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# People's Political Participation: A Theoretical Exposition and Reality in Case of Bangladesh

Bibi Morium<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Political Science, University of Rajshahi, Rajshahi, Bangladesh

Correspondence: Bibi Morium, Department of Political Science, University of Rajshahi, Rajshahi-6205, Bangladesh. Tel: +88-01716697801. E-mail: morium@ru.ac.bd

## Abstract

People's participation is one of the central things in a parliamentary democracy. An effective democracy cannot be imagine without people's participation. In this respect, this research investigated the people's political participation in Bangladesh. For that the theories or models related to people's political participation are reviewed first. Then people's political participation in Bangladesh is analysed to see whether any theory or model best fit to explain it or not. The empirical analysis and findings are based on primary data collected using a field survey conducted in February-April 2018 using a structured questionnaire in the Rajshahi City Corporation area. In the case of theories related to people's participation, five models were found in the literature. They are the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM), the Rational Expectation Model (REM), the Social Psychological Model (SPM), the Mobilization Model (MM), and the General Incentive Model (GIM). It is found that each of the models has some strengths as well as weaknesses to explain people's participation. On the basis of the framework we get from different models it is found that the Civic Voluntarism Model to some extent explains the people's participation in Bangladesh. This research provides an explanation of people's political participation in general as well as in Bangladesh.

**Keywords:** Bangladesh, People's Participation, Political Participation, Theory, Reality

## 1. Introduction

People's participation means people's close involvement in the economic, social, cultural and political processes that affect their lives. People may participate individually or in a group. It may be goal-oriented, rational, observable and can be measured straightforwardly (Goel, 1980). Within the framework of a representative democracy, for example, people vote in the general elections, in order to support some parties or candidates, or to make sure others will not gain power. The outcome over which the participation occurs is generally a collective or public good – a good to be enjoyed even by those who have provided no help in bringing it (Back et al., 2011). However, participation also requires time, effort and sometimes even financial expenses. Even though, a large share of citizens of democratic countries choose to participate in at least some respect. Why is that? This paper is devoted to answer this question in relation to Bangladesh.

The aim of this paper is to explain people's political participation in Bangladesh. For that purpose a theoretical basis is needed that could explain people's political participation in general. Therefore a literature review methodology is used here to identify the theories first. Then in relation to these theories the people's participation in Bangladesh is analyzed here. For explaining people's participation in Bangladesh data from the survey are also used here.

There are several sections in this paper. In the first section, literature review is discussed. In the next section, data sources and the methodology used in this research are discussed. Findings and discussions are in the next which has two sub-section. Different theories or models related to people's participation are discussed where the strengths and weaknesses of each model are critically evaluated first. Then in the next sub-section, people's political participation is explained in Bangladesh on the basis of the theories or models that discussed in the previous section followed by conclusion.

## 2. Literature Review

The literature related to political participation as well as the Bangladesh perspectives were given focus here in broader perspective. A summary of the literature related to people's participation is as follows:

Blair (2000) analyzed the two topics of participation and accountability in democratic local governance. He studied in six countries such as Bolivia, Honduras, India, Mali, Philippines and Ukraine. This research finds that participation has a significant potential for promoting democratic local governance, though there are some important limitations.

Milbrath (1965) in his book analyzed the key problem of 'political participation' from different angles i.e., political participation as a function of stimuli, personal factors, the function of the political setting, the function of social position, etc. In conclusion the author has argued that high participation is not required for successful democracy. High participation levels would actually be detrimental to society if they trended to politicize a large percentage of social relationships. However, the author admits that it is difficult to prove the validity of the above argument. However, it varies from society to society and time to time.

Waheduzzaman (2010a) did a research on public participation in good governance focusing on rural development programs in Bangladesh. This study has investigated into the circumstances at the local level and barriers to the process of people's participation in local government bodies. Using qualitative approach, this research revealed problems related to the ineffectiveness of people's participation. Firstly, none of the actors (such as government officials, elected representatives, and local people) was aware of the value of people's participation. Secondly, the mechanisms of people's participation through different management committees found ineffective. Thirdly, there is no legal system to ensure people's participation at the rural level. Finally, lack of social capital is hindering true people's participation. Another research he concluded that the notion of good governance through people's participation has been imported from the developed countries through international aid and donor agencies remains in somewhat fashion is unclear and ambiguous in a country like Bangladesh (Waheduzzaman, 2010b).

Sarowardy (2000) in his dissertation, *'People's Participation in Bangladesh Politics: A Study of June 1996 Parliamentary Elections'*, has shown the nature and scope of people's participation in Bangladesh politics. The objective of this research was to examine the variables and influencing factors related to people's participation depending on different variables and influencing factors. The study also aims to observe the consciousness of the people and their attitude towards the politicians and towards the political system as a whole. However, this study does provide the status of people's political participation in Bangladesh.

Azad (2010) did a research on a limited scale to see democratic practices followed by political parties in Bangladesh. He studied to examine how far democracy works inside individual political parties of Bangladesh and to evaluate the role of political parties in strengthening democracy in the country. In his review he only concentrated on the practiced democracy in the parliamentary performance and analyzed that from the political party's perspective which is in power or in opposition.

Huntington (1979) in his famous work titled as *Political Order in Changing Societies* describes the violence, instability, and disorder of third world countries. The writer has made an effort to probe the condition of society and tried to identify the reasons for disruption. The indices of political order or its absence are qualified here. He pointed out that economic development depends on the relation between investment and consumption, political order and the development of political institutions and the mobilization of new social forces into politics. In this respect the political participation is very important to develop political participation. However, how political participation can be improved or minimize the gap between politicians and individuals has not been analyzed here.

Jahan (1980) in her famous book '*Bangladesh Politics: Problems and Issues*' analyzed political experiences of Pakistan and Bangladesh. It is a collection of twelve articles where she discusses about the national integration crisis, independence movement and liberation war, post-independence problems like constitutional experiments, electoral participation and political development. These articles were originally written separately with different views and political participation issues are not been analyzed here.

Chowdhury (1995) attempted to analyze in her book '*Constitutional Development in Bangladesh: Stresses and Strains*' on the functioning of constitutional changes and their nature. She described and explained the principle organs of the state: the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. The author discussed constitutionalism in legislature side separate under Mujib, Zia and Ersad regimes. She also analyzed the interruptions and the breakdowns of the democratic process in the several periods when the legislature was either totally abolished, or the powers of the legislature were curtailed. Similarly the writer has discussed the evaluation of the executive system in Bangladesh under all the four regimes as well as the martial law periods in regard to the judiciary. It described the fact that without an independent judiciary, there cannot be any form of democratic government nor can people enjoy fundamental rights. She mostly concentrated her attention on the internal political changes through constitutional means. However, in this respect people's political participation has not been touched here.

### **3. Objectives**

The aim of this research is to understand the reasons for people's political participation in parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh. However, in a parliamentary democracy, people may participate directly as well as indirectly in the political activities. The dimensions of their participation may be seen from different perspective, such as in election campaign, in voting, in political party activities and even in parliament. In this research, people's participation is mainly analyzed here in general elections. However, before going into those, a theoretical basis for participation and explanation close to those in relation to Bangladesh are studied first. Therefore specific objectives for this research can be identified as:

1. To explore the theoretical models of people's participation
2. To explore the resemblance of the theory and practice in Bangladesh

### **4. Methodology and Data**

The aim of this research is to understand the reasons for people's political participation in parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh. However, in a parliamentary democracy, people may participate directly as well as indirectly in the political activities. The dimensions of their participation may be seen from different perspective, such as in election campaign, in voting, in political party activities and even in parliament. In this research, people's participation is mainly analyzed here in general elections. However, before going into those, a theoretical basis for participation and explanation close to those in relation to Bangladesh are studied first. Therefore specific objectives for this research can be identified as:

#### *4.1 Research Approach*

This study is based on empirical research where qualitative research strategy was employed. Although data is presented here in quantitative form and for the analytical purposes some descriptive statistics (i.e., mean and percentage) are used but, no causal relation and statistical significance is seen here.

#### 4.2 Sources of Data Used

As the sources of data both secondary and primary data are used. The sources of secondary data included unpublished theses and published books, reports, journal articles, and newspaper analyses, gazette notifications, election commission reports, bulletin, parliamentary debates, proceedings of parliament, parliament website along with personal observations. Those secondary materials were reviewed thoroughly and the findings are discussed in accordance with the objective of this research.

Primary data was collected using field survey using structured questionnaire. For this purpose, field survey was conducted in Rajshahi City Corporation area. It has been purposively selected because of the convenience for the researcher and it is one of the politically active places in Bangladesh. Total 200 respondents were selected to collect the required primary data. Most of the cases purposive sampling procedure is followed but in some cases simple random sample is also used. Face to face interviews was conducted to collect the data from each of the respondents.

#### 4.3 Sample Size and Selection Procedure for Primary Data

There are 30 wards in the Rajshahi City Corporation. It is quite difficult to cover all the wards. Although there is no rule in quantitative research, however 15% is quite reasonable to be representative. In this respect 5 wards among all 30 wards are selected randomly. These 5 wards are wards 1, 3, 17, 19 and 30. Because of time and resource constraint the total size of respondent as 200 was decided first. Then the sample number from each 5 wards is taken equally as 40. The sample size and the wards from where it is collected with the major area covered as well as the total voters in each ward is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample size from Different Selected Wards

Ward Number	Main Area/Para Covers	Total Number of Voters	Sample Size
1	Kashiadanga, Shahajipara, Raipara, Guripara, Horogram	12099	40
3	Dashpukur, Baharampur, Bilshimla, Laksmipur	14874	40
17	Noadapara,	14622	40
19	Sheroil Colony, Hazrapukur, Chhoto Bongram	18807	40
30	Motihar, Mirzapur, Budhpara, Meherchondi	13636	40
Total Respondents			200

The population for our sample in each ward was all the voters residing in that ward. We could collect the voter list and select the respondent from that list following simple random sampling technique. However, in each ward there were more than 12 thousand voters and from that huge number only 40 respondent may not be representative. Moreover, in this research we are not trying to establish any causal relation and not doing any statistical analysis where random sample is strictly required. Therefore, in this research a unique procedure has been followed to maintain both randomness as well as representativeness of the data. First, the whole area of the ward was taken into consideration and there 40 spots were identified for respondent. The spots were identified in such way that it scattered all over the specific ward covering the whole area.

In each spot, after going there one respondent is taken randomly for the data collection. In selecting the respondent, it is strictly followed that the person reside near that spot and is a valid voter in that area. The respondents have been interviewed by the researcher himself and a trained interviewer. The field survey was conducted in February-April in the year 2018.

The data was collected using a questionnaire survey among the respondents. The structured questionnaire was used to collect the data from the respondents. The questionnaire was designed in accordance with our research

objectives. However, it was finalized by conducting a pilot survey. From the pilot survey, the wording of the questions, their sequence and the options for the answers were finalized. For the pilot survey, 10 respondents from different areas of Rajshahi City Corporation were used and these data were not included in the final data.

#### 4.4 General Characteristics of Sample Respondent

Table 2 shows the general characteristics of the sample respondents. Just to have a flavor of the distribution of the respondents, the respondent characteristics were seen from age, sex, occupation and educational background perspective. For the age we classified them young, middle and old people on the basis of age group as 18-35 years, 36-55 years and above 55 years respectively. It is seen that around 70 percent of the respondents are young and only a few of them are old. As majority of the respondents are young and active, therefore views regarding our research issues are expected to be much authentic. Because being young they are expected to be much more active and observing the political things here. Moreover, it is also seen that more than 90 percent of our respondents are male who are expected to be much more politically conscious, informed and active.

It is also seen from Table 2 that the respondents came from different occupational backgrounds from students to government service holders. The major portion of the respondents' occupations of daily labor, businessmen and students, more than 80 percent. These groups are independent and expected to be well-informed about political situation of the country. These groups are also expected to be politically active. Moreover, from the educational background perspective, the respondent composition is also diversified. However, majority of the respondent, more than 80 percent, were up to higher secondary level of education. The percentage of respondents having high level of education (Honours/degree and masters) is very low and they are also generally less active in politics. The opposite is expected of majority of our respondents.

Table 2: General Characteristics of Sample Respondent

Characteristics	Categories	Frequency	%
Age	Young (18-35 Years)	140	70
	Middle Aged (36-55 Years)	57	28.5
	Old Aged (55+ Years)	3	1.5
	Total	200	100
Sex	Male	187	93.5
	Female	13	6.5
	Total	200	100
Occupation	Government Service	3	1.5
	Non-Government Service	5	2.5
	Business	53	26.5
	Housewife	14	7
	Farmer	9	4.5
	Daily Laborer	94	47
	Student	22	11
Total	200	100	
Education	Illiterate	36	18
	Primary	68	34
	Secondary	47	23.5
	Higher Secondary	19	9.5
	Honors/Degree	29	14.5
	Masters	1	0.5
Total	200	100	

Source: Researcher's field survey, February-April 2018

Figure 1 shows the political characteristics of the respondent. In this case multiple responses were also considered. It is seen that around 12 of the respondents are a member of political party. These number are not so big which is good for our research as their answer might be biased for our research. However, around 68 percent of respondents were members of any voluntary organization. This shows that they are independent and active. Moreover, around

99 percent of respondents acknowledged that they cast vote regularly. This is one of the main political participation through with people's representatives are elected.

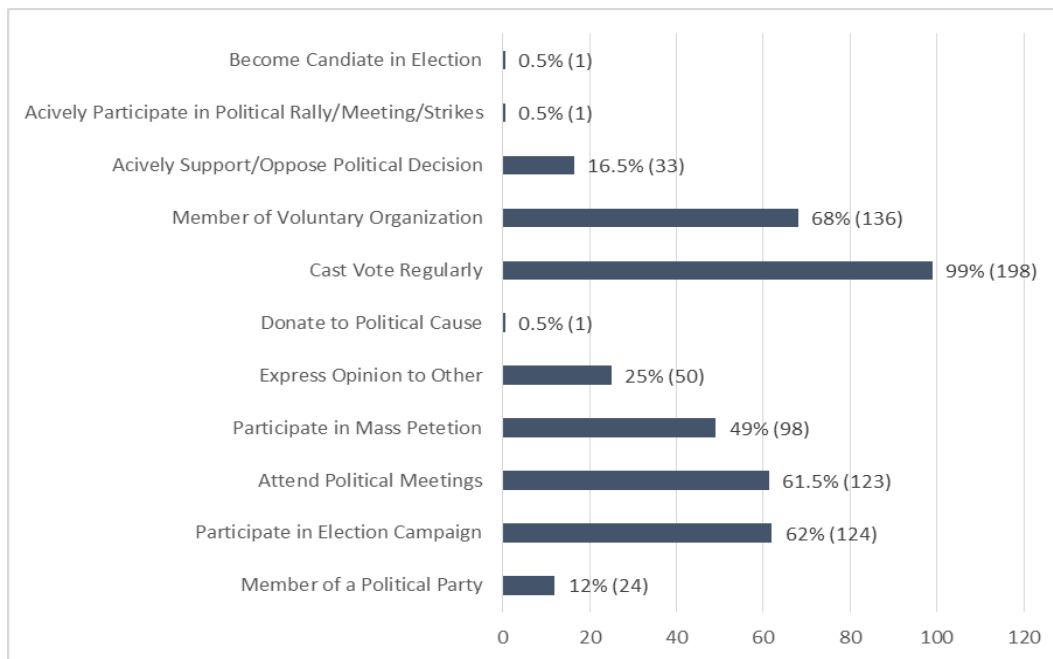


Figure 1: Political Characteristics of Sample Respondent

Source: Researcher's field survey, February-April 2018; Number in the parentheses shows the total number of responses in that category. For these categories multiple responses were there; Total respondent was 200.

Figure 2 also shows respondent characteristics from their participation in different activities. It is seen here that respondents acknowledged that they also *attend political meetings* (around 62 percent respondent), *participate in election campaigns*, (62 percent of respondents), *express opinions to others* (25 percent of respondents), and *actively support/oppose political decisions* (around 17 percent respondent). Moreover, few of them also *become candidates in elections*, *actively participate in political rallies/meetings/strikes*, *donate to political causes* and so on. The point here from the above discussion is that the respondents are very much well-informed and politically active people. Therefore, responses related to our research issues will be very much reliable.

## 5. Findings and Discussion

There are two sections here in accordance with the objectives of this research. Findings related to the theories of people's political participation are discussed first. Then empirically estimated them in the next section.

### 5.1 Theoretical Aspect of People's Participation

There are five theoretical approaches or models of political participation are found in the literature. They are known as '*the civic voluntarism model*', '*the rational choice model*', '*the socio-psychological model*', '*the mobilization model*', and '*the general incentives model*'. In the following sub-sections each of these approaches is discussed in brief. The aim is to examine the strengths and weaknesses of each approach, before estimating them empirically in next section.

#### 5.1.1 The Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM)

The most well-known model of political participation in both theoretical and applied work is '*the Civic Voluntarism Model*'. This model was initially proposed and used by Sidney Verba and Norman Nie in 1972 in their research on political participation in the United States. Later on, Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry Brady (VSB) developed this model and examined the process of political participation in America (Verba,

Schlozman, and Brady, 1995). The central ideas of the civic voluntarism model of participation are captured in the VSB's following quote:

*...conception of the participation process rests upon two main factors: the **motivation** and the **capacity** to take part in political life. A citizen must want to be active. In America, participation is voluntarily activity and, thus, involves choice. However, the choice to take part in a particular way is a constrained one. Various forms of participation impose their own requirements – the time to volunteer in a campaign, the money to cover a check to a political cause, and the verbal skills to compose a convincing letter. Thus, those who wish to take part also need the resources that provide the wherewithal to participate. We consider a third factor as well as. Those who have both the motivation and the capacity to become active are more likely to do so if they are asked. Therefore, we consider the **networks of recruitment** through which requests for political activity are mediated.*

(Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995, p. 3)

From VSB's interpretation, the central idea of civic voluntarism model is that people come voluntarily to participate actively in politics. However, the participatory process rests upon three main factors: the *motivation* to participate, the *capacity* to take part and the *network of recruitment* through which the political activities are channelized (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995; p. 3). Therefore, this model tries to explain the factors that may answer why people do or do not become politically activist. According to this model, in order to participate in political activities, people need a certain level of motivation that, they want to participate voluntarily. People also need the capacity to be active – they must be able to participate. And finally, individuals who are both willing and able to participate are more likely to participate if they are requested to participation.

In explanation of the model VSB argued that people do not take part in politics “because they can’t; because they don’t want to; or because nobody asked” (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995; p. 15). “They can’t” refers to the lack of necessary resources like time to participate, money to spend, and skills to use time and money effectively. “They don’t want to” refers to lack of willingness to political engagement, little interest in politics or little concern with public issues, a belief that activity can make little or no difference, and little or no knowledge about the political process, or other priorities. Lastly, through “nobody asked”, they refer to isolation from the networks of recruitment through which people are mobilized to politics.

In their research, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) used original survey data from 15,000 individuals as well as 2500 personal interviews. They found that all these three factors are helpful in predicting participation. They found that both access to resources, or capacity to take part, and motivation to take part are necessary for political participation. In relation to recruitment or requests for engagement in activity, they found that it acts as a catalyst for participation. They also claimed that capacity and motivation to participate in politics have their roots in non-political settings. In early stage, individuals develop these from family and school. In mature stage, the job, the church and non-political voluntary organizations help. These institutions also confer feelings of psychological engagement with politics. The causality direction goes from involvement in non-political institutions to political activities. Therefore, VSB claimed that people's involvement in family, school, work, voluntary associations, and religion has a significance impact on their participation as voters, campaigners, donors, community activists, and protesters.

Theoretically this model seems very appealing, but it is not free from criticism. Rubenson (2000, p. 17) argued that “the elements of the CVM are important for political participation – indeed they may be necessary for political participation to take place – but they are not sufficient explanation”. He criticized that the model places special emphasis on resources like money, time, and civic skill prior to the other two factors, engagement, and recruitment network. Rubenson (2000) argued that the direction from having resources to participation in politics is not always visible. Even if people possess the resources like time, money and civic skills, they still may be non-participants. He also argued that the political institutions or the setting where political participation takes place may be responsible for affecting participation. He also put emphasis on the different goals that individual participants have when they engage in political acts and the choices they make. Choices between various modes of participation and the choices between who they support may also have some answers for the reasons for participation.



### 5.1.2 The Rational Choice Model (RCM)

The core of *Rational Choice Model* (RCM) is that we the human beings are rational. A rational man is one who always: (1) makes a decision when confronted with a range of alternatives: (2) ranks all the alternatives facing him in order of his preference in such a way that each is either preferred to, indifferent to, or inferior to each other, (3) chooses from the possible alternatives among those which ranks highest in his preference ordering and his preference ranking is transitive<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, the RCM of participation highlights the importance of the role of incentives in an individual's decision to participate (Whiteley, 1995). Individual prefers outcomes with higher utility to those with lower utility and choose actions to receive more highly valued outcomes. Therefore, if an individual participates in political activity that means the participation option is preferred than other available options.

However, the rational choice theory applied to the task of explaining political participation faces a key problem, the so called paradox of participation (Whiteley, 1995). It is argued with the proposition that rational actors will not participate in collective action to achieve common goals because the products of such collective action are public goods. Public goods have two properties; *jointness of supply* and *impossibility of exclusion*. Jointness of supply implies that one's consumption does not reduce the amount available to anyone else, and the impossibility of exclusion means that a person cannot be prevented from consuming the good once it is provided, even if he did not contribute to its provision.

The rational choice theory has played an important role in the analyses of political participation ever since Down's (1957) seminal work on party competition. Although rational choice theory has deep roots in economics, it has also been used in political philosophy which serves as a base to explain some individual political behavior (Oppenheimer, 2008). However, it is also clear that a purely rational choice account provides an incomplete explanation of political action.

### 5.1.3 The Social Psychological Model (SPM)

According to the social psychological model (SPM), individuals' psychological orientation such as political interest, political efficacy, trust in government, and civic duty are the important factors to influence political participation (Leighley and Vedlitz, 1999). This model argued that there are three kinds of variables that function as the basic determinates of behavior: (1) attitudes toward the behavior; (2) normative beliefs (both personal and social); and (3) motivation to comply with the norms.

Here the attitudes toward behavior are the product of individual's beliefs and the consequences of his behavior (Muller, 1979). Thus an individual may not get involved although he or she may expect high rewards from participation but their sense of political efficacy is low. Normative beliefs refer to an individual's justifiability of his behavior as well as his perception of other significant persons. Motivation to comply with the norms reflects factors like individual's personality and his perception. However, norms could be internal or private norms and external or public norms. Private norms are individual's own value that influence participation. For example, if a person feels that a law is unjust, then this will stimulate him to participate in protest activity designed to change the law. Such private norms are largely a product of socialization that operates over a longtime scale and are influenced by the early experiences of the individual. Public norms are determined by other people whose opinions they value. Hence other people whose views are important to them will further motivate them to be active.

Muller et al. (1991) criticized that in this model, equal weight is given to actions that benefit to society and to actions that benefit the individual. It is implicitly assumed that individuals will treat collective benefits in the same way as individual benefits. But in reality we know that how these variables can be antagonistic to one another. Muller et al. (1991) also argued that political efficacy plays an important role in this model, which is subjective,

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<sup>1</sup> If A prefers to B, and B prefers to C then A prefers to C.

not objective in type. There is a big difference between subjective and objective political efficacy in influencing participation behaviour. Therefore, social psychological models provide an incomplete account of political participation. However, the SPM has been used with some success to account for unorthodox types of participation in various democratic systems.

#### 5.1.4 The Mobilization Model (MM)

The mobilization model (MM) asserts that participation is a response to contextual environment and mobilization of the political campaign. Mobilization through political parties, campaign, campaign spending, groups, and political discussion are the reasons for people's participation (Leighley, 1995; Cox and Munger, 1989; Wielhouwer and Lockerbie, 1994; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993). Through formal institutional (e.g. party, campaign, group) mobilization or informal social mobilization (e.g. political discussion) people are more likely to engage in political behavior. Thus, mobilization acts as a mechanism that mediates the relationship between socioeconomic status and political participation.

Although the mobilization model appeals very much to explain people's participation in political activities, it cannot explain the reasons for non-participation behavior. Rather it is argued that the mobilization model does assist the other three theoretical models of participation through mobilization phenomenon (Leighley, 1995). For example, in the rational choice model when individuals are deciding whether they are going to participate, then mobilization would only help the rational actor to decide about participate if it provides new information relevant to the cost benefit calculation of choice. However, it is not clear why some mobilization activities (e.g. canvassing) should induce individuals to participate, as most of the cases it provides highly biased information from strangers. In the conclusion, it can be said that the mobilization model highlights that of why people should change their behavior in response to the efforts of others to persuade them to do so. But overall the mobilization model cannot provide a complete theory of participation.

#### 5.1.5 The General Incentives Model (GIM)

The *General Incentives Model* (GIM) of participation tries to explain the participation from the incentive perspective. The essence of the model is that individuals need incentives to ensure that they participate in politics. Some argued that high-intensity types of participation, such as canvassing, attending meetings, and running for office could explain this model properly (Back, Teorell and Westholm, 2011). However, Back et al. (2011) argued that the GIM has considered a wider array of incentives than narrowly defined individual incentives that appear in rational choice models. In that sense, this model is a synthesis of rational choice and social psychological accounts of participation.

It can be seen that a number of incentives exist to promote political participation, which are independent of each other. Broadly, they are *collective* and *selective* incentives. Back et al. (2011) argued that the collective incentives are based on the provision of collective goods, the policy goals of a political party. For example - individuals motivated by collective incentives may believe that their party will reduce unemployment, improve health service, defend the nation, promote the interests of people like themselves and generally implement policies that they favor. Collective incentives to join or be active in a political party are of two kinds: positive and negative. People will participate not only because they want to promote a particular policy goals but also because they oppose the policy goals of other parties. Thus positive incentives involve promoting collective goods, whereas negative incentives involve opposing collective 'goods'.

The *selective incentives* refer to motives concerned with goals that are private rather than collective, and these may be important for understanding why some people join and become active in a party. Selective incentives are of three types: *process*, *outcome* and *ideological incentive*. For some people, the political *process* is interesting and stimulating in itself, regardless of the outcomes or goals. For some people high intensity participation is way of meeting likeminded and interesting people. Tullock (1971) argued that this type of selective incentive may have entertainment value. Citizens who vote, campaign, lobby or demonstrate may find the activity exiting or enjoy the company of other participant (Back, Teorell and Westholm, 2011). Opp (2001) even argued to release discontent

is one's incentive being involved in political protest. *Outcome* incentives refer to motives to achieve certain personal goals. For example, an individual participant might wish to become local councilor/mayor/leader/party representatives. Yet others might be interested in business connections that party membership can bring, particularly in areas where the party is strong in local government. Lastly, selective incentives is ideology that is derived from the law of curvilinear disparity proposed by John D. May (1973). In the context of motives of involvement this argued that individuals join a party because of their ideological beliefs. Joining a party allows them to interact with like-minded people.

## 5.2 People's Participation in Bangladesh

From the above discussion, we have seen about the theoretical explanation of people's participation. Now here from the survey data it is been trying to see what is in reality happening in Bangladesh regarding people's participation.

### 5.2.1 Reasons for People's Political Participation

Figure 2 shows the reasons for people's participation in political activities in Bangladesh. It is seen here that around 37 percent of the respondents did not participate in political activities. Therefore, around 63 percent of respondents were acknowledged to participate in political activities. They have been asked regarding the reasons for participation. In response, the reasons acknowledged by the respondents are a *citizen's duty*, *influenced by friends*, *to collectively change the country*, *to support a political party*, and *for the country*. However, a few of them acknowledged that *just for curiosity* was the reason to participate in political activity. It is found that majority of those who are active participant are acknowledging that this is they are doing because *for the country*. The second highest portion acknowledging to *support a political party*. We can say if someone supports a political party that means he/she supports the ideology, workings, and manifestos of that party. And we can assume that these are believed to be good for the country. Moreover, if we add the reasons *as citizen's duty* and *collectively change the country* then, we can see that for more than 80 percent of political activist the reason for political participation is *for the country*.

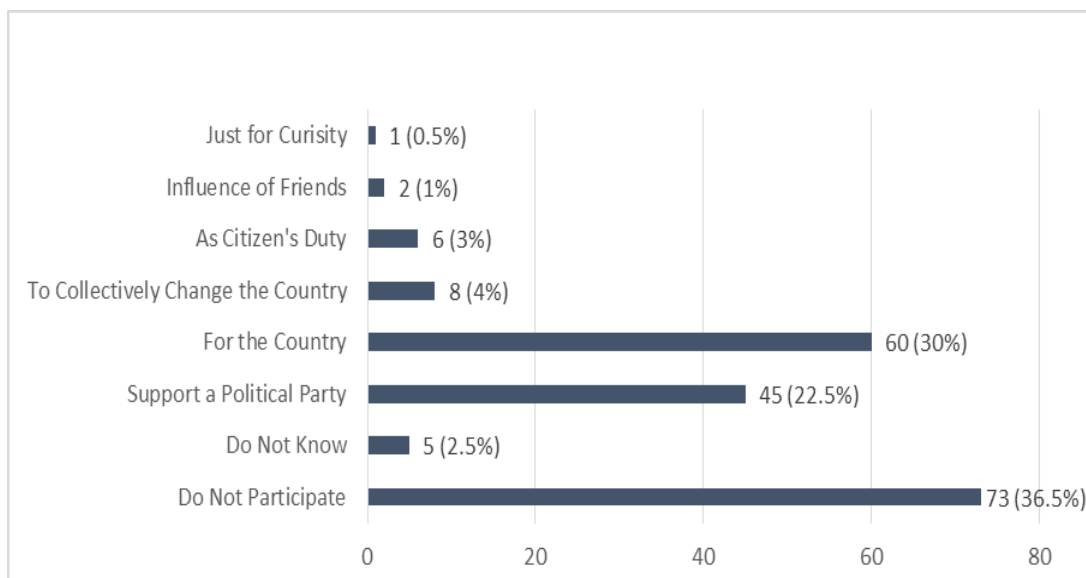


Figure 2: Reasons for Peoples Participation in Political Activities

Source: Researcher field survey; N=200,

From the above discussion, we may derive that it is the people's belief about the consequence of their participation influence them to participate in political activities in Bangladesh. The belief that their participation may help to change the country, develop the country or in general it is for the country. Therefore, from our theoretical models that we have, we may say that the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM) is very much close to explaining the people's political participation among the respondents. In our case here, for the respondents, the evidence on *motivational*

and *recruitment* factors is clearly seen. However, let us see what reasons identified by the respondent who do not participate.

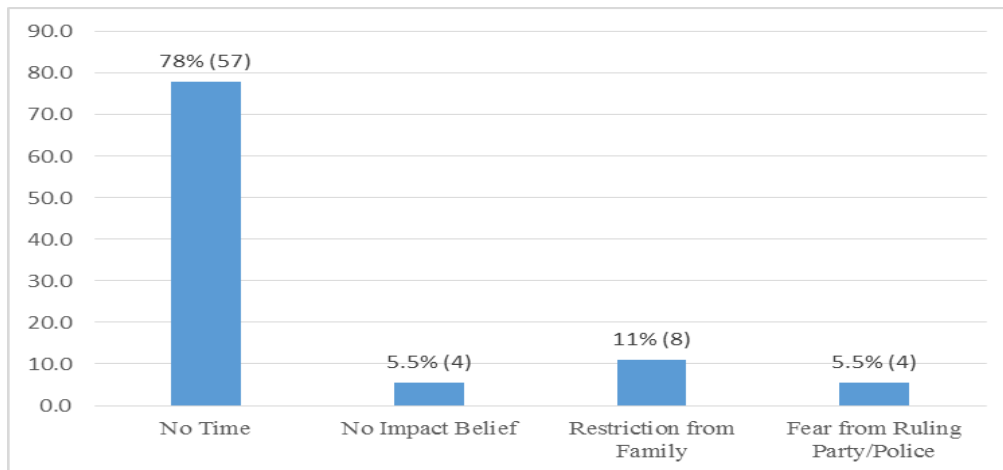


Figure 3: Reasons for Non-participation in Political Activities

Source: Researcher field survey

### 5.2.2 Reasons for People's Non-Participation

Figure 3 shows the reasons for not participating identified by those respondent who did not participate in political activities. They have identified four main reasons that refrain from political participation. Those reasons are as *no time*, *no impact belief*, *restriction from family*, and *fear from ruling party/police*. It is also seen here that majority of the non-participants, around 80 percent, have identified as they do not have time to do participate in political activities. In relation to the CVM, people do not take part in politics *because they cannot* which we found here. Moreover, other reasons are also indicated to either motivation or capacity factors. The *no impact belief* is related to motivation whereas *restriction from family* and *fear from ruling party/police* are related with restricting *capacity* to participation. Therefore, in this respect also our findings suggest that the Civil Voluntarism Model is explaining the political participation in Bangladesh.

### 5.2.3 Reasons for People's Casting Vote

We have tried to investigate a particular political activity, casting vote, which is a bit difficult to explain according to the literature discussed above. Figure 4 shows the factors that people considered while casting vote. People were asked questions regarding this and allowed them to respond with multiple responses. It is found that the factors that people consider while casting vote are *candidate's quality only*, *political party only*, *both party and candidate*, *money gain from candidate*, and *heavy campaign*. Among these, majority of the respondents considered first three factors for casting vote. That means people consider the candidate, the party to which he belongs, and both.

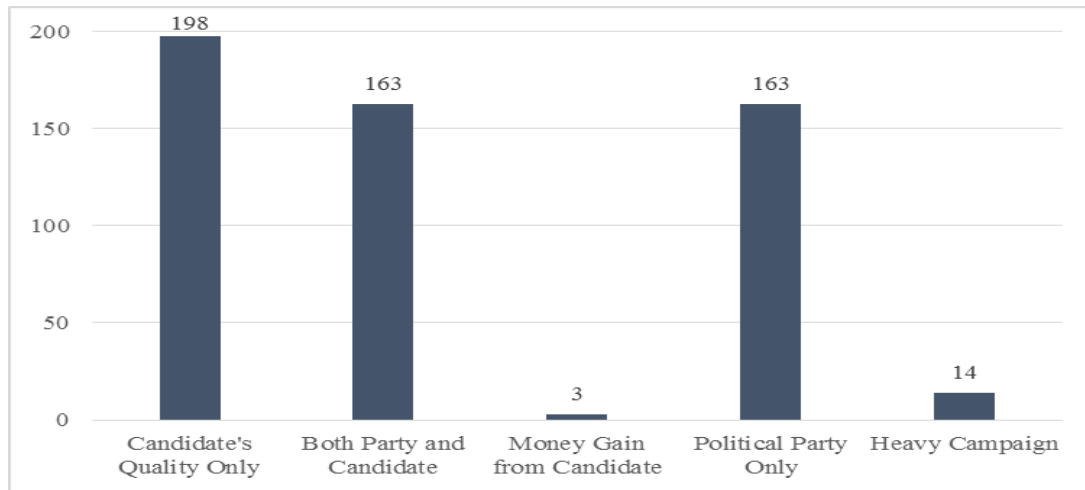


Figure 4: Factors People Considered while Casting Vote

Source: Researcher's field survey

People were also asked to identify the main/factors among the factors that they considered while casting vote. The Table 3 shows the people's responses regarding the main factors that they consider while casting vote. From this it is again seen that as the main factor majority of the respondents, 70 percent, consider both candidates as well as the party to which the candidate belongs. It seems that people might believe that the candidates or the party can bring the change or do well whatever they are supposed to do and that is why they are casting votes. It is the motive that influences people to cast vote for a candidate. Therefore, again we found the evidence of the CVM to explain the casting vote. Although money gain and heavy campaigns are found as factors but only a few, negligible number of respondents said about them.

Table 3: People's Main Consideration while Casting Vote

Consideration	Frequency	Percentage
Candidate's Quality Only	53	26.5
Both Candidate's Quality and Party	140	70
Money Gain from Candidate	2	1
Political Party Only	5	2.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Researcher's field survey

In this respect, Figure 5 shows the respondent voting behavior toward political party. The idea was to see the motivation toward political behavior in respect to liking of the political party. It is found here that majority of the respondents, more than 80 percent (163 out of 200 respondents), *likes a political party*. That means people individually like the ideology or the activities of a particular party. It shows that this likeness gives them a *motivation* to participate and the *network of recruitment* that helps people to participate in political activities. Moreover, in support of political party, the respondents acknowledged that although they consider the other aspects (like quality of the candidate) but most of the cases majority of them, around 96 percent, cast their vote for their favorite political party's candidate. Therefore from this perspective, we may also derive that the political participation is explained through the CVM.

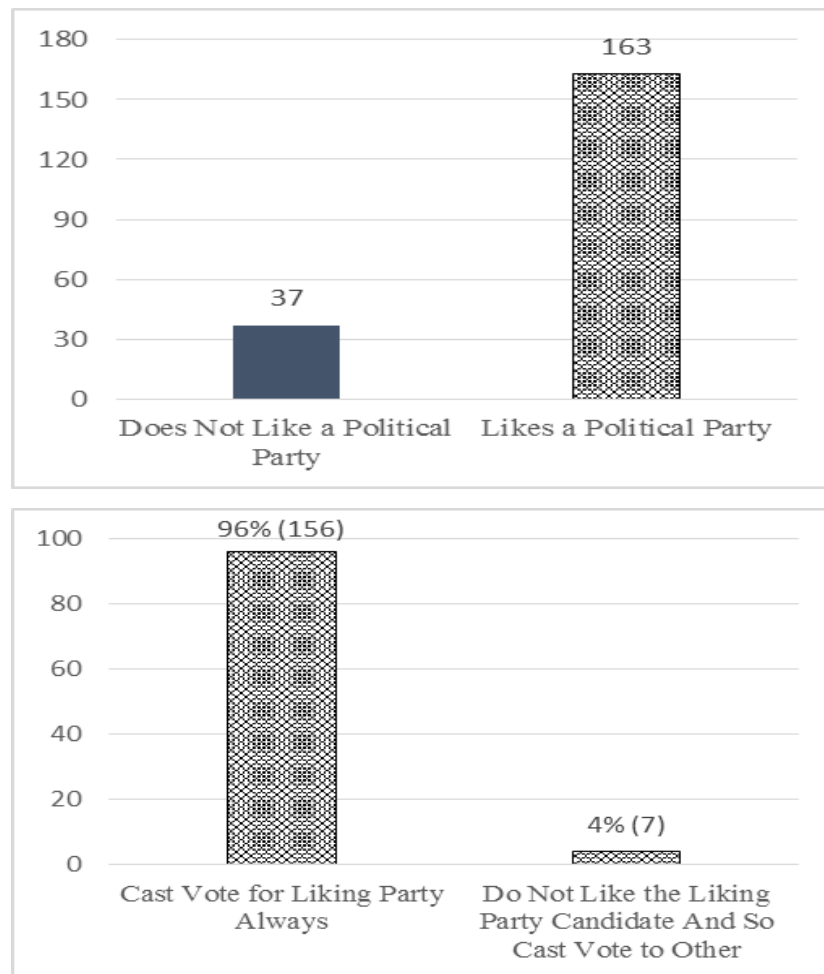


Figure 5: Voting Behavior towards Political Party

Source: Researcher's field survey

#### 5.2.4 Reasons for People's Not Casting Votes

Figure 6 shows the reasons for not casting vote that the respondent acknowledged in our survey. It is the main reason respondent identified for which they did not cast their vote in any previous election. It is seen that majority of respondents did not go for voting because of *fear of violence or prevention caused by some group*. In explanation of the CVM, Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) argued that people do not take part in political activities 'because they can't; because they don't want to; or because nobody asked'. Therefore, in our case *fear to go or prevention to go to vote* is nothing but 'they cannot' go for participation, which is related with the CVM. Similarly, another reason identified by respondent as *didn't manage time* is also refers to 'they cannot' or *capability* reason of CVM. Moreover, the other reason identified as *no impact belief* refers to lack of willingness to engage political activity from a belief that activity can make little or no difference which is also *motivational* reason of CVM.

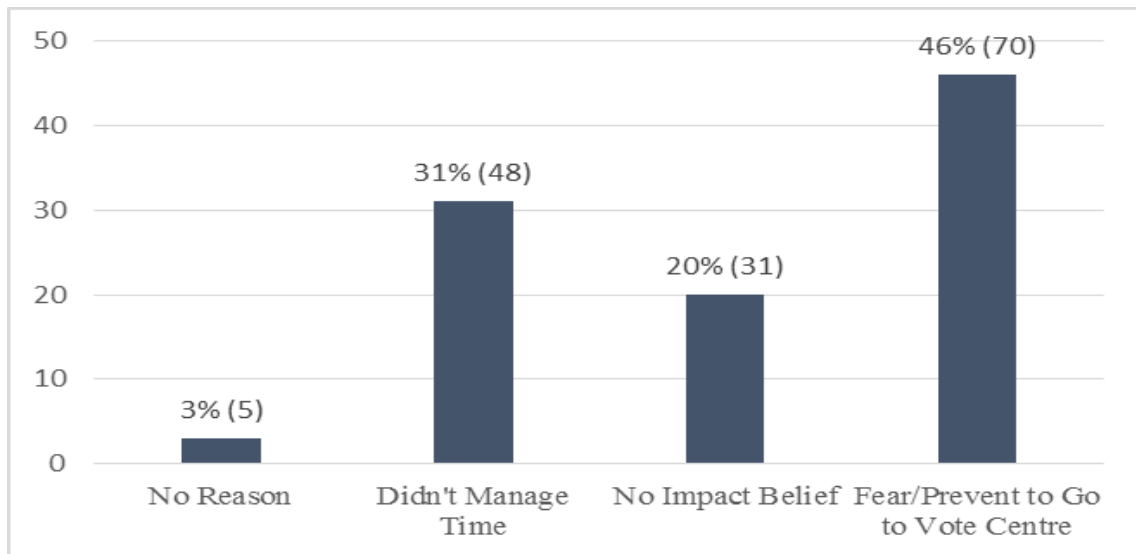


Figure 6: Reasons for Not Casting Vote (n=154)

Source: Researcher's field survey

## 6. Conclusion

This paper is about the explanation for people's political participation. For that purpose, different theories explaining the people's participation are reviewed first. Then, we tried to explain the participation in Bangladesh using the survey data from the respondents on the basis of framework we get from different models. In the case of theories related to people's participation, five models were found in the literature. They are *the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM)*, *the Rational Expectation Model (REM)*, *the Social Psychological Model (SPM)*, *the Mobilization Model (MM)*, and *the General Incentive Model (GIM)*. It is found that each of the model has some strengths as well as weaknesses to explain people's participation. On the basis of framework we get from different model it is found that the Civic Voluntarism Model to some extent explains the people's participation in Bangladesh.

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