

Beyond Geography: Decomposing the Drivers of Patient Satisfaction in Urban vs. Non-Urban Public Healthcare Facilities in West Bengal

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Abstract: The differences in patient satisfaction of the urban and non-urban public health care facilities in India are well-documented, but the causes of this difference are not fully broken down (Sharma and Narang, 2019; Das et al., 2021). It was a cross sectional comparative study of six chosen districts in West Bengal that involved 1,182 patients (591 urban, 591 non-urban) in 12 public healthcare units through systematic random sampling. A validated 24 item scale was used to measure patient satisfaction (Mukherjee and Banerjee, 2018), and a BlinderOaxaca three fold decomposition (Jann, 2008) was used to decompose the urban non-urban gap in satisfaction into endowment and coefficient. Mean overall satisfaction (0–100) was significantly higher in urban facilities (78.2 vs. 61.8; $p < 0.001$), yielding a raw gap of 16.4 points (Cohen's $d = 1.59$). Breaking down the gap, it was found that 62.1% (10.18 points) of the gap was attributed to the presence of endowment effect, which was mainly influenced by the presence of medicine (31.0% of total gap), waiting duration (18.0%), and staff qualification (13.0%) (all $p < 0.001$). Coefficient effect explained a 37.0 percent (6.06 points) of the total gap, courtesy score explained 16.0 percent of the total gap ($p < 0.001$) and as such, non-urban patients value respectful treatment above all. The seven null hypotheses were all rejected ($p < 0.001$). Resource shortage, particularly medicine supply and waiting time are major factors that lead to the urban non-urban gap in satisfaction with the public healthcare units in West Bengal, yet the difference in the value of courtesy also contributes considerably. The focus of the policy should be on strengthening the pharmaceutical supply chain and reducing wait times in non-urban areas with low costs interpersonal communication training (Patel et al., 2022; Bhattacharyya and Roy, 2020).

Keywords: Patient Satisfaction, Urban Rural Disparity, Blinderoaxaca Decomposition, Public Healthcare, West Bengal

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