



DISTRIBUTIONAL PATTERN OF AMENITIES AND SERVICES IN PLATEAU REGION OF RURAL BENGAL: A BLOCK LEVEL STUDY.

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Abstract : The present article focuses on the importance of amenities in rural areas of West Bengal with special reference to plateau region comprising of the districts of Puruliya, Bankura, Paschim Medinipur, Barddhaman, Birbhum. The access to basic amenities and facilities like education, drinking water, health facilities, banks and credit systems, power supply etc is essential for a better quality of Life. The availability of such facilities in a village has multiple level impact on health, education and economic life of a person. A block level attempt has been made to identify the distributional pattern of rural amenities in rural areas. A suitable index has been used to combine several indicators and observe different zones of variation of available amenities.

Keywords: Rural amenities, education, drinking water, health facilities, banks and credit systems, power supply, plateau region, distributional pattern.

1. INTRODUCTION:

As per Census of India, 2011, 68 percent of rural population in West Bengal resides in villages and rest 32 percent resides in urban areas. The exponential growth of population is very natural in both the region. The development of a Nation or a region is severely dependent on distribution of infrastructure, facilities and amenities to its people for a better quality of life.

According to scholars "Rural people constantly face locational disadvantage due to their being in rural area where the access to basic amenities is difficult".¹ "The uneven distribution of rural development is very common in the rural areas of India. Even in a better-off state, the condition of living is backward in many pockets of the district".²

There was an improvement in access to basic amenities in rural India during 2001–2011 as indicated by Census data. "The data shows fall in percentages of deprived households—from 71.3% to 65% for drinking water, 78.1% to 69.3% for latrine facility, 56.5% to 44.7% for electricity and 96.09% to 94.2% for closed drainage connectivity for waste water outlet in the premise".³ Deller et al. (2001)⁴ has observed that different types of amenities can influence growth in population, employment and per capita income in subtle and unique ways.

In this context the present article has focused mainly on the rural plateau region, comprising of the western part of West Bengal. The region comprises of the districts - Puruliya, Bankura, Paschim Medinipur, Barddhaman, Birbhum of West Bengal. Among these districts, selected blocks comprise of the plateau region. The distributional pattern of availability of amenities and facilities in the plateau region is assumed to be different from that of plains mainly due to geographical reasons. Hence an attempt has been made to look into the pattern of distribution of amenities and facilities in the rural plateau region of West Bengal.

2. OBJECTIVE:

- To identify distributional pattern of amenities and services in rural areas.

¹ Motkuri, V. (2008). Deprivation of basic amenities in Andhra Pradesh. Online at <https://mpr.aub.uni-muenchen.de/48445/> MPRA Paper No. 48445, posted 20 Jul 2013 15:02 UTC.

² Adhikary, B., & Rath, K. C. (2021). Inequalities in rural amenities and services: A study in southern part of West Bengal, India. *Geographic*, 16(1), 13-24.

³ Kumar Arjun . 2015. "Disparities in Access to Basic Amenities across Caste, Ethnicity and Classes in Rural and Urban India", Social Change and Development, Vol. XII No.1, pg. 25

⁴ Deller, Steven C., Tsung-Hsiu Sue Tsai, David W. Marcouiller, and Donald B.K. English. 2001. "The Role of Amenities and Quality of Life in Rural Economic Growth." *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 83(2): pg. 352-365.

3. DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY:

The block level, Census of India 2011 data has been used for the present study. The District Census Handbook, Appendix-I, village level data has been used to conduct a block level study from the districts of Puruliya, Bankura, Paschim Medinipur, Bardhaman, Birbhum of West Bengal. The total number of 61 blocks have been used for this study (Map no.1).

In this study 23 indicators of amenities and facilities (Table no.1) have been used to construct respective indexes and a composite amenities index to assess the distributional pattern of amenities and services at the block level. The details are as follows: The following analysis has been conducted:

$$1. \text{ Composite index (weighted method): } \{(i_1 \times w_1) + (i_2 \times w_2) + (i_3 \times w_3)\} / (w_1 + w_2 + w_3)$$

where i_1 = value of indicator 1, i_2 = value of indicator 2, i_3 = value of indicator 3

w_1 = value of weight 1, w_2 = value of weight 2, w_3 = value of weight 3

- Multiplying variable with weight
- Sum of multiplied variable
- Dividing by total weight to form index
- Adding all the index and dividing by total number of index to form composite index.

Table no.1 List of Indicators

Sl no.	Index Category	Indicators* (23)
1	Education	1. Primary school 2. Middle school 3. Senior Secondary school
2	Health	4. Primary health centre 5. Primary health sub centre 6. Maternity Child Welfare Centre 7. Medical Practitioner with MBBS 8. Medical Practitioner (with other degree) 9. Medical Shop
3	Communication	10. Post office 11. Sub post office, Landlines, 12. Mobile phone coverage 13. Internet cafes/ Common service centre
4	Transport	14. Village roads-pucca road 15. Bus service (public/private) 16. Taxi & vans 17. Tractors.
5	Banking	18. Commercial & co-operative banks 19. Agricultural credit societies
6	Miscellaneous	20. Power 21. Newspaper
7	Drinking water	22. Hand pump 23. Tubewell

* Indicate percentage of villages with different amenities and facilities

4. FINDINGS AND RESULTS:

The mean is another measure of the center of the distribution of the data which is 37. The standard deviation determine how spread out the data is from the mean. A higher standard deviation value indicates greater spread in the data. The standard deviation is 5.6769 (Table no.2).

The block level pattern of *Amenities & Services Index (ASI)* (Table no. 3) clearly shows uneven distribution of amenities and facilities in the plateau region of West Bengal. It shows more than one third of the blocks are below the mean value of 37. This indicates rest blocks to be in a favorable position of above the mean value. The map no.2 shows better performing plateau region of Birbhum, Bardhaman. The district of Puruliya, Bankura shows central cluster of medium performing region. The southern part of the plateau mainly comprises of the poorly performing continuous belt which is of serious concern. Therefore planners and policy makers must focus on the developmental activities of this region.

Table no. 2 Descriptive Statistics

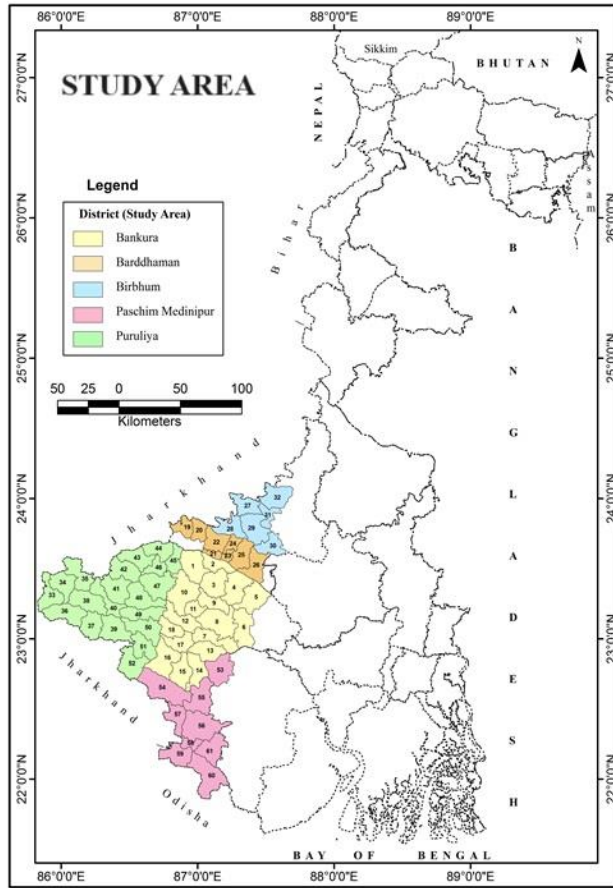
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	CV
Amenities & Services Index	61	24.6	52.8	37.0	5.6769	15.34

Table no. 3 Blockwise rural amenities & services Index of West Bengal, 2011

<i>Amenities & Services Index (ASI)</i>	<i>Frequency (No. of blocks)</i>	<i>%</i>
High (46 above)	2	3
Medium (37 - 46)	30	49
MEAN 37		
Low (Below 37)	27	44
<i>Total N</i>	<i>61</i>	<i>100</i>

Source: Computed from various District Census Handbook, 2011

Map no.1 Study area



Map no.2 Amenities & facilities distribution

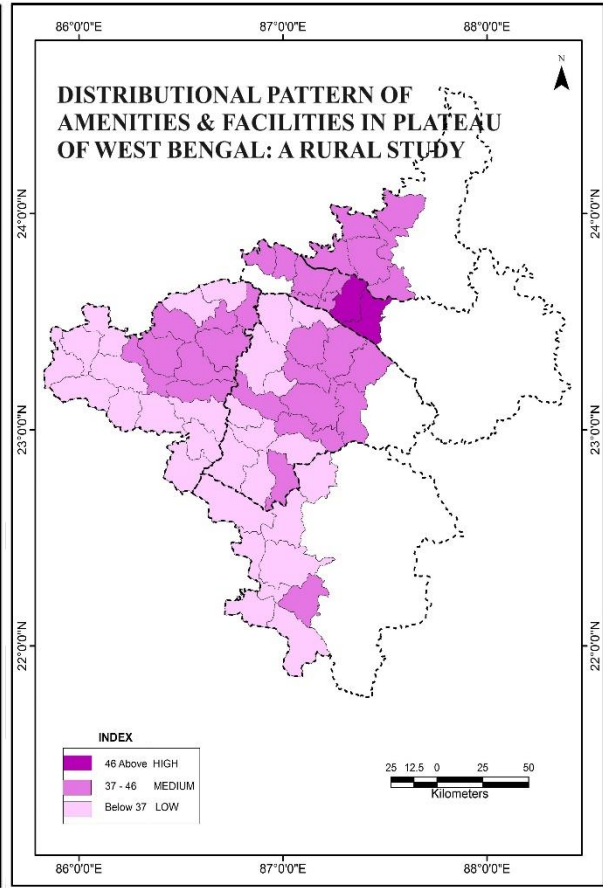


Table no.4 Rank wise Amenities and Services Index.

SL NO.	BLOCK	DISTRICT	ASI	Rank	SL NO.	BLOCK	DISTRICT	ASI	Rank
1	0122-Kanksa	Barddhaman	53	1	33	0228-Raghunathpur - II	Puruliya	36	33
2	0121-Faridpur Durgapur	Barddhaman	47	2	34	0219-Simlapal	Bankura	36	34
3	0119-Ondal	Barddhaman	46	3	35	0204-Mejhia	Bankura	36	35
4	0118-Raniganj	Barddhaman	46	4	36	0290-Garbata - II	Pasch. Medinipur	36	36
5	0120-Pandabeswar	Barddhaman	46	5	37	0230-Neturia	Puruliya	35	37
6	0116-Barabani	Barddhaman	44	6	38	0236-Arsha	Puruliya	35	38
7	0112-Illambazar	Birbhum	44	7	39	0206-Chhatna	Bankura	35	39
8	0211-Sonamukhi	Bankura	44	8	40	0208-Bankura - I	Bankura	34	40
9	0115-Salanpur	Barddhaman	43	9	41	0223-Raipur	Bankura	34	41
10	0117-Jamuraia	Barddhaman	43	10	42	0303-Gopiballavpur - II	Pasch. Medinipur	34	42
11	0114-Khoyrasol	Birbhum	42	11	43	0220-Khatra	Bankura	34	43
12	0231-Santuri	Puruliya	42	12	44	0222-Ranibundh	Bankura	34	44
13	0224-Sarenga	Bankura	41	13	45	0221-Hirbandh	Bankura	33	45
14	0104-Mohammad Bazar	Birbhum	41	14	46	0203-Saltora	Bankura	33	46
15	0227-Para	Puruliya	40	15	47	0240-Balarampur	Puruliya	33	47
16	0106-Suri - I	Birbhum	40	16	48	0225-Jaipur	Puruliya	32	48
17	0217-Onda	Bankura	40	17	49	0238-Jhalda - II	Puruliya	32	49
18	0218-Taldangra	Bankura	40	18	50	0243-Manbazar - II	Puruliya	31	50
19	0235-Puncha	Puruliya	39	19	51	0237-Jhalda - I	Puruliya	31	51
20	0216-Vishnupur	Bankura	39	20	52	0239-Bagmundi	Puruliya	31	52
21	0233-Hura	Puruliya	39	21	53	0304-Gopiballavpur - I	Pasch. Medinipur	30	53
22	0113-Dubrajpur	Birbhum	38	22	54	0241-Barabazar	Puruliya	30	54
23	0105-Rajnagar	Birbhum	38	23	55	0301-Jhargram	Pasch. Medinipur	29	55
24	0209-Bankura - II	Bankura	38	24	56	0242-Manbazar - I	Puruliya	29	56
25	0210-Barjora	Bankura	38	25	57	0305-Nayagram	Pasch. Medinipur	29	57
26	0306-Sankrail	Pasch. Medinipur	38	26	58	0244-Bundwan	Puruliya	28	58
27	0234-Purulia - I	Puruliya	37	27	59	0289-Binpur - I	Pasch. Medinipur	28	59
28	0229-Raghunathpur - I	Puruliya	37	28	60	0302-Jamboni	Pasch. Medinipur	27	60
29	0205-Gangajalghati	Bankura	37	29	61	0288-Binpur - II	Pasch. Medinipur	25	61
30	0232-Kashipur	Puruliya	37	30					
31	0226-Purulia - II	Puruliya	37	31					
32	0207-Indpur	Bankura	37	32					

5. CONCLUSION:

We can conclude from the above discussion that the distribution of amenities and services in plateau region of rural Bengal is uneven. The plateau region is an extension of Chotanagpur plateau, which is rich in forest resources, mineral resources, the soil is not very fertile like plains and hence the level of urbanization, density of population is low compared to plains. In these conditions the economic development of the region is low hence such uneven amenities and services pattern can be observed. We have clearly identified patterns of existing lower distributed areas in the southern rural areas of West Bengal comprising mainly of Paschim Medinipur, South Puruliya, South Bankura where more planning and selected region based intervention is required.

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