

Analyzing the Motivational level among the employees of Urban and Rural Local Bodies in West Bengal

Dr. Debarshi Nag¹

Abstract

Several research studies are being conducted world over for the past three decades on the concept of Public Service Motivation (PSM) among employees involved in the public sector. This concept of PSM was put forward by American scholars Perry and Wise in the early 90's and has since been a major topic of research by several scholars. Unfortunately, however this topic did not catch the attention of Indian scholars who for a long time attached more attention to the implementation part of administration and chose to remain virtually blind towards the human resource factors of the public sector employees. Based on a survey conducted among employees engaged in several Blocks and Municipalities across the length and breadth of West Bengal and then measuring the feedback received based on an indigenous 28-point questionnaire, developed on the line of Perry's 24-item Public Service Motivation scale, which is measured by Likert's Scale of grading 1 to 5, several conclusions were reached. The study suggested that most of the employees are responsible citizens and strive hard to improve the living standards of their community through various schematic interventions and work extremely hard, often beyond their normal working hours, in order to meet the administrative and schematic targets. Some constructive measures such as periodical training programs on specific skill development, reforming the existing mechanism of pay and allowances and developing a sense of pride among them for serving the society could go a long way in improving their performance which in turn will prove beneficial for the society in the long run.

Keywords: Motivation, Work culture, Political interference, Recognition, Promotional prospects, Benefits.

¹ WBCS (Exe.), OSD to Hon'ble MIC, WRI&D & Environment Department, West Bengal.

I. Introduction

Motivating the workforce of a government organization is perhaps the greatest challenge for the bureaucrats in the present times. Advent of e-governance, increasing complexities of administration, allotment of huge funds to the Local Bodies for development in the recent years, rising intolerance and corruption in politics and implementation of numerous schemes transparently and under strict vigil from several agencies within a tight schedule have led to a situation where the presence of skilled manpower is essential for any Government Department, especially at the implementing position i.e. in the Rural and Urban Local Bodies. It is even more important in the case of these Bodies which involve direct public interaction and political intervention at several stages of implementation of these Government schemes effectively at the ground level².

In India, a Community Development Block comprises of a predominantly rural area which is earmarked by the Panchayat & Rural Development Department of the concerned State. This Block consists of several Gram Panchayats which act as the local administrative unit for several villages. The Block is administratively managed by a Block Development Officer who is aided by several other officials. However, the actual task of public interaction and scheme implementation is done by the numerous staff at the Block and Gram Panchayat level. These employees are mostly recruited through written examinations conducted by the Public Service Commission or various Recruitment Boards of the concerned State. The actual development of a Block in terms of infrastructure creation and reaching of schematic benefits to the deserving beneficiaries, thus leading to the social and economic upliftment of the Block in the real sense, is dependent to a large extent on the performance of these Government employees who work at the ground level. The employees in the Panchayati Raj Institutions (or Rural Local Bodies) include some officials, engineers and clerical staff including Data Entry Operators (DEOs), all of whom are brought under the purview of the present study.

Even though the first Municipality in India was started in Madras in 1688, it was the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 that conferred the constitutional validity upon the Urban Local Self Governments which are mostly in the form of Municipal Corporations or Municipalities. The Government employees who are

² DHARAMPAL, PANCHAYATI RAJ AS THE BASIS OF INDIAN POLITY, (Rashthrothana Sahitya 2001)

engaged in these Urban Local Bodies are either engaged through competitive examinations held by the concerned Municipal Service Commissions or are recruited by the District Administration through various written examinations which are conducted from time to time. The employees engaged in the Municipalities fall under three categories – officials, engineers, clerical staff, accountants, and Data Entry Operators. There is also a large number of contractual staff who are employed for various schemes but since their tenure is uncertain, they are not brought under the purview of this study.

II. Motivation among Employees

Manpower is the most important asset of any organization and the study of employee motivation assumes a great significance to judge its effective performance. Motivation in workplace is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon and has far reaching implication on the human resource development policies of any organization. In this context, Public Service Motivation (PSM) may be considered as an important tool to assess the level of motivation among the employees. Public Service Motivation refers to a general altruistic motivation to serve the interests of a community of people, a state, a nation, or humankind i.e. individual motives are largely, but not exclusively, altruistic and grounded in public institutions³ (Perry & Wise, 1990). Recent research studies have established the fact that the employees engaged in Public Sector possess a higher level of motivation and job satisfaction compared to their counterparts in the Private Sector. This is despite the fact that they get comparatively lower pays and work under intense pressure from both the political and the social ends. Substantial studies on employee motivation in Public Sector have been carried out in the United States and in the countries of Europe. Even researchers from Asian countries like China and Philippines have made significant contribution in this field. However Indian researchers have lagged behind in this field of research despite the fact that this country boasts of a significant public sector workforce which turns out to be approximately 22 million as on date. It is an irony that though more than 50 percent of this workforce is working at the ground level in various sectors, their contribution or

³ JAMES PERRY & WISE, LR, THE MOTIVATIONAL BASES OF PUBLIC SERVICE, (Indiana University, Bloomington 2001).

welfare is preferably ignored as they lack a powerful lobby to influence any State Government to look into their case with due importance.

III. Research Methodology

The researcher has taken recourse to the quantitative method of determining the motivational patterns of the employees of Local Bodies by using the 28-point questionnaire as the research tool. The present study has been conducted on 400 Local Body employees presently engaged in 30 Community Development Blocks (out of a total of 342 CD Blocks) and 14 Municipalities (out of a total of 118 Municipalities) covering all the districts of West Bengal (Table 1). Out of these, 347 respondents replied to all the queries posed in the questionnaire and also shared their details properly. The employees belonging to the 7 Municipal Corporations are purposely left out of the purview of this study because they have some special characteristics and advantages which are similar to any Government Department in the Secretariat and are quite distinct from those of the rest of the Local Bodies.

Table 1

List of Blocks & Municipalities where the survey was conducted	
Name of State	Name of Community Development Block
West Bengal (30 CD Blocks & 14 Municipalities)	Sitalkuchi, Falakata, Kurseong, Rajganj, Barjora
	Kalimpong-II, Harirampur, Keshiary, Habibpur, Ghatal
	Bolpur Sriniketan, Krishnaganj, Narayangarh, Moyna, Baruipur
	Jamboni, Gaighata, Baghmundi, Minakhan, Hemtabad
	Panchla, Basanti, Pursurah, Bagnan, Salanpur
	Bhatar, Kakdwip, Haroa, Bishnupur, Domjur
	Name of Municipality
	Rajpur Sonarpur, Arambagh, Kalimpong, Medinipur
	Suri, Bansberia, Balurghat, Kalyani, Barasat
	Buniadpur, Egra, Jhargram, Kandi, Mekhliganj

For the purpose of the study, the researcher has deliberately chosen those employees who have been appointed by the Public Service Commission or Municipal Service Commission of the State i.e. they are directly recruited through an open competitive examination by following a definite and standard procedure. All the employees are directly related to public interaction and play an important

part in devising the policies for schematic implementation on a regular basis during their entire work period i.e., the researcher has consciously avoided the back office employees.

For the purpose of survey, an indigenous 28-point scale has been devised which resembles Perry's 24-point PSM questionnaire but the nature of the questions is different. This is because there are certain issues which are unique to a region and has to be understood and measured so as to give a fair idea of the motivational patterns among the employees engaged in the local Bodies across the State. So, it can safely be concluded that the 28-point scale which has been employed in this present research study is universally accepted as a fairly reliable scale to measure the level of motivation among public sector employees.

Table 2

Understanding the motivational patterns among employees of Local Bodies
Statement/Parameter
1. I always strive to serve my community through my profession
2. I am seriously concerned with all the occurrences in my society
3. I consciously try to contribute some value-added services to the beneficiaries
4. I feel pained to see the hardships of the poor and needy
5. I deliver all the Government Schemes with equal sincerity even though I might doubt its efficacy
6. I believe that every citizen can contribute something worthwhile to the society
7. I respect my profession and always strive to raise the standards of service delivery
8. I am satisfied with the benefits associated with my service
9. I always mix with the common people while serving them
10. I give more importance to serving the society than the financial benefits of my job
11. I feel good when any scheme implemented by me benefits the society for a long period of time
12. I feel proud when my organization gives recognition to my efforts in any manner
13. I believe that I am providing all the basic amenities to my family satisfactorily
14. I feel inspired when the common people praise my efforts to serve them
15. I try to study all the schemes carefully so as to implement them effectively at the ground level
16. I am satisfied with the work culture and working conditions at my workplace
17. I always try to follow the directions of my superior officers sincerely
18. I always maintain an amicable relationship with my co-workers

19. My family supports me in my endeavour to serve the society better
20. I read various periodicals related to Government schemes in order to understand them better
21. I select beneficiaries strictly based on the scheme parameters without getting tempted or intimidated
22. I maintain a cordial and workable relation with politicians
23. I take an active part in the Employees' Union to demand my service rights and benefits
24. I contribute write-ups to Department journal to share my schematic delivery experiences with others
25. I believe that regular training programs will be beneficial for implementing schemes
26. I could maintain my work-life balance properly throughout my career
27. Local Body employees should be given opportunities for promotion through Departmental exams
28. Local body employees should be given similar pay benefits as regular Government employees

The responses were invited in the form of a five-point scale where “1” stands for Strongly Disagree while “5” stands for Definitely Agree (Table 2). Apart from the questionnaire, the respondents were requested to fill in a form which contained several details regarding their age, length of service, departmental position, gender, educational qualification and nature of work (Table 3). The entire survey was conducted within a time period of one month during which no major political or social events or changes took place nor were any new schemes declared by the Government. Thus, it can safely be assumed that the responses received from the participants are free from any partisan attitude that might have crept up during the course of the survey.

Table 3

Details of respondents (n = 347)			
Variables	Characteristics	N	%
Gender	Male	219	63.11
	Female	128	36.88
Age	30-40	124	35.73
	41-50	87	25.07
	51-60	136	39.19
Nature of work	Engineer	109	31.41

	Accountant	31	8.93
	Clerk	207	59.65
Educational level	10+2	98	28.24
	Graduate	153	44.09
	Post-Graduate	96	27.66
Departmental position	Clerk/Assistant/Junior Engineer	114	32.85
	Section Head/Assistant Engineer	183	52.73
	Secretary/Executive Assistant/Deputy Secretary/ Official	50	14.41
Tenure of service (in years)	5-10	64	18.44
	11-20	82	23.63
	21-35	201	57.92

Before conducting the research study, the following steps were taken in order to get authentic results from the survey-

1. All the respondents have been contacted personally and the theme of the research study has been explained to them.
2. All the respondents were provided with a brief leaflet in which the objective of the survey, the description of the process and the significance of carrying out such a study has been described in brief.
3. The survey is conducted via Google forms so that the identity of the respondent remains anonymous.
4. Every attempt has been made to extract the honest response from all the participants to the maximum possible extent.
5. None of the offices in which the respondents are currently employed have been provided with the individual responses so as to safeguard the interests of the respondents.
6. Every attempt has been made to devise the questionnaire in such a manner so that it is free from any bias whether personal, political or any specific social factor.
7. Out of the 400 participants who were personally contacted and sent the questionnaire over mail, the responses of 347 participants were considered for the final study (86.75%). The responses of 44 participants

were either partial or erroneous while 9 participants did not respond even after repeated persuasion.

Table 4

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree to an extent	Neutral/No opinion	Disagree to an extent	Strongly Disagree
1	285	62	0	0	0
2	159	118	70	0	0
3	87	231	56	0	0
4	94	139	114	0	0
5	67	134	112	34	0
6	81	145	52	69	0
7	304	43	0	0	0
8	37	126	58	112	14
9	231	109	7	0	0
10	104	98	103	42	0
11	272	75	0	0	0
12	192	155	0	0	0
13	47	68	81	151	0
14	301	46	0	0	0
15	44	58	127	95	23
16	38	50	79	164	16
17	147	189	11	0	0
18	203	134	10	0	0
19	62	251	29	5	0
20	51	127	22	108	39
21	24	45	101	82	95
22	76	126	97	43	5
23	39	255	53	0	0
24	14	91	0	214	28
25	286	49	12	0	0
26	41	82	102	49	73
27	153	108	14	27	45
28	109	127	111	0	0

IV. Findings of the Research Study

Each of the statements which represent a motivation pattern is discussed in detail in the light of the results obtained from the 347 respondents through the questionnaire. This is deliberately done to choose those patterns which had the highest impact on the respondents.

S1: I always strive to serve my community through my profession – The best part of a Government job is that each and every employee serves his community through every professional action that he performs. This is all the more evident in the case of an employee of a Local Body because he works at the ground level and interacts directly with the beneficiaries in particular and the society in general. He takes pride in the fact that he acts as a catalyst in the development process and most of the community members respect him. So, it is evident that the majority of participants find this parameter to be a strong motivating factor in their profession⁴.

S2: I am seriously concerned with all the occurrences in my society – An overwhelming majority of the employees engaged in the Local Bodies are members of the same community to whom they deliver their services or start living with them for obvious ease of conveyance. So, most of them are affected in some way or the other when some significant changes or incidents take place in the society where they reside and work as well. However, a small portion of employees opted to stay indifferent as they either stay far or belong to a different societal segment.

S3: I consciously try to contribute some value-added services to the beneficiaries – Most of the functions performed by the employees of Local bodies are predominantly basic in character such as collecting taxes and applications over the counter, planning the schematic works in a site, visiting a locality to identify beneficiaries based on certain parameters and conducting essential campaigns such as immunisation programs. However, there is a scope to help the beneficiaries by explaining them how to fill up a form, how to apply for certain schematic benefits and how to satisfy certain parameters to qualify for a specific scheme. This parameter is supported by those employees who are in a position to

⁴ ANIL CHAUDHARI & DIPIKA, PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM IN INDIA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES, (ABD Publishers 2019).

add some more value to their services while the others remained indifferent. So, this parameter may be considered as moderately motivating in character.

S4: I feel pained to see the hardships of the poor and needy – As mentioned previously, most of the employees of Local Bodies either belong to or stay in the same community where they are employed and so they try to help the poor and the needy through whatever benefits the Government can provide. However, there are several restrictions which impede universal support as there are strict quotas for the widows and the aged and other restricting parameters for helping the poor and disabled. Some employees have limited access to decide the beneficiaries while the others do not have any function in this exercise. So, while a segment of the employees has supported this parameter, the others have exercised a neutral opinion to this claim.

S5: I deliver all the Government Schemes with equal sincerity even though I might doubt its efficacy – This is an extremely sensitive aspect as a significant number of government schemes are actually meant to appease the voters though they are proclaimed to have certain social benefits. This entails wastage of funds from the Government coffers which is blatantly evident to the employees at the grass root levels and so a section of them disapproves such acts and try to act in an indifferent manner in such cases. However, this is not always possible due to professional obligations and so this parameter has received a lukewarm acceptance⁵.

S6: I believe that every citizen can contribute something worthwhile to the society – There are certain lofty assumptions which are generally nursed by the Civic Society but a few of them do not match the reality at the ground level. It is a fact that most citizens work hard to earn their living and deserve the benefits of the social schemes but a small section of citizens behave otherwise. They are lazy but are quick enough to grab the benefits of each and every social scheme to which they may be remotely related, influence the relevant Local Body by political means to serve their petty interest and even grab undeserving benefits at the cost of depriving the needy. Occasionally, the employees of Local Bodies remain mute

⁵ BUDDHADEB GHOSH & GIRISH KUMAR, STATE POLITICS AND PANCHAYATS IN INDIA, (Manohar Publications 2020).

spectators to such deplorable acts and so this parameter has got some negative response as well.

S7: I respect my profession and always strive to raise the standards of service delivery – Over the past two decades, the number of Government schemes have increased three times while the strength of employees has declined to one-third of its sanctioned strength. This has made the work of employees of Local Bodies very tedious. Added to this is the introduction of e-governance and Right to Services Act (2013) which has prompted quick and seamless delivery of service benefits to the citizens. So, the standard of service delivery has improved several times over and obviously, this parameter has received an astounding response and may be considered as a powerful motivational parameter.

S8: I am satisfied with the benefits associated with my service – The salary and other benefits of the employees of West Bengal are far less compared to their compatriots in the Central Services. The employees engaged in the Local Bodies are not entitled to certain benefits which the State Government employees receive. A small number of veteran employees who work in higher posts may get a comparatively decent salary and may have accepted this proposition. But the sizeable majority of the junior employees are potentially dissatisfied with their salary and benefits. So this parameter has received a significant negative response and may be considered as a negative motivational pattern.

S9: I always mix with the common people while serving them – This is a universal requirement for almost all the employees engaged in the Local Bodies as they work at the grass root level and mandatorily need to interact with the local people on a daily basis as a part of their professional requirement. This parameter has predictably received a stupendous response and together with S14 forms the most important positive motivational parameter in this entire research study.

S10: I give more importance to serving the society than the financial benefits of my job – This parameter has evolved a mixed response among the lot of respondents as most of them consider that it is their duty to serve the society. However, as mentioned in S8, the perks and allowances of the respondents are quite low. This is the reason why a portion of them feel that they are sacrificing their personal benefit while serving the society while another portion has expressed their disgruntlement towards their financial benefits. So, this may be treated as a negative motivational pattern for the entire group.

S11: I feel good when any scheme implemented by me benefits the society for a long period of time – There are several Government schemes which when implemented successfully results in providing certain basic amenities to the community members as well as aid in their livelihood. Any employee who has contributed some professional effort and belongs to the same community takes pride in the fact that the scheme has yielded its desired result. This is a strong motivational pattern as is evident from the unanimous response in its support. It is almost an exactly contrasting pattern to S5 where the respondents had expressed their dissatisfaction towards implementing several futile schemes which take a heavy toll on the state exchequer.

S12: I feel proud when my organization gives recognition to my efforts in any manner – This parameter has received a lot of support from the respondents because every employee within an organization craves for some kind of recognition for his hard work. This recognition may be in the form of a certificate or a small memento which has insignificant monetary value but inspires him to strive further to raise the benchmark of service delivery. In the Local Bodies, the administrators (SDO, Chairman, BDO) are the competent authority to determine the parameters of recognition and it solely depends upon their own spirit of teamwork and enthusiasm as to how they will reward the competent employees. Such a reward process also arouses a healthy competition among the employees to make more effort which is in turn beneficial, for the organization in particular and the community in general, in the long run.

S13: I believe that I am providing all the basic amenities to my family satisfactorily – A sizeable majority of the respondents are not satisfied with their salary and other service benefits and believe that it is very difficult to sustain their families with such a meagre amount and provide them with all the basic amenities in life. With the advent of commercialization in the society in the modern era, the prices of all commodities have taken a steep upward turn while the salaries of these employees have failed to match with this pace and this has taken a heavy toll on the purchasing capacity of these employees. Apart from a few senior employees whose salaries are comparatively higher due to the higher pay scale, almost all the employees have expressed their unanimous dissatisfaction to this parameter. Hence, this parameter may be treated as a potentially negative motivational pattern.

S14: I feel inspired when the common people praise my efforts to serve them – The employees of the Local Bodies perform the essential functions of governance at the ground level and are the agents of delivering all the schematic benefits to the deserving beneficiaries. It is therefore apparent that most of the community members hold these employees in high esteem and they command a certain amount of respect in the society by virtue of their position. This is perhaps one of the most important reasons why an employee continues in this service in spite of several disadvantages and may certainly be considered as an important positive motivational parameter⁶. No doubt, this parameter also received an overwhelming support from the respondents in this survey.

S15: I try to study all the schemes carefully so as to implement them effectively at the ground level – The social schemes of the Government have significantly increased in the past decade from 15 to 42 and with the advent of technology and e-governance, each of these schematic details are required to be updated in the earmarked website on a regular basis. This requires an in-depth expertise about the details of each scheme and the employees of the Local Bodies mandatorily require having a working knowledge about them. However, the immense work pressure on these employees makes it difficult for them to study such schemes and so it turns out to be a negative motivational pattern for most of the respondents.

S16: I am satisfied with the work culture and working conditions at my workplace – Contrary to the popular belief about Government employees, those engaged in the Local Bodies do not have any fixed working hours and even have to work on weekends quite often. However, they lack the basic infrastructure to a great extent compared to those employed in the Secretariat and District level. Even though these employees are mostly permanently posted in one office throughout their service tenure and share a good relationship with their colleagues, the work pressure and lack of amenities forced a majority of the respondents to cast their negative vote towards this parameter. So, the absence of a comfortable working condition may be considered as a negative motivational pattern in this case.

S17: I always try to follow the directions of my superior officers sincerely – The employees of any Local Body remain fixed while the administrators, both elected

⁶ PATIL & ASHA RAMAGONDA, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT: AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE, (Prentice Hall of India 2018).

and officially posted, keeps on changing after a certain period. This makes the head of Office to be dependent on these employees to a great extent as they deliver all the services and are familiar with the administrative functioning of that office. On most occasions, the relationship between the superior officers and the staff remain cordial which serves the mutual benefit and so most of the respondents have given a positive vote to this parameter and has chosen it as an important motivational pattern.

S18: I always maintain an amicable relationship with my co-workers – The employees of Local Bodies work in the same office throughout their entire service tenure. This makes them mentally attached to their office and colleagues and they share a personal relationship with each other. They take part in marriage ceremonies, help each other during medical emergencies and collectively put pressure on the administration to exact their demands. This is a very important parameter which gives a lot of mental strength and support to the employees and has aptly been voted as an important positive motivational pattern.

S19: My family supports me in my endeavour to serve the society better – Most of the employees engaged in Local Bodies belong to or stay in the same community where they work. As mentioned in S14, the community members treat them with respect and their families enjoy an upper status. Since the members of the extended family of such employees belong to the same social set up, they take pride in this fact and in spite of the meagre salary and other paltry service benefits received by an employee, they continue to support him morally and mentally in his endeavour to serve the society through his profession. This is again a positive motivational pattern and has been supported by most of the respondents.

S20: I read various periodicals related to Government schemes in order to understand them better – During the regime of the Left Front Government in West Bengal, it was a common practice to make both the party leaders and the Government staff literate about the various schemes and programs of the then Government by publishing monthly journals by various Departments. The articles were penned by eminent bureaucrats, social thinkers and economists and served as interesting as well as knowledgeable piece of data. However, with the change of regime and introduction of several schemes which serve only to appease the masses without any long-term development, the present regime turned a cold shoulder to such Departmental journals fearing honest criticism from several quarters. The journals, in turn, either stopped abruptly or are published in a

careless manner and the quality of articles as well as authors has gone down pathetically. So, most respondents have stopped reading the journals and have expressed their apathy towards this parameter. This may well be treated as a negative motivational parameter.

S21: I select beneficiaries strictly based on the scheme parameters without getting tempted or intimidated – The employees engaged in Local Bodies throughout India take pride in the fact that they have served as the agents of positive development and harbingers of administrative success of this great Nation since her Independence. Most of these employees have a strong integrity of character and have collectively prevented misuse of Government funds as well as schematic allocations in the past. Unfortunately, in the present times, an unholy nexus between the political leaders cutting across party lines and the senior bureaucrats have resulted in widespread corruption and undue and unethical political intervention in all affairs. Beneficiary selection is one of the most important criteria for the success of any scheme and must be done after proper enquiry. Unfortunately, in present times, the influential lobby within the ruling regime gives a list of beneficiaries who are either their own family members or party cadres and most of them fail to meet the criterion for selection. With the silent approval of administrators and covert support from the Head of Office, the employees of Local Bodies are indirectly forced to create lists of undeserving beneficiaries. This process undermines their honest efforts and drains them mentally⁷. This is the reason why a majority of respondents have expressed their pain by voting against this important parameter and it may be treated as a negative motivational parameter.

S22: I maintain a cordial and workable relation with politicians – Politics and administration are the most unlikely of members in a democratic family. Since politicians have a limited tenure and rarely have any influence once they are out of power, they try to extract the maximum possible benefit in every form during their tenure. In the absence of the strong and conscious control and monitoring from the Government and party leadership, these politicians may a mockery of administration to extract their personal interests. Most of the respondents become a mute spectator to such mayhem and corruption and have little to do other than

⁷ GEORGE MATHEW, PANCHAYATI RAJ: FROM LEGISLATION TO MOVEMENT, (Concept Publishing 1994).

accept all the system. So, it is a fact that even though most of them are forced to maintain a cordial relationship with the political entities, they behave in a superficial manner with the political class and nurse a deep grudge of annoyance and hatred towards them. This is again a negative parameter though it has evoked a mixed response in this research survey due to the obvious fear of negative backlash from those presently in power.

S23: I take an active part in the Employees' Union to demand my service rights and benefits – Forming Employees' Union and demanding the justified rights from the Government is one of the basic entitlements of an employee. Since the promotional prospect of an employee of a Local Body is dim, only a handful of them are able to reach the Gazetted scale. These organizations play a vital role in shaping the mentalities and aspirations of the employees in general and serve as a positive motivational pattern as it gives power to the employees to get united and raise their voices against any unfair treatment and more importantly, to demand their service rights and benefits.

S24: I contribute write-ups to Department journal to share my schematic delivery experiences with others – Till two decades ago, there existed a class of Local Body employees who were thoroughly conversant in both the administrative and service rules and Acts and at times, even the superior officers sought their advice before taking crucial decisions. These employees gained experience mostly due to their erudite nature and though they may not be very hard working, they were extremely meticulous in their approach and handled the strategic files. Most of them contributed regularly to the Government periodicals and studied them regularly. With the advent of internet and extreme work pressure as well as staff shortage, this class of employees are gradually declining. The employees of the present generation neither get time to concentrate on these journals nor do they have the interest to do so and as a result, both the standard of authors and chapters are declining with every passing day. It is evident that most of the respondents have shown their extreme apathy to this parameter and so it may safely be removed from the consideration of the present study.

S25: I believe that regular training programs will be beneficial for implementing schemes – Conducting in-service trainings for the employees is one of the most vital components of the administration. This is all the more strategic in case of Local Body employees who play a pivotal role in implementing the various Government programs and schemes at the ground level within a strict time

schedule. Every District has an earmarked District Training Centre (DTC) with residential facility under the District Panchayat & Rural Development Cell. State Institute of Panchayat & Rural Development (SIPRD) & Administrative Training Institute (ATI) are the apex institutes for training on various administrative matters concerning Panchayati Raj Institutions and Public Administration respectively. Most employees get an opportunity of training in DTCs once in several years which serve the dual purpose of getting accustomed to the various administrative and schematic matters and interacting with the employees of other Local Bodies. Most of the respondents have voted in favour of this parameter and so it may be treated as yet another strategic motivational pattern.

S26: I could maintain my work-life balance properly throughout my career – This parameter has predictably evoked a mixed response because of the fact that while the employees who were engaged in the Local Bodies two decades ago could enjoy a specific working schedule with optimum leaves and holidays, the comparatively newer ones are subjected to a strict work schedule under severe pressure. As mentioned in S15, S16 & S24, there is a shortage of staff due to retirement and no new recruitment, increase in number and purview of schemes and a strict timeline to execute the work. So, while a small section of senior employees has voted in favour of this parameter, a majority of young employees have voted against it.

S27: Local Body employees should be given opportunities for promotion through Departmental exams – There is extremely limited opportunity for career development for the employees serving in Local Bodies. The employees who are recruited in Municipalities as Lower Division clerks, accountants and typists (Data Entry Operators) requires serving for at least fifteen years to become eligible for promotion to Upper Division Clerk, Senior Accountant or Typist Supervisor. Only one employee becomes the Senior Head Clerk after almost three decades of service provided the post becomes vacant. In case of Panchayats, the Gram Karmee could be promoted to Gram Sahayak and in rare cases to Deputy Secretary. The posts of Panchayat Secretary, Executive Assistant, Nirman Sahayak (Technical Assistant), Samity Audit & Accounts Officer and Data Entry Operators have no promotional prospect save a special increment after every decade of service. Interestingly, a section of the senior employees who were promoted based on their seniority in service has voted against this proposition as they do not want to study and sit in examinations anymore. So most of the

respondents have voted in favour of this proposition and this may be treated as an extremely positive motivational pattern if it is implemented properly.

S28: Local body employees should be given similar pay benefits as regular Government employees – There are some administrative limitations to impose S27 as the number of vacancies is extremely limited and every office has a handful of staff compared to the Government departments at the Secretariat. However, the pay scales of these employees may be raised after a specific time period (Career Advancement Scheme) rather than some simple increments after each decade of service. This will make their pay at par with the employees serving at the Directorates. This parameter has evoked a huge amount of positive response as most of the employees have favoured a raise in pay and so this parameter may be treated as an important motivational pattern⁸. However, a section of the employees has reserved their comments as they are sceptical whether the Government will at all take any steps in this regard.

V. Discussing the Positive Parameters

The maximum positive votes received in this survey under question is the proposition that all Local Body employees respect their profession and try their level best to raise the standards of service delivery. All the basic amenities enjoyed by the citizens of this country are provided to them directly by these employees and so they are often termed as the “real agents of governance” in our society. Most employees consider it their duty to help the community members in various possible ways to enable them to get some schematic benefit or the other and derive a lot of satisfaction from it and so the respondents supported the pattern stated in S1. This corroborates the proposition of S14 which states that the employees feel proud and elated when they are praised by the common people for their good deeds. Most of the fresh recruits and mid-career employees are interested to receive trainings from subject experts on various administrative issues and schematic details as they have to carry out the functions first-hand. They have several queries in their mind regarding the execution of schemes which need to be addressed appropriately for the successful implementation of all the schemes at the ground level. So, it is obvious that most respondents supported this

⁸ RAO & C NAGARAJA, URBAN GOVERNANCE IN INDIA, (Gyan Books 2016).

parameter (S25). Since most of the Local Body employees either belong to or reside in the same community where they work, the benefits of any constructive scheme such as a rural road, Health Centre, Anganwadi Kendra, water tank, small bridge, culvert or minor irrigation channel are enjoyed by them as well. They take pride in the fact that they had played a crucial role in the execution of those “successful” schemes which has helped to develop the community and sometimes even act as a source of direct and indirect livelihood (S11). It is highly improbable that the employees of Local Bodies will be able to work in isolation while executing their Government functions. On the contrary, they mandatorily need the active and actual support from the various stakeholders of the community in order to deliver the schematic benefits and so they maintain a very close liaison with the community members (S9). Any employee derives a lot of mental satisfaction and inspiration when his hard efforts are given due recognition by his organization (S12). Every District Administration recognises the efforts of the employees engaged in the Local Bodies under its jurisdiction based on several parameters and the deserving employees are usually awarded on special occasions such as Independence Day, Republic Day and National Voters’ Day. Since there is almost no scope of transfer for employees of Local Bodies (apart from special grounds such as critical health condition of self or close family member), the entire workforce stays together for several decades till anybody retires on superannuation. It is therefore quite obvious that most employees develop an extremely cordial relationship with each other extending to their personal lives (S18) and stand by each other in times of hardship. This also explains the fact why such employees remain associated with Employees’ Union to a larger extent (S23) and demand their rights more vociferously, cutting across political differences, compared to the employees of secretariat and Directorate Services (S23). Finally, these employees exhibit a greater extent of loyalty and efficiency towards their superiors and the administrators (both political and official) because they work directly under the control of the latter which is not the case of Secretariat and Directorate employees (S17).

VI. Discussing the Negative Parameters

Since the last few decades, there has been a virtual upsurge of Government schemes at the Panchayat and Municipal levels which target predominantly individual beneficiaries. This ranges from providing free foodgrains, allotment of

homes, Health benefits and even cash benefits to students and women. This has led to the rise of a lot of corruption and nepotism in the beneficiary selection process and the political leaders who are at the helm of power consciously force the Local Bodies to accept their list. The Local Body employees who are actually supposed to draw such lists after proper enquiry feel insulted and dejected and are liable to become victims as they are the signing authority against such a illegally concocted list in case of any audit survey. This serves as an extremely negative motivational pattern and so most employees have expressed their dissatisfaction regarding this proposition (S21). With the advent of technology and e-Governance aspects, it has become essential to provide the latest electronic gadgets and internet facilities to the offices of Local Bodies. Unfortunately, however, lack of funds and lack of positive administrative intervention has led to an acute shortage of such devices in most offices which has made it extremely difficult for the employees of Local Bodies to execute their official functions in time. This factor, along with the undue political interference, has made the work atmosphere unhealthy and so most employees have expressed their concern and stated it as a negative parameter (S16). The proposition regarding working hours has also been seriously hampered because of the above reason and extreme pressure from the District administration which is why most employees are quite unhappy with their present work-life balance, also given the meagre salary which they get in return (S26). The promotional prospects of the Local Body employees are extremely bleak and so the pay scale rise takes place just twice or thrice in their entire service tenure. This fact, along with the paltry salary of Government employees at lower levels, has made it a negative motivational pattern (S8).

VII. Suggestions

The real India stays in her villages and small towns. These residents decide who will form the State Government, how the society will develop and what decisions will be taken by the Nation while formulating her Public Policy and governance. No doubt, the employees who are serving the Local Bodies are the silent and yet strategic crusaders in this constant strive towards progress and development of the Nation. The Government, both at the Centre and the State, should take some worthwhile measures to increase the motivational patterns of these employees. To start with, the undue political interference should be dealt with strongly and every schematic execution should be made more transparent and stricter and audited

regularly. The pay and other benefits of the employees should be improved as much as possible with a more practical Career Advancement Scheme. Schematic and administrative training programs should be more frequent and can even be conducted online. The offices should be more equipped with essential gadgets and internet facility to enable e-Governance. It should be kept in mind that no development of the nation will take place unless the lot of employees serving in Local Bodies are empowered in the true sense of the term by elevating their positive motivational patterns and doing away with the negative ones, to the maximum possible extent, as they represent the real face of community development.