

Citizen Participation and Political Awareness in Democratic Governance: A Focused Analysis with Special Reference to India

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Abstract

Citizen participation constitutes the backbone of democratic governance, enabling citizens to engage meaningfully in decision-making processes and hold public institutions accountable. This paper examines the interrelationship between citizen participation and political awareness within the framework of democratic governance, with special reference to India. Drawing upon deliberative and participatory democratic theories, the study conceptualizes political awareness as a composite of knowledge, attitudes, and skills that shape civic engagement. The analysis situates India's participatory practices within its historical, constitutional, and institutional contexts, highlighting mechanisms such as Panchayati Raj Institutions, the Right to Information Act, and emerging digital governance platforms. While these frameworks have expanded opportunities for participation, the paper argues that structural inequalities, administrative bottlenecks, media fragmentation, and uneven digital access constrain their effectiveness. Grassroots participation and collective efficacy are identified as critical drivers for enhancing political awareness, particularly among marginalized communities. The paper further explores the role of education, media literacy, and the information environment in shaping informed citizenship. By synthesizing theoretical perspectives and empirical insights, the study underscores that meaningful citizen participation not only strengthens political awareness but also enhances the quality of democratic governance in India. The paper concludes by emphasizing the need for inclusive, deliberative, and context-sensitive participatory models to deepen democracy.

Keywords: Citizen Participation; Political Awareness; Democratic Governance; Deliberative Democracy; Grassroots Participation; Media Literacy; India

1. Introduction

The term citizen participation means the participation of the citizens in the policies or decisions made by the governments at local, state, or national levels during the socioeconomic development. In recent years, the situation of citizen participation in democratic governance has received considerable attention from researchers worldwide. The direct link between citizen participation and political awareness is also being investigated in several studies. However, sufficient literature is not available regarding the importance of citizen participation in democratic governance and its relationship with political awareness in the Indian context (Rafique, 2017). India is the country with the largest democracy and therefore it is crucial to understand how citizen participation influences political awareness.

Deliberative and participatory paradigms are two perspectives that can be considered visions of democratic governance. Deliberative democracy focuses on inclusive, representative, and open dialogue among equals in collective decision-making processes, underpinned by sufficient knowledge and skills about public issues and policy choices. It is associated with major theorists such as Habermas, Elster, and Cohen and empirical studies on a variety of deliberative processes, including citizens' juries, consensus conferences, and roundtable discussions, demonstrate that deliberative democracy also provides a mechanism for enhancing citizens' political awareness (Abdul Malek et al., 2019). Participatory democracy highlights the frequent practice of informal citizen engagement, such as direct democratic action, opinion expression to decision-makers, involvement in community self-organization, and residential group participation in government workings. Political theorists such as Pateman Tilly have examined participatory democracy's connection to citizen competence, public knowledge, political interest, and social capital, while rigorous empirical research explores distinct forms of participatory action and their intensity and quality.

2. Theoretical Foundations of Citizen Participation

Citizen Participation is a form of collective action where individuals and social groups engage in decision-making processes. It encompasses a wide range of activities that are aimed at influencing decisions at various levels of governance and in diverse thematic areas (Shahjahan Chowdhury & Aktaruzzaman, 2017). Political Awareness is indicative of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that influence electoral and direct political participation as well as civic engagement. Political Awareness entails knowledge and skills related to public administration, policies, and values that underlie political economy. It influences citizen participation, the qualities of participation, and citizen engagement. Such knowledge and skills impact citizen participation by influencing perceived relevance of government programmes to social development and encouraging citizen action (Rafique, 2017).

The deliberative and participatory paradigms are closely linked theoretically, socially, and politically, and there is a strong correlation between the quality of deliberation and the attainment of Political Awareness. Deliberative democracy focuses on the processes of discussion, reasoning, and communication conducted on the basis of equality rather than on collective decision-making itself. Participation is understood as the articulation of views, concerns, needs, and interests into decision processes and policies through collective contention and social mobilization, emphasizing a collective rather than individualized view of participation. Citizen participation becomes more intense through articulating, discussing, and negotiating the concerns of the citizenry vis-à-vis the government. A better understanding of problems, solutions, and coping strategies enhances the capacity of citizens to monitor state action and seek accountability. Overall, citizens equipped with these forms of Political knowledge and skills are better able to participate in the political process, respond to opportunities and efforts for engagement, and take advantage of formal and informal channels available for influencing governmental and urban decision-making.

2.1. Deliberative Democracy and Political Awareness

In the deliberative paradigm, "deliberation" refers to a structured public discussion in which citizens contribute their perspectives on societal or political issues guided by norms of mutual respect and equality, with the objective of bringing about a collectively reasoned judgement. Extended deliberation takes place when a public issue is aired in a sequence of deliberative events that include diverse perspectives and over which a deliberative authority

exerts a degree of control. Deliberation is grounded in the philosophical principle of public reason, which upholds that for a decision to be accepted, the reasons that justify it must be openly communicated on terms that all those affected can accept (Uyangoda & Peiris, 2017). Political awareness is accordingly framed in terms of knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Knowledge encompasses information on public affairs, citizenship rights and duties, and governmental rules and procedures; attitudes include openness to alternative political positions, appreciation for civic responsibility, and esteem for the political system; and skills refer to the capacities to acquire public information, engage in political discussion, and participate in governance (Fraunholz & Unnithan, 2006).

2.2. Grassroots Participation and Collective Efficacy

Citizen engagement is essential to the democratic management of governance. Participation at the grassroots level is necessary for public institutions to be responsive to popular priorities. When citizens participate in local governance, they are empowered and public policies are more responsive to their needs (Rafique, 2017). Such empowerment is constrained where political and administrative institutions perceive local levels as agents in the implementation rather than as the locus of policy formulation and prioritization (John I., 2015).

Grassroots governance embraces participatory and decentralized modes of administration that enable citizens to engage with local authorities and articulate their priorities. Various forms of grassroots action are available, including residents' cooperatives, community-development and self-help associations, and local deliberative forums such as gram sabhas, mohalla sabhas, and ward sabhas. Citizen engagement at the grassroots level creates opportunities for civil-society organizations and local political representatives to act as intermediaries, enhancing the legitimacy of governance and improving citizen policy uptake.

3. Political Awareness: Concepts, Dimensions, and Measurement

Political awareness encompasses citizens' knowledge, attitudes, and skills regarding government and civic life. Knowledge includes factual or conceptual information about government institutions, processes, policies, and laws; systems of authority; governance principles; citizens' rights, responsibilities, and access channels; and basic socio-economic data relevant to decision-making. Attitudes reflect feelings toward government, political actions, policy issues, and public institutions. Aesthetic engagement and emotional involvement in media consumption represent key indicators. Skills enable understanding of complex ideas or themes, extraction of relevant information from extensive media content, interpretation of messages implied but unstated, critique of information substance, discernment of disinformation, and engagement in political discourse with peers. Quality of political engagement improves systematic, comparative, and critical reasoning about political events and choices (Kumar Dube, 2013).

Measurement frameworks distilled from the literature encompass political awareness components, an information environment dimension, and media literacy aspects. Indicators capture the features of the information context, diversity of content encountered across various sources, confidence in storing and retrieving information, trustworthiness of sources utilized, exposure to information manipulation by political actors, and beliefs about the preventability of the spread of false information. The current socio-political climate and associated opportunities for political engagement underscore the need to gauge the extent and depth of political awareness in all citizen strata (Shahjahan Chowdhury & Aktaruzzaman, 2017).

3.1. Knowledge, Attitudes, and Skills

Growth of participatory governance indicates a shift towards enhanced citizen engagement in the decision-making process at the local level. In India, a number of platforms have been established, through popular mobilization or institutional amendment, that provide greater space for citizen participation in governance, and boost political awareness. Grassroots action takes multiple forms, including the setting up of cooperatives, the establishment of community fora and local councils, engagement in public consultations, membership of informal community-based organizations, organization of campaigns, and participation in social movements. Such participatory efforts contribute positively to the local governance system by improving transparency and accountability and enhancing the legitimacy of governance itself.

Action-generating well-structured community forums at the local level help in articulating the problems faced by various segments of society, while cooperatives focus on generating gainful employment for the unemployed and underemployed youth. Political education, skill development, and awareness-generation activities enhance grassroots-level political consciousness and motivate various segments of society to engage with the system. Participation of the disadvantaged, marginalized, women, and women in leadership positions boosts the confidence and morale of these segments, and motivates the youth to play a role in community development. Such collective participation often turns into a movement demanding pro-people policies from the state. Local governance strengthens participatory platforms and enhances grassroots action by recognizing such community-level initiatives, thus facilitating the growth of participatory governance at a greater geographical level (Shahjahan Chowdhury & Aktaruzzaman, 2017).

3.2. Information Environment and Media Literacy

Political awareness denotes citizen knowledge about political facts, issues, leaders, and institutions alongside citizen attitudes towards political issues, parties, and leaders, and citizen skills to effectively engage in political discourse, develop political opinions, and deliberate on political matters. Various combinations of these elements inform how political awareness is defined and, while awareness is integral to participatory governance, appropriate measurement methods remain debated. Building on the insights of Eagleton (2002), North and Elbadawi (1999), and Venard et al. (2003), political-maturity indicators articulate political awareness in dimensions of knowledge, attitudes, and skills and accompanying survey items probe these dimensions.

The information environment emerges as an essential consideration within the political-awareness framework. Media contexts, shaping political-acquisition opportunities and influencing information reception, ultimately affect the quality of knowledge and skills acquired. The potential for misperceptions, post-truth politics, and excessive information is evident in many countries, and robust approaches to civil discourse are crucial during waves of populism and extreme partisanship. Insights on the Indian information environment highlight variation in access to conventional media, trust in media sources, availability of diverse content, and susceptibility to misinformation, alongside governmental, non-governmental, and commercial measures and associated gaps (Udupa et al., 2019).

4. Historical and Institutional Context of India

An evolved process and product of centuries-long parliamentary and participatory governance experiments, India's democratic framework and citizen participatory architectures are still very much works in progress. The parliament-state legislature-local body structure, 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments, Right to Information Act, and other statutory provisions

establish strong legal and institutional bases for citizen engagement. Yet, the 2021-2022 electoral survey paints a more nuanced picture; only 38% of Indians feel sufficient confidence to provide direct feedback on government schemes, and only 24% can access information on policy formulation. These findings reflect the complex, shifting participatory landscape, shaped by colonial-era, post-independence institutional establishments, and contemporary governance reforms like the 1990s economic liberalization and community-driven development initiatives.

India's parliamentary framework, democratic infrastructure, and participatory governance mechanisms comprise an intricate web of arrangements that undergird, enable, and, ultimately, constrain citizen engagement. With respect to citizen participatory modalities, the institutional matrix can be examined through the lens of its historical evolution—certain enabling elements can be mapped back to India's colonial era, while other elements were introduced post-independence.

India's parliamentary democracy has evolved through three phases; the pre-independence phase during which democratic institutions like parliamentary debates and elections first took root; the post-independence phase with the formal enactment of the constitution; and the contemporary phase characterised by a succession of external policy and institutional transformations. The substantial lag between the corpus of constitutional proclamations and citizen participatory opportunities remains a glaring challenge to democratic governance (Kumar Datta, 2019).

4.1. Evolution of Democratic Institutions

Modern parliamentary democracy, in which the people elect their representatives at regular intervals to carry out political functions on their behalf, constitutes a politically neutral method of governance which permits an opportunity for citizens to engage in the political process within a broad legal framework. Parliamentary democracy enables the political players to enjoy various rights, privileges, and liberties under the Constitution. The socio-economic, cultural, gender, and age-related factors play a very important role in exercising the rights of the citizens as they enter into the political processes of a nation, especially in a vast, complex, and diverse country like India. The participation of citizens in the political process is institutionalized in the Constitution and other laws. The Constitution of India can be described as juvenile as it is in the process of (Uyangoda & Peiris, 2017).

4.2. Legal and Constitutional Frameworks for Participation

The Constitution of India is the supreme law of the land that provides a critically important legal framework for citizen participation at the local, state, and national levels. Fundamental Rights protect a host of civil liberties, such as freedom of speech, that facilitate citizen participation. Provisions regarding the Directive Principles of State Policy and the Fundamental Duties of citizens in the Constitution provided momentum to citizen participation from the time of independence. During the late '80s, the constitution was amended to provide for the establishment of the three-tier system of local self-governance—the Panchayati Raj Institutions—for enhancing citizen participation at the grassroots level. The 74th Amendment of the Constitution relating to the Urban Local Bodies was enacted in 1992, broadening the scope for citizen participation in urban areas.

Numerous laws governing the right to information have been enacted at the Central and State levels since 2005. These laws empower citizens to seek information from public authorities on various aspects of governance. The Right to Information Act enacted by the Government of India in 2005 and the right to seize, use, or extract information from public authorities available under both the Central and several State legislations have greatly facilitated access to information.

These participatory measures have been enhanced further by the incorporation of several measures regarding citizen participation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Schedule of the Constitution empowering the State Governments to legislate for further enhancement of citizen participation. According to the 2017 Global Democracy Index 'Citizen participation has been institutionalized to some extent in India through a range of laws, rules and procedures and is seen as a normal part of the decision-making process of the local authorities,' (Jane Waterhouse, 2015) the provisions made in some of these laws have created space for further exploration and engagement. However, in practice, citizen participation has not yet translated into the desired degree of articulation and responsiveness.

After 2000, the Government of India undertook some fundamental governance reforms such as the enactment of the Right to Information Act which led local Governments to instill an additional layer of participation (Rafique, 2017), the establishment of Electronic Governance that provided adequate space for citizen participation through e-governance in local bodies; the passage of laws to empower State Election Commissions, and the establishment of the National Commission on Urbanization to enhance local Government Structures and a few laws and legislative provisions designed to generate space for community participation. However, the political will to implement these reforms actually and the linkage between citizen participation and citizen empowerment has remained underexplored.

4.3. Governance Reforms and Civic Engagement in India

While deliberative practices are only partially and sporadically institutionalised in India at any level, deliberation is basically a two-way process in which citizens express their views about public affairs and receive feedback from public authorities and leaders. The notion of political awareness here encompasses citizen knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to public affairs, and constitutes a critical condition for citizen participation. The more aware the citizenry is, the more they engage in participatory governance mechanisms aimed at improving response to citizen concerns and preferences—such as the airing of grievances, whether through formal channels or on social media—fostering accountability and greater use of the same mechanisms at subsequent times (Rafique, 2017).

Grassroots participation is more or less effective in strengthening political agenda-setting and implementation responsiveness to collective needs. Such efforts encourage by constituencies beyond the vote often take the form of participation in deliberation, social accountability, community-based organisations, or other collective-action and cooperative efforts. Collective efficacy constitutes yet another crucial component of the political-awareness framework. In its broadest sense, collective efficacy denotes the shared belief of a group in its ability to act together to achieve goals and desired outcomes. For example, in deliberation about public service improvements in the health, education, and sanitation sectors, one of the primary goals is to increase assurance to the authorities that complaints will be received and duly acted upon. Collective efficacy has been found to be a significant and positive predictor of continued civic engagement in turn as well as having a direct influence on the level of uptake of policy measures that subsequently inform and feedback back into the process (Jeet Singh, 2008).

5. Political Awareness in the Indian Public Sphere

Political awareness plays a crucial role in the public sphere of India, as social and educational factors intersect with media consumption and digital participation. While India ranks amongst the top countries in terms of youth population who are active and engaged with political affairs, various socio-economic and cultural factors hinder citizens' full participation in the

democratic process. Additionally, barriers range from access to adequate education to the spread of misinformation across social media and mainstream media platforms. Political awareness is broadly defined as the knowledge citizens maintain regarding the political process and actors in their state, and the level of information awareness impacts the extent to which citizens engage with their respective governments (Kumar Dube, 2013). The Indian media ecosystem flourishes on strong production and consumption of information, yet unevenness in quality and content creates fragmentation through the differing information diets consumed by various audience segments. This media ecosystem further constrains citizens' participatory activities through dependence on self-referential, rumor-centric content (Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) & Council, 2010). Political participation varies considerably at the state level, where assessments of political knowledge showcase pronounced gaps in content awareness at the local level, in spite of comparatively high familiarity with larger political actors and relationships (Aondo-verr Kombol, 2014). Understanding these diverse barriers to political awareness among the population reveals disparities and inequities that must be recognized to ensure the active participation of all sectors of society in the democratic process.

5.1. Education, Literacy, and Civic Sentripetalism

Political awareness can be understood through at least three central dimensions: knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Knowledge refers to the awareness of political structures and the broader political environment, as well as knowledge of basic facts required for the exercise of democratic rights and responsibilities (Leyva Cordero et al., 2017). Attitudes encompass values such as the significance of democracy, trust in political institutions and representatives, or perceptions of the quality of democracy. Skills broadly concern civic engagement, such as assessing candidates or information for elections or participation in public discussions (Chen & Rasool Madni, 2024).

Measurement frameworks have been proposed for both awareness and these dimensions, but considerable uncertainty remains regarding their reliability and validity for national assessments in the Indian context. For example, surveys conducted across a range of countries offer a compelling operationalization of basic political Knowledge, Attitudes, and Skills, presenting broad indicators and specific survey items. However, the prominence of social media, the existence of local news outlets outside the formal press, and the substantial impact of WhatsApp on a wide range of content pose challenges for standard indicators of Information Environment and Media Literacy.

5.2. Media Ecosystem, Information Access, and Misinformation

Although India hosts a complex information environment with a diversity of voices, many citizens remain uninformed because reliable knowledge seldom reaches them. Simultaneously, disinformation has intensified, with an even more dangerous dimension: social-media algorithms amplify sensational narratives that trigger emotional reactions. The overlap of covid-related misinformation and rising unemployment, poverty, and food insecurity sowed widespread fear and distrust of government initiatives (Udupa et al., 2019). The ensuing pattern of distribution exposed stark divides between affluent, educated individuals who consume a range of trustworthy sources and those ensnared in tailored echo chambers circulating misinformation about government activities — restricting engagement without reflection on its merits. An enabling environment urges the emergence of countervailing forces through timely and unobscured messaging followed by discussions that stimulate critique of governance. To date, responses beyond inclusion of information literacy topics in school curricula have fallen short of remedying growing disquiet about misinformation.

5.3. Digital Participation and E-Governance

Both urban and rural India has witnessed a rapid surge in citizens' awareness, interest, and usage of e-governance services. Citizens have been provided a variety of digital services on diverse online platforms. However, there still remain many challenges to expanding and sustaining meaningful digital participation. The overwhelming majority of published studies on digital participation in both urban and rural contexts are qualitative in nature. Those studies suggest that citizens are largely using digital platforms to interact with the government by posting complaints about various issues or renouncing their rights. When citizens post complaints and track their status on digital platforms, they are not participating in governance; they are merely consuming a service. The effective utilization of social media for participatory planning is still in its infancy, having yet to be fully exploited. Digital participation still relies heavily upon the educational and economic backgrounds of users. Affirmative measures for expanding access to digital infrastructure and increasing the affordability of devices remain essential for achieving genuine digital participation among the less privileged sections of society.

The concomitant processes of digitalization and e-governance have altered the traditional processes of citizen participation and governance. The use of innovative ICT tools for communication and delivery of government services has the potential to widen and deepen existing participatory mechanisms. The growing interest in digital participation is underscored by a plethora of online platforms set up by a multitude of organizations, including government agencies, non-profit organizations, political parties, civil society actors, and individuals. Digital participation manifests in different ways. Popular social networking sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, are being utilized for interacting with the bureaucracy, posting complaints regarding poor service delivery, and appealing to political leaders to take corrective action. Some researchers claim that the frequency and quality of citizens' interaction with the government through these platforms indicate increasing levels of digital participation, while others argue that merely complaining does not signify active participation in the governance process.

6. Challenges to Participation and Awareness

Regardless of the political system, participation and awareness increasingly become essential to the citizens' role. However, in India, these two aspects still confront various unprecedented challenges which hamper usage of both formal and informal channels. Participation remains limited due to socioeconomic inequalities across communities; certain electoral dynamics affect the quality of what is perceived as participation; and gaps in basic governance contribute to the lack of implementation of widely dispersed policy frameworks. Awareness emerges as a key enabler for utilization of both mechanisms, but here too, the situation is precarious: educational parameters such as literacy and graduation remain low; media consumption is complex and access to reliable sources appears inadequate; and digital participation stays polarized both geographically and across genders (Shahjahan Chowdhury & Aktaruzzaman, 2017).

6.1. Socioeconomic Inequalities and Marginalization

Socioeconomic inequalities and marginalization create differential risks of participation in governance. Systemic disadvantage diminishes social cohesion and weakens collective efficacy, engaging citizens and ensuring that public policies are as responsive to their needs. The interplay between high poverty and income inequality in India fosters mutually reinforcing cycles of deprivation across material, human, and social dimensions of development (Venu Menon, 2007).

Sustainability issues related to drinking water, health, sanitation, and housing remain inextricably tied to participation outcomes; in design and delivery, remedial measures require a coupled rather than parallel strategy. Young women face even greater barriers than young men to enrolling in vocational training and acquiring the requisite skills for socially valuable participation (Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) & Council, 2010).

6.2. Electoral Dynamics, Populism, and Trust in Institutions

Participation through elections is crucial in the consolidation of democracy. Election campaigns are valleys of democracy, proffering a momentary return of relevance to ordinary people. Political leaders and parties compete to seize popular imagination. On the eve of elections and sometimes after winning a election, political discourse revolves around various schemes to uplift vulnerable, economically poor, women, and backward classes. Political leaders utter promises during the speech but once elections are over people's participation is again curtailed. Studies reveal that socio economically backward classes, women, and marginalized sections of society are still deprived from enjoying their justified participation in democratic governance.

The composite social economic status of Indian Society is a major factor towards active citizen participation. To build citizen awareness civil society organizations, various committees, political parties and institutions are working during election campaigns. Various schemes for employment, health, education, child labour, M.N.R.E.G.S. are formulated at national and state level and they are published in newspapers. Various political leaders are paid in cash, liquor, smoke items, vapour items, food items, etc. as it is assumed that these items stimulate and increase vote for them. A long, difficult and tiring process precedes and follows before a person votes. Remainder is provided to people of age, whose name is enlist as voter explaining them to vote. In many places citizen awareness creation programs are conducted by schools, colleges, and universities that focuses on voting (Borooh & tagat, 2015).

6.3. Administrative Bottlenecks and Policy Fragmentation

Administrative bottlenecks and policy fragmentation hinder the effective governance of participatory mechanisms in India (Kodzo Dzakaklo et al., 2023). Numerous policymaking processes—including the National Health Mission, National Rural Livelihoods Mission, and Swachh Bharat Mission—envision a citizen-centric approach that promotes public involvement in decision-making. However, actual engagement falls short of participation expectations (Kumar Sharma, 2014). Unrealized opportunities for active consultation eliminate citizens' roles as co-drafters or decision-makers, undermining efforts to secure political accountability and transparency.

Effective participatory governance teeters toward policy decentralization; strategies originating from administrative tiers remote from citizens perpetuate policy fragmentation in democratic governance. Failure to engage with relevant public appeals to secure an administrative responsive apparatus reinforces the narrowness of citizen inputs, constraining substantive participation. Despite actions taken by local government and collective groups, the dominant policy influence wielded by state governments and municipal headquarters often ignores local needs, distorting the participatory mandate enshrined in the Constitution.

Strategies employed by successive governments and administrative systems have exhibited a tendency to overlook existing vehicles and acknowledgments of civic involvement at the grassroots level. Institutional apparatuses conspicuously designed to monitor and assess such participatory mechanisms often remain dormant, while active avenues pursue stand-alone initiatives that bypass the milieu of grassroots engagement, thereby further fragmenting the

equation. Achieving the participatory ideal fundamentally hinges on systematically reinforcing collective engagement across all decision, policy, and programme stages.

7. Conclusion

Democratic governance relies significantly on citizen participation, which stimulates political awareness and the willingness to engage actively in politics. A focused analysis of the Indian context reveals mechanisms generating citizen participation and informing political awareness, as well as significant gaps impeding both dynamics and diminishing the quality of democratic governance. Drawing from policy, practical, and scholarly insights, the analysis maps citizen participation onto deliberative and grassroots participation paradigms and links political awareness to knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

The deliberative paradigm highlights the importance of the quality of political deliberation for the generation of political awareness, while the grassroots paradigm emphasises the influence of collective efficacy and the social capital accumulated through citizen participation on political awareness. New forms of participatory governance are emerging in India, especially at the local level, which have broadened civic engagement opportunities and enhanced responsiveness to public needs. Collective action—particularly through community-based organisations—has flourished, and collective efficacy, even after controlling for participation, is found to be a significant predictor of civic engagement and policy uptake, attesting to its centrality in the Indian political landscape.

Political awareness, defined as knowledge, attitudes, and skills relevant to the public sphere, remains limited in the Indian context. Knowledge encompasses awareness of political issues, institutions, and processes; attitudes refer to trust in and satisfaction with political institutions; and skills include media literacy and the capacities associated with effective civic engagement. Active, informed, and engaged citizenship for the common good, which underpins democratic governance and accountability, is not widespread. Socioeconomic inequalities, electoral dynamics, administrative bottlenecks, and policy fragmentation reinforce this situation; yet responsive advocacy coalitions generating awareness-related knowledge and fostering media pluralism are also emerging.

The analysis identifies avenues for future inquiry into the relationships between citizen participation, political awareness, and democratic governance. Further refinement of the participation and awareness constructs and their measurement approaches is warranted, along with systematic assessments of new participatory governance approaches, the role of collective efficacy, and infrastructural and advocacy-support requirements for the expansion and enhancement of participation and awareness dynamics.

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