries, divisions, pertinent offices, district and sub district level offices, local government bodies, NGOs, cooperatives, Public Administration training institutions (Panday & Chowdhury, 2023). This all-encompassing strategy seeks to guarantee a unified effort in providing effective and citizen-centred services.

Considering the dimension of uncertainty avoidance of Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, it can be observed that Bangladesh has a strong inclination to oppose any changes to the public services. Numerous obstacles prevent the citizen Charter from moving forward and accomplishing its objectives, which prioritize effective service delivery to citizens. As a result, the question arises as to whether the initiatives implemented for the welfare of the people have been successful in meeting the needs and expectations of the people.

Literature review

Panday and Chowdhury (2023) focused on the supply-side actors and available resources, specifically the Local Government division, which monitors the Union Parishad's (UP) and local government institutions' activities in carrying out the Citizen Charter. During the implementation of the Citizen Charter, the supply-side actors, notably the Division of Local Government, are responsible for overseeing local government bodies as well as the Union Parishad (UP). The study showed that the Union Parishad (UP) of Bangladesh's service delivery system was altered as a result of the application of the Citizen Charter.

Kamrul Ahsan and Shafiqul Huque (2016) stated that in developing nations, poor implementation tactics and procedures hinder citizen empowerment and impair the efficiency of local councils. Most people are satisfied with the level of council services because they feel intimidated by powerful local figures and do not try to learn more about the criteria and schedule for providing services. The document explored that a Citizen Charter successfully implemented raises the caliber of services offered by the relevant organizations, which on the other hand increases customer satisfaction.

Rab and Rahaman (2017) noted difficulties implementing the citizen charter at the local level, including ineffective publicity campaigns, a person-centered approach to the delivery of services, and stakeholder apathy and lack of interest. Furthermore, the introduction of the Citizen Charter in Bangladesh had little effect because of ineffective publicity campaigns that led to low public awareness.



Mushfiqur Rahman et al. (2020) discovered that officials do not always adhere to their Citizen Charter in their daily operations, and that a lack of sufficient public awareness is the main reason for ineffective implementation. Bangladesh's public offices are only beginning to implement the Citizen Charter, and service providers do not always strictly adhere to it in the course of their daily operations. The study indicates obstacles to successful implementation of the Citizen Charter include inadequate public awareness, citizen knowledge, service providers' positive attitudes, a communication barrier between service recipients and providers, and a lack of adequate monitoring and feedback mechanisms.

According to Md. S.J Bhuiyan et al. (2022) citizen charters improve the delivery of public services in the land management sector, but middlemen and special interest groups can still complicate things. To ensure transparency, accountability and efficient monitoring systems, the study suggested appointing more technically inclined officials and encouraging professionalism and teamwork among land officials. Bhuiyan (2022) stated the key components of the citizen charter are choice, standard, value, and accountability. The study analysed that the government can guarantee the Citizen charter's implementation by establishing regulatory organizations with sufficient legal support in regard to crucial services, which are capable of holding public hearings about crucial issues like tariff structure. By ensuring that Citizen Charter is implemented in letter and spirit and a grievance redress system for people to report any infringements or flaws in the provision of public services, the government can hold itself accountable.

Bellamy and Greenaway (1995) stated that the citizen charter program and citizenship are related in that it aims to give citizens more power by enlightening them on the public services to which they are entitled and by giving them pathways for redress if those services fail to meet the required standard. The system is based on the notion that people should be able to hold public officials accountable for their actions and have a right to expect high-quality services at a reasonable cost. The citizen charter program seeks to improve the relationship between citizens and the state by establishing standards for public service delivery and increasing their responsiveness to citizen needs.

Result and Findings

Awareness regarding citizen charter

Exploring the perception of people in Rangamati and Naniarchar Upazila of the term "Citizen Charter" provided insights into the level of familiarity with this administrative notion. The survey found that a significant majority, 55% of the respondents, said that they are familiar with the term "Citizen Charter". However, the results also indicate that a remarkable part, 45% of the respondents said that they are not familiar with the term "Citizen Charter". This indicates that there is a lack of awareness in Naniarchar Upazila in comparison to Rangamati regarding Citizen Charter.

Table 1

Awareness regarding Citizen Charter

	Yes	No	Total
Are you aware of "Citizen Charter" term?	110	90	200
Percentage	55%	45%	100%

Source: Field survey



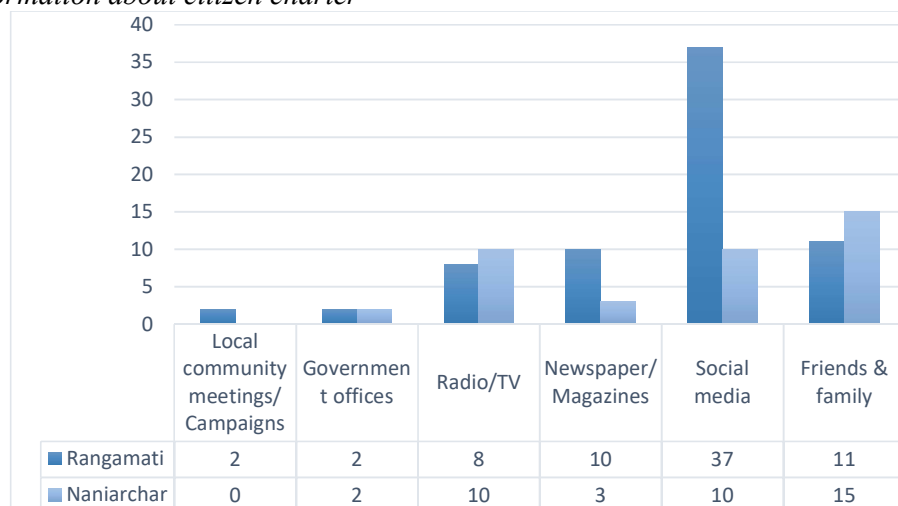
Sources of Information regarding citizen charter

The sources of information seem to be quite varied in the Upazilas. Among the respondents, 2 respondents said they got to know about the CC through local community meetings or campaigns, 2 said they know about the CC from the government office. Radio and television were cited by eight respondents in Sadar Upazila, while newspapers/ magazines were mentioned by 10, the other 37 respondents acknowledged social media as their source of information and 11 individuals responded to know about Citizen Charter from their family and friends.

In Naniarchar Upazila, only two respondents cited government offices as their main source of information, while none referred to local community meetings/ campaigns. TV, Radio, social media worked as a big platform for people to know about Citizen Charter here as in total 20 people mentioned this. 15 people mentioned their friend and family connections while from newspapers/ magazines 3 individuals became aware of citizen charter.

Figure 1

Sources of information about citizen charter



Source: Field survey

Assessment of citizen charter awareness in Upazila

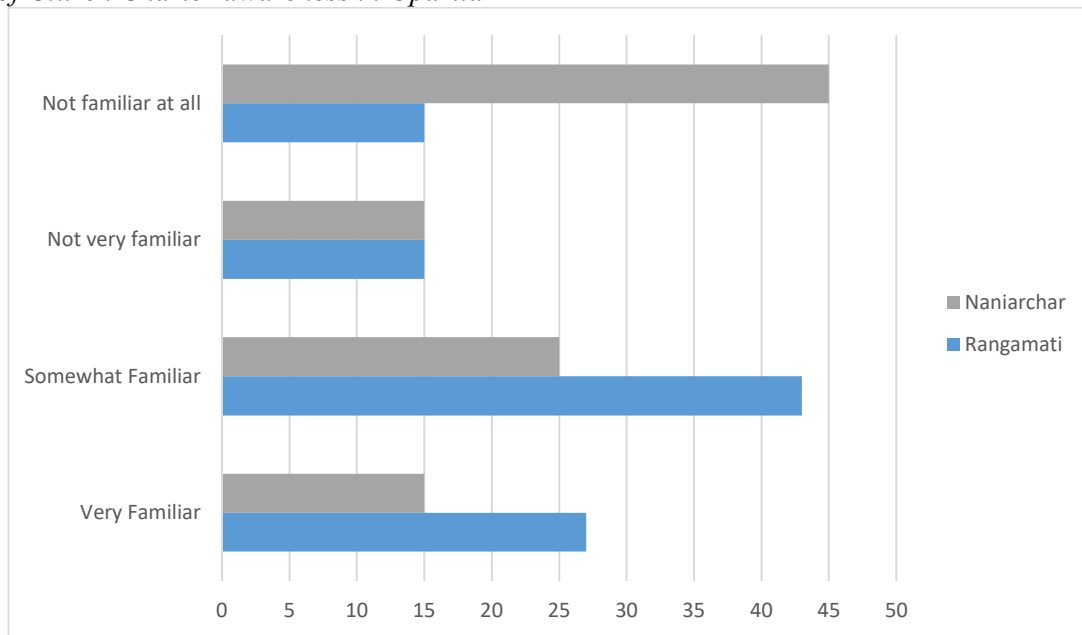
Survey results indicated that 27 respondents, or a portion of the respondents, were “Very Familiar” with the citizen charter in Sadar Upazila. A total of 43 respondents described themselves as “Somewhat Familiar” with the Citizen Charter. In contrast, 15 respondents consecutively said they were “Not Very Familiar” and “Not Familiar at All” with the citizen charter.

The pattern is somewhat different in Naniarchar Upazila, where only 15 individuals know about Citizen Charter, suggesting a lower familiarity level than in Sadar Upazila. Twenty-five respondents marked themselves in the “Somewhat Familiar” category. There were a large number of respondents, with 15 people reported not being familiar with CC. The category of “Not familiar at all” has a slightly higher number of respondents, with 45 individuals.



Figure 2

Extent of Citizen Charter awareness in Upazila



Source: Field survey

Level of satisfaction by gender

The survey results reveal a distinct pattern in terms of satisfaction levels among male respondents. Among 110 male respondents, 45 individuals, a substantial portion of male respondents expressed “Dissatisfaction” with citizen charter services, while 20 male respondents reported feeling “Very Dissatisfactory.” However, 22 male respondents claimed to be “Satisfied” with the services, suggesting that there are areas in which the citizen charter has been successful in meeting the needs of respondents. There were 90 female responders in all, and only 30 and 15 of them, respectively, voiced "Dissatisfaction" and "Very Dissatisfaction", which is lower than male respondents.

Table 2

Level of satisfaction

Satisfaction Level	Male	Female
Very satisfied	15	14
Satisfied	22	26
Neutral	8	5
Dissatisfied	45	30
Very dissatisfied	20	15

Source: Field survey

Level of satisfaction by diverse age group

When the data is segmented down by age groups, it is clear that, 10 individuals between the ages of 18 and 30 said they were "Very Satisfied" with the services, while 12 individuals said they were "Satisfied." Ten respondents, nevertheless, stated that they were "Dissatisfied," and 15 people said they were "Very Dissatisfied." The age group of 18 to 30 respondents expressed the highest level of satisfaction



in the "very satisfied" category, with 10 individuals; this may be due to the fact that younger people tend to use modernised services and are more receptive to new administrative ideas.

The scenario change as moving toward the age range of 31 to 50. Responses of "Very Satisfied" fall to 8 individuals, while 12 individuals said they were "satisfied". Other 16 individuals expressed their dissatisfaction, and 9 individuals remained in the "Very Dissatisfied" group.

In the age range of 51 to 70, only 9 people showed their satisfaction and 5 individuals said they were very satisfied. None of the respondents remained neutral here. Though 19 and 17 individuals, consecutively, said they were dissatisfied and very dissatisfied with the service. Finally, in the age group of 71 and above only 4 people expressed their opinion of being very satisfied and the other 5 people opined that they were satisfied. With 25 respondents, "Dissatisfied" continue to dominate this category, which shows that as recipients get older and have more service-related experience, their scrutiny increases, producing more of a mixed reaction. Among the respondents, 3 individuals remained neutral and 13 individuals said they are very dissatisfied.

Figure 3
Level of satisfaction by diverse age group



Source: Field survey

Level of satisfaction by Upazila

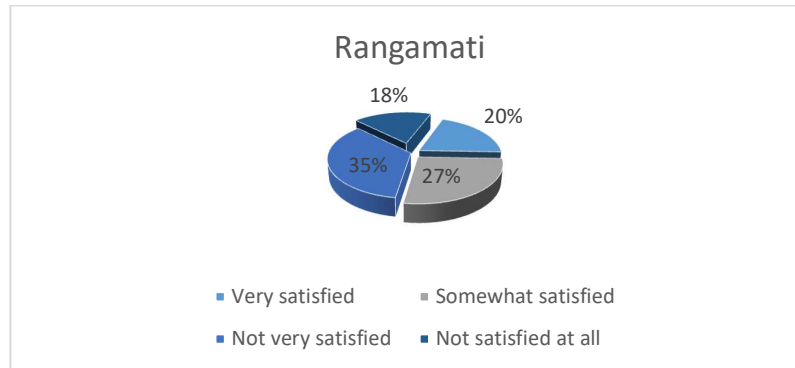
Among the sample, 20% of respondents in Rangamati and 16% in Naniarchar said they were "Very Satisfied" with the Citizen Charter, respectively. 20% of respondents in Rangamati and 16% in Naniarchar said they were "Very Satisfied" with the Citizen Charter, respectively. This implies a little greater level of contentment among Rangamati citizens. However, Naniarchar displays a greater proportion of 31% in "Somewhat Satisfied" compared to Rangamati, which is 27%. 28% of respondents in Naniarchar indicated that they were "Not Very Satisfied," compared to 35% of respondents in Rangamati. This shows that a



higher percentage of respondents in Naniarchar believe there is a need for more development. 25% of Naniarchar respondents agreed to the "Not Satisfied at All" category, compared to 18% in Rangamati.

Figure 4

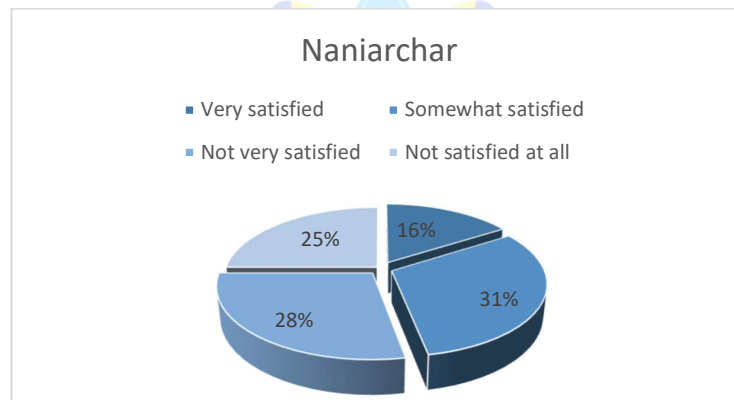
Level of satisfaction in Rangamati



Source: Field survey

Figure 5

Level of satisfaction in Naniarchar



Source: Field survey

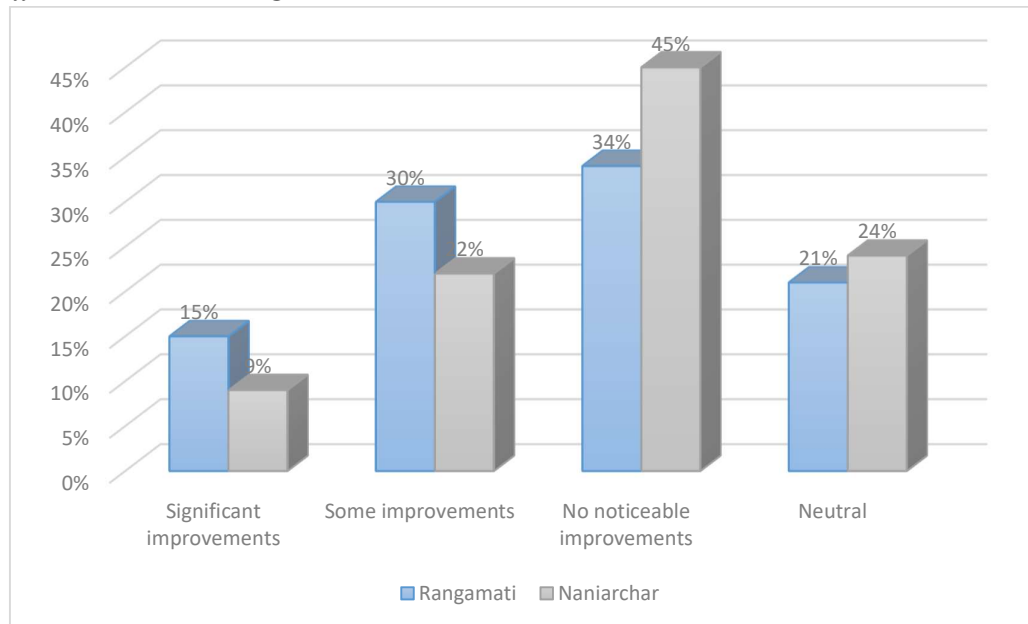
Extent of effect on the well-being of respondents due to Citizen Charter

In Rangamati 15% of respondents expressed that the Citizen Charter had "Significant Improvements" in their quality of life. This percentage was 9% in Naniarchar, which is a little lower. According to 30% of respondents in Rangamati and 22% of respondents in Naniarchar, a larger percentage of respondents in both locations reported "Some Improvements" in their well-being, which suggests that the Citizen Charter has a contribution to the well-being of the people of these areas. In Naniarchar 45% of respondents said there are no noticeable improvements while 34% of respondents in Rangamati agreed with this category. In Naniarchar, 24% of respondents agreed "Neutral" about the influence on well-being, compared to 21% in Rangamati.



Figure 6

Extent of effect on the well-being



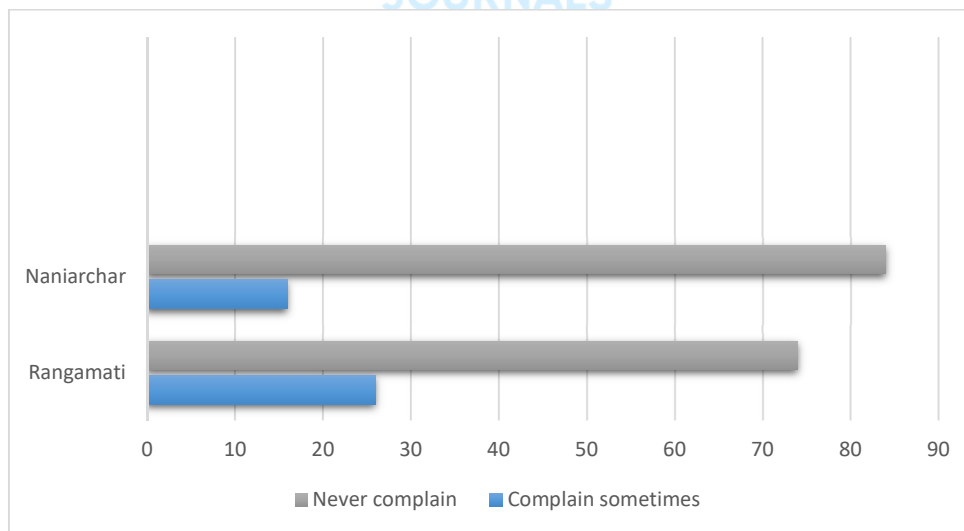
Source: Field survey

Assessment on the grievances

The respondents were asked whether they had complained about officials if they didn't receive service, 84% of Naniarchar respondents indicated they did not file a complaint with the appropriate authority, compared to 16% who claimed they did. The scenario is also similar in Rangamati, where 26% of respondents sometimes complain but 74% don't take any action.

Figure 7

Extent of grievances



Source: Field survey



Conclusion

The results emphasize the necessity for a specific and comprehensive strategy to spread knowledge of the Citizen Charter. The results show that the Citizen Charter situation in Rangamati is significantly more stable than in Naniarchar. Since Naniarchar is located in a remote area and the socioeconomic conditions of that area are not as good as Rangamati, awareness regarding this administrative initiative has not caught the attention of citizens in that area. It is evident that more initiatives are needed in order to make the Citizen Charter initiative effective. It is clear that there are still issues with its implementation and perception of its effects. Further investigation is needed into the causes of the knowledge gap and the development of focused efforts to guarantee that the benefits of the Citizen Charter are available to everyone which might ultimately help to uplift the people in the Rangamati District.

Bangladesh has undertaken steps to enhance the scope and usefulness of Citizen Charter, incorporating them into e-governance projects and digital platforms. Continuous evaluation, assessment, and public awareness campaigns are required to guarantee that the initiative accomplishes the intended objectives of enhanced public service delivery, transparency, and citizen empowerment.

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