
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Why Anti-Corruption Reforms Succeed or Fail: An Institutional Analysis in Bangladesh

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| ABSTRACT

Anti-corruption reform has been widely practiced in developing nations, but the reforms have not been effective enough in the reduction of corrupt practices, as seen in Bangladesh. This paper explores the reasons behind the success of certain reforms and the failure of others through the application of a qualitative institutional analysis by discussing the relationship between regulatory, normative, and cognitive institutional aspects. Government reports, policy documents, academic and media investigations were used to gather data, and thematic analysis of the data was performed to identify patterns affecting the outcome of reforms. The results indicate that commitment to leadership, digital transparency, and international accountability pressures are beneficial to improve the effectiveness of reform, and political interference, bureaucratic resistance, and lack of enforcement are negative factors that reduce success. Reforms do well when the formal policies are in line with the institutional capacity, administrative support, and socio-political legitimacy. The theoretical contribution of this study is the application of the institutional theory in explaining an uneven reform performance, and the practical contribution in terms of governance approaches that can enhance anti-corruption efforts in a setting where political and administrative bottlenecks are predetermined.

| KEYWORDS

Anticorruption reform, governance, institutional capacity, Bangladesh, public administration.

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1. Introduction

Corruption is one of the greatest issues of governance across the globe, as it weakens democratic institutions, in addition to poor public trust, and hindering sustainable development. Corruption in most of the low- and middle-income countries alters how the people resources are allocated, diminishes the quality of the public services, and constrains the performance of development policies that led to inclusive growth. The Corruption Perceptions Index provided by Transparency International illustrates that most nations are ranked below the middle of the global integrity scale, which signifies that there are overall flaws in governance and accountability within those nations (Heeks & Mathisen, 2012; Zaloznaya & Lynn, 2021). In this regard, Bangladesh exemplifies a prominent situation where corruption remains a major issue in the public administration, procurement, judicial, and service delivery despite the frequent institutional reforms (Zafarullah & Huque, 2021).

The history of corruption in Bangladesh is traced back to administrative precursors of the colonial period, and it has developed under complicated political and bureaucratic interactions since independence. Corruption has, over time, been protected by the socio-political system in the government system and has also influenced daily relationships between citizens and state agencies. Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) reports regularly reveal abnormalities in

government agencies, such as requests for informal payments in exchange for administrative approvals and public services (Sakib, 2019). Corruption is also quite pronounced in areas like land administration, where transparent processes and unofficial connections destroy tenure security and strengthen social disparities (Md. Hafizur Rahman et al., 2024; Sakib et al., 2022). The same issues of governance can also be observed in the area of environmental and forest management, where corruption allows illegal extraction of the resources and invading into restricted lands (Miah & Islam, 2021). Moreover, other policies like periodic amnesty of unknown wealth have been said to promote corruption and financial abnormalities instead of enhancing economic transparency and accountability.

In order to deal with these issues, a number of institutional reforms have been introduced in Bangladesh to enhance the desire to deal with anti-corruption governance. One of the most significant actions was the creation of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) as an independent institution to conduct investigation of corruption and other preventative measures throughout the institutions (Parnini, 2011; Sakib, 2020). Another force of reform in the international development partners is the promotion of institutional models as are practiced in other countries like Singapore and Hong Kong (Sakib, 2020). Nevertheless, these reforms are at times an indicator of institutional isomorphism whereby externally advanced structures are incorporated and without acclimatizing them to local political and administrative circumstances (Sakib, 2019). Along with the institutional reforms, there are digital governance projects and public procurement transparency systems have been introduced to limit administrative discretion and enhance accountability based on technology systems (Khorana et al., 2024). Other programs aimed at enhancing administrative accountability, like the National Integrity Strategy (NIS), have tried to assert greater control over the government institutions (Doig & Mclvor, 2003). However, these reforms have often been hampered by poor institutional capacity, cumbersome bureaucracy, and even endemic political interference in the administrative system (Md Nazirul Islam Sarker, 2017; Shafiqul Huque, 2011).

Regardless of these institutional interventions, corruption is still rampant in Bangladesh, which points to a profound gap between the official implementation of the anti-corruption reforms and their living implementation. The key issue is not hence merely to create institutions of anti-corruption, but to make sure that these mechanisms are functioning with enough autonomy, integrity, and enforcement power. In reality, political interests, bureaucratic culture, and informal networks of patronage usually determine the effectiveness of a reform initiative and shape the administrative behavior and undermine the accountability systems (Ankamah & Manzoor E Khoda, 2018; Gemperle, 2018; Quah, 2021). As a result of this, corruption continues not merely due to institutional weaknesses but also due to formal governance reforms often coexisting with informal practices that defeat their intended effects (Rashid & Johara, 2020). In this light, this research paper aims to examine how the institutional aspects of the Bangladesh anti-corruption reform initiatives succeed or fail with reference to the interplay between the formal governance structures and informal politics and administration.

This research presents contributions to the literature of governance and public administration in three ways. To begin with, it contributes to the theoretical knowledge by introducing an institutional approach that explains the unequal results of anti-corruption reforms in developing countries. Second, it offers empirical evidence on the interaction of formal institutions, informal administrative practices, and political incentives in Bangladesh. Third, it lists major structural obstacles to the effectiveness of reforms and states the importance of institutional capacity, political commitment, and administrative accountability in determining the outcome of governance.

2. Literature Review

The issue of anti-corruption reforms has been a constant concern all over the world since corruption is something that is corrupting the global administration, economic stability, and social justice (Hindess, 2005). Various studies have been able to evaluate the success and failures of these reforms in various settings, highlighting the positive and negative aspects of the reforms.

2.1 The International Studies of Anti-Corruption Reforms

Efforts to combat corruption in the world have taken various approaches, including the establishment of special agencies to general measures in the sector, in order to enhance transparency, accountability, and effectiveness of

the administrative system. Another strategy that has been highly embraced in most countries, particularly in fragile and conflict-ridden states, is the creation of anti-corruption agencies (ACAs), which are supposed to indicate the willingness of the government in curbing corruption, to increase the legitimacy of the state, and to increase the trust that people have in governance (Gemperle, 2018; Kuipers, 2021). The most notable ones are the Singaporean Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau and the Hongkong-based Independent Commission Against Corruption that are regularly referenced as international standards because of their organized enforcement, prevention, and long-term credibility among the population (Sakib, 2020). The success of such models has permeated the institutional design of many other states, and states have been induced to institutional isomorphism where they take on the same organizational forms, legal systems, and procedures without necessarily tailoring them to the local political, administrative, and even social culture (Carothers, 2022).

Although all these global strategies have been adopted, the results of the anti-corruption reforms have been quite inconsistent. The systematic reviews of the public sector reforms show that many of them are carried out, but few of them have strong empirical studies of their effect on decreasing corruption (Mugellini et al., 2021). Various interventions, such as donor funded procurement reforms, aim at bridging the governance gaps, as well as enhance transparency. Nevertheless, the reforms may inadvertently push out the corrupt practice instead of eradicating it, as those engaging in the practice may move to a less regulated space or learn to evade the new regulations (Dávid-Barrett & Fazekas, 2020). Moreover, the effective implementation of ACAs in a certain environment does not imply similar effective results in different settings because the traditional basis of their success relies on institutional strength, political approval, independence of law, and the overall administrative culture. It is important to note here that, in addition to the formal forms of anti-corruption reforms, it is necessary to develop the same in the context of how it interacts with the current institutional and socio-political settings.

2.2 Why anti-corruption reforms are unsuccessful

Although the idea of anti-corruption reforms is widely propagated, there are a number of reasons as to why they tend to be ineffective. One of the major challenges is political interference since the lack of consistent political will weakens the planning, execution, and implementation of reforms (Johnston*, 2013). This interference can take forms of protection of corrupted officials, selective enforcement of the law, placement of politically-friendly people in strategic positions, or passing of token reforms with no real intention. The autonomy of anti-corruption institutions in Bangladesh is restricted by the politicization of key institutions such as the judiciary, law enforcement roles, and the credibility of the institutions is undermined (Md Nazirul Islam Sarker, 2017; Sakib, 2020). Poor institutional designs also limit the results of reforms. The administrative systems where there are complicated guidelines, duplicate roles, and low support find it hard to implement regulations or keep individuals accountable (Shafiqul Huque, 2011). The bureaucracy and lack of resources, coupled with the lack of professional training, decrease the ability to monitor and implement official anti-corruption guidelines. Lack of investigative powers, inadequate staffing and technical resources, as well as poor enforcement capacity, which may make it impossible to act effectively, undermine the action, and the courts are not fast enough, procedural loopholes, and obsolete laws undermine the confidence of the population (Hossan et al., 2024). Also, the extensive absence of accountability adds to these challenges. The administrative bodies have generally poor internal control, and external controls like citizen surveillance or transparency efforts are underdeveloped or badly implemented (Hindess, 2005; Labik Amanquandor, 2024). Such an amalgam of impunity and corrupt culture is a breeding ground to continue to have corrupt practices even in the midst of official reforms. These macro problems underscore the need to have systemic responses that respond not only to formal institutional design but also to informal governance processes in order to have a significant impact on anti-corruption and make the impact sustainable.

2.3 The Institutional Approach to Corruption

The institutional theory also provides a handy way to understand corruption, as the theory is no longer focused on the behavior of individual maleficence, but rather on the structural elements that facilitate or hinder criminal activities (Rashid & Johara, 2020). Formal and informal institutions influence behavior, and may either encourage integrity or further corruption. As an example, institutional isomorphism is used to explain how countries respond to the external pressures, e.g., donor requirements, and how these responses cause countries to develop similar

anti-corruption structures, though they do not lead to any significant change in behavior (Sakib, 2020). This can lead to ritualistic changes which do not solve problems at a deeper level. Embedding integrity into the organizational structures is the main focus of an institutional integrity view, and it is not based on punitive policies only (Sakib, 2019).

2.4 Corruption in Bangladesh: Research Results

In Bangladesh, corruption is so embedded into the socio-political framework that it has elements of both the colonial administrative heritage and the post-independence politics. It cuts across various sectors such as land administration and forest governance with a lot of implications on the quality of governance, economic growth, and social equity (Rahman et al., 2024; Miah & Islam, 2021). Policies like frequent amnesty on undisclosed wealth have very many times promoted corruption instead of promoting transparency and accountability in the economy of a nation.

Bangladesh, in turn, has been adopting a number of anti-corruption reforms. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is a body that has been set up as independent and uses punitive as well as preventive measures to deal with corrupt activities (Sakib, 2019). Nevertheless, even with such efforts, the citizen engagement programs, which are usually brokered by community-based organizations that are governmentally-driven, are often ceremonial reactions to donor pressures and do not necessarily result in anything substantive. Equally, the National Integrity Strategy (NIS) has been put forward to enhance accountability systems, especially in land administration, although their implementation has continued to suffer due to systemic corruption as well as institutional inefficiency (Chowdory, 2024; Sakib et al., 2022). Structural and political factors such as lack of a proper rule of law, obsolete laws, professional incompetence among the bureaucracy, and politicization of state institutions have continued to cripple the reform processes (Hossain et al., 2023). These persistent problems underscore the necessity to attain a more inclusive and context sensitive institutional response to anti-corruption reforms in Bangladesh, which considers how the formal, informal, and the general socio-political environment interact.

2.5 Research Gap

Even though there exists a lot of institutional literature about corruption in the world in general and Bangladesh specifically, there is a deficiency of a thorough institutional analysis that can be used to determine the success or failure of anti-corruption reforms. The available literature has mostly recorded the level of corruption and the effectiveness of the individual reform, like the ACC or NIS, without conducting a systematic review of the process in which formal institutions interrelate with the context of informal institutions, cultural practices, patronage, and power relationships. Little literature distinguishes between the rules-on-paper and rules-in-use, which is essential in explaining why there is still a gap between the intents of anti-corruption policies and their real-life results in Bangladesh. The study fills this gap by offering an elaborate institutional examination to identify the root cause of the failures and successes of anti-corruption initiatives in the nation.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

2.6.1 Institutional Theory

The institutional theory is a solid approach to governance and anti-corruption reforms since it focuses on the impact of both formal and informal institutions to influence behavior. It goes past the personal activities to consider the systemic, structural, and cultural circumstances that facilitate compliance or limit integrity. Institutional theory, in the case of anti-corruption reforms, emphasizes the role of laws, organizational regulations, social norms, and mutual understandings of the effectiveness of governance interventions. This approach can be used to understand why the implementation of reforms that seem to be sound on paper fail to deliver their expected results in practice.

2.6.2 Institutional Dimensions

There are three pillars that are inter-relational and can explain the institutional environment that consequently influences the outcomes of governance:

Regulatory Institutions: Regulatory institutions entail formal rules, laws, and policies as well as enforcement mechanisms that prevent corruption and create compliance. Good regulatory institutions have transparent operation, sanctions that are credible, as well as independent enforcement capability, and these are key to the proper operation of the anti-corruption reforms.

Normative Institutions: These include professional norms, organizational culture, and ethical standards in the field of public administration. The internalization of integrity, accountability, and ethical behavior in bureaucrats is influenced by normative institutions, as they provide behavioral rewards which support formal rules.

Cognitive Institutions: These are common belief systems, social expectations, and unwritten practices that determine how actors view the way they should act. The social legitimacy of the reforms depends on the cognitive institutions, and the formal rules may be followed or bypassed in practice.

2.6.3 Research analytic framework

This paper will use the institutional lens to determine the failure and success of anti-corruption reforms in Bangladesh by analyzing the interplay between these three pillars. Strong regulatory force is not always effective in cases where normative and cognitive supports are weak, and vice versa, a lot of normative strong ethics can be compromised by poor enforcement of the law. The analytical structure focuses on how formal institutions, informal administration practices, and socio-political situations interplay to give an absolute picture of why reforms success in one area and fail in another. The analysis of how these institutional dimensions affect the results of reforms reveals key leverage points to be used to enhance governance and reduce corruption in Bangladesh.

3. Research Methodology

This paper uses a qualitative institutional analysis to discuss the reasons that contribute to the success and failure of anti-corruption reforms in Bangladesh. The research design is informed by an institutional approach, which points to the reaction of formal rules, administrative practices, and informal socio-political processes to influence the outcomes of governance. A qualitative method will make it possible to take a closer look at the multifaceted institutional relations and to investigate how the reforms are being implemented, adapted, or sabotaged in the local environment. The method is especially applicable to the governance studies conducted in developing nations, where the political, bureaucratic, and social conditions play a critical role in policy performance.

3.1 Case Selection

Bangladesh has been chosen as the subject matter of this study because it has been facing the problems of governance, and corruption has been rife in all its sectors, such as public administration, procurement, judiciary, and service delivery. Although various institutional reforms have been put in place, including the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and the National Integrity Strategy (NIS), corruption is still widespread. This is why Bangladesh is a relevant subject in exploring the relationship between formal anti-corruption measures and informal institutional practices, and getting answers as to why some reforms work better, and others do not.

3.2 Data Sources and Method of collection

The research relies on various secondary sources of data to come up with a holistic examination of the dynamics of the institutional dynamics of the anti-corruption reforms in Bangladesh. Such sources are government reports on reform initiatives, institutional requirements, and implementation results; policy documents describing legal frameworks, procedural rules, and reform strategies; scholarly literature that provides theoretical knowledge and empirical evidence of the nature of governance and anti-corruption systems; corruption perception reports offered by international organizations and indices to put the reform success in perspective and media reporting on the practical aspects of corruption and policy enforcement problems.

These sources were exploited to gather data in a well-organized manner, such that the results are reliable and deep. All the documents were read thoroughly to obtain pertinent data on the institution design, reforms, administration, enforcement, and socio-political factors. The information collected was grouped thematically to determine similar

patterns across various periods and dimension of governance, enabling the systematic examination of the interaction of institutional factors, both formal and informal, in contributing to the success or failure of the process of reforming anti-corruption in Bangladesh.

3.3 Data Analysis Method

The thematic institutional analysis was applied to the obtained data. This method entailed coding and classification of data in the themes based on regulatory, normative, and cognitive institutional aspects. Specific attention was given to the relationship between formal reforms and informal practices, with the consideration of disjunctures between the rules-on-paper and the rules-in-use. Relationships were then determined in terms of the contribution of institutional capacity, political interference, bureaucratic culture, and administrative practices to that of the reform.

3.4 Reliability and Validity

Triangulation was also done to improve reliability because several sources were used, such as government documents, academic studies, and media reports. The thematic categorization and coding were used and cross-compared all the time to reduce bias. The results in various sources were examined to guarantee validity and also to ensure that the analysis was a proper reflection of the observed institutional dynamics.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The article utilizes publicly available data only, such as reports, policy documents, and published literature. No confidential or personal identifiable data were gathered. Citation of all sources is done in order to ensure transparency, respect the intellectual property, and also to abide by ethical research standards.

3.6 Bangladesh Institutional Context

The evolution of the institutional context of Bangladesh is defined by a complicated mixture of official forms of governance, administrative mechanisms, and informal socio-political activities that determine the success of anti-corruption reforms. This section will look into the governance system of the country, the responsible anti-corruption institutions, and the significant reforms initiatives in order to have a holistic picture of the issues and forces influencing the implementation of the policies.

3.7 Governance Environment

The Bangladesh institutional context is described as a complex administrative environment, which is a combination of formal administrative organizations and informal practices and political activities. The governing system in the country is a parliamentary democratic one, but the administrative system is usually limited by complicated regulations, inflexibility, and the lack of a well-established institutional support (Shafiqul Huque, 2011). These obstacles do not support proper governance and accountability because the decision-making process is sluggish, and implementing regulations is uneven. The politics of interference is a common problem, and governmental institutions such as the judiciary often tend to become politicized. This undermines the objectivity and performance of the public administration and control institutions, and this preconditions the possibility that corruption might gain firm roots in the socio-political life. Corruption in Bangladesh has long since been an issue because of the colonial administrative history and aggravated by the post-independent politics on governance, economic development, and social justice.

3.8 Governance Structure

The government of Bangladesh is a blend of a centralized administrative system and a parliamentary form of political systems. Although there are formal rules and regulatory frameworks that can make the administration of the people guided, their application is usually hampered by bureaucratic complexity, small institutional capacity, and ad hoc application. These institutional flaws add to a situation where officials in government can be involved in corrupt activities, and citizens are very often subjected to requests to pay illegal amounts of money to get access to government services (Sakib et al., 2022). This is because poor internal accountability systems, political interference, and professionalism in the bureaucracy weakens the potential efficacy of anti-corruption policies.

3.9 Anti-Corruption Institutions

A number of formal establishments have been put in place to prevent corruption in Bangladesh, which often lacks effectiveness due to structural and political limitations:

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC): The ACC has been constituted as an autonomous organization with a punitive as well as preventive mandate. The design of it was partially based on the international best practices, especially the agencies in Singapore and Hong Kong. Although the ACC has undertaken many initiatives, such as the ritually adapted program of engaging citizens, some of the initiatives have been seen as simply a push and pull measures by responding to external pressures and not attaining significant behavior change (Sakib, 2019). There is still the problem of political meddling, poor institutional backing, and enforcing abilities that are at a disadvantage to the efficiency of the ACC.

Judiciary: An autonomous judiciary is needed to enforce the anti-corruption laws. In Bangladesh, however, judicial independence is compromised by politics, resulting in the failure to prosecute corruption cases fairly and in time, and it is a factor that fosters a culture of impunity. Lack of a robust rule of law has continued to be a major element that has enabled corruption to thrive (Zafarullah & Huque, 2021).

Public Administration: The larger administrative apparatus is a place where change and corruption occur. Efforts to foster ethical behavior, like the National Integrity Strategy (NIS), have been made to ensure that there are ethical behaviors, especially the land administration, although they encounter challenges because of systemic deficiencies. High bureaucracy, the lack of internal accountability tools, and politicization provide corrupt practices and undermine tenure security and intensify social inequalities (Hossain et al., 2024; Quah, 2021).

Audit Institutions: Audit bodies are crucial in the aspect of financial accountability and the abuse of funds of the people. However, they are effective based on the independence of the institution and the readiness of the government to take action based on the results. When there is weak support and political interference, there are high chances that audit institutions are unable to mitigate financial irregularities and corruption (Sakib, 2020).

3.10 Major Reform Initiatives

The country has also taken some notable anti-corruption reforms over the years in order to bolster governance, transparency, and accountability. These reforms are geared towards the capacity building of the institutions, the enhancement of enforcement mechanisms, and the ethical behavior in the public sector. One of them has been setting up the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) that is integrative in its punitive and preventive roles and was inspired by international practices like Singapore and Hong Kong (Das, 2013; Sakib, 2020). Online governance and e-procurement reforms are also put in place to enhance transparency and minimize bribery opportunities, but this can only be effective when they are implemented in a wholesome way and circumvented. The reforms in public procurement and the National Integrity Strategy (NIS) are set to increase accountability and ethical standards in certain aspects, especially land administration. In spite of all this, political interference, ineffective institutional support, and endemic corruption within the systems still restrain the overall effectiveness of these initiatives (Doig & McIvor, 2003).

Table 1: Most Significant Anti-Corruption Reforms in Bangladesh

| Reform Initiative | Year | Objective | Implementing Institution |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Anti-Corruption Commission reform | 2004 | Enforcement of anti-corruption in a stronger manner | ACC |
| Reforms in e-governance | 2010 and above | Increase transparency | Government ministries |
| Reform of public procurement | In Progress | Improve integrity and efficiency in procurement | Various government agencies |
| National Integrity Strategy (NIS) | Implemented | Promote ethical conduct; prevent administrative corruption | Public administration bodies |

This table gives a review of the key anti-corruption reforms in Bangladesh, their goals and commitments, and the institutions that are tasked with their implementation. It depicts how the reforms in the historical context have taken their current form and highlights the limitations on developing effective governance in a system whereby corruption is deeply entrenched.

4. Results

This paper applied the qualitative institutional analysis in order to understand the variables influencing the outcome of anti-corruption reforms in Bangladesh, with the analysis of government reports, policy documents, literature, and media sources. Thematic analysis revealed some patterns in institutional enablers, constraints, political dynamics, capacity, and oversight.

4.1 Institutional Factors Supporting Reform Success

In the analysis, there were a number of institutional requirements that have been found to contribute continuously towards successful anti-corruption reforms. The commitment to leadership was also core, because high political and bureaucratic support is guaranteed to grant priority, allocation of resources, and harsh enforcement; initiatives led by ACC with consistent leadership showed an improved throughput and people trust. E-governance and e-procurement systems, which are aspects of digital transparency, minimize the discretionary power, automate, and generally offer traceability, which restricts bribery opportunities and enhances accountability among bureaucrats. The pressures to accountability internationally, such as donor control and adherence to international anti-corruption standards, served to reinforce legitimacy and provide incentives to adhere to enforcement. The combination of these factors establishes an environment of enhanced institutional responsiveness, ethical behavior, and policy implementation, specifically in high-profile areas like public procurement and service delivery, as summarized in Table 3.

Table 2: Factors that Support Reform Success

| Institutional Factor | Role in Reform | Example from Bangladesh |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Leadership commitment | Brings about and implements reforms | Political support for ACC initiatives |
| Digital transparency | Minimizes discretionary authority and maximizes audit | E-procurement systems in government contracts. |
| International accountability pressure | Strengthens compliance and legitimacy | Donor-based oversight and reporting pressure. |

4.2 Institutional Strategy Failure Reasons

Although formally reformed, there are a number of limiting factors. Political meddles with the independence of anti-corruption institutions, which leads to their selective application and safeguarding of politically affiliated players. Bureaucratic resistance is attested to slow adoption of reforms, subversion of policy in an informal manner, and resistance to adopt procedural changes. Implementation of the reform is further limited by weak enforcement capacity, such as a lack of staffing, investigative powers, and financial resources. Even qualitative evidence demonstrates that these factors interact, and they increase the continuation of corruption even in those cases when the formal policy is in place. Table 4 summarizes the key obstacles and connects the structural weaknesses with the definite enforcement problems.

Table 3: Reform Constraining Institutional Factors

| Constraint | Impact on Reform | Example from Bangladesh |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Political interference | Does not strengthen independence of institutions | Slowness of ACC investigations. |
| Bureaucratic resistance | Less compliance to policy use | Adaptive resistance to e-governance |
| Weak enforcement | Reform gains restricted effectiveness | Incomplete implementation of NIS initiatives |

4.3 Responsibility and Oversight Mechanisms

Having institutions such as monitoring, in-house audit, and oversight committees are very significant in identifying abnormalities. Nonetheless, qualitative analysis demonstrates that the mechanisms are not always well implemented, the follow-up is weak, the enforcement is ineffective, and there is a lack of transparency. There are citizen engagement programs and external checks and balances that are not well utilized or tokenistic and, thus, have little practical effect. The research concludes that accounting systems have the highest probability of success when coupled with leadership commitment, political support, and digital surveillance systems that offer both publicity and binding. And without these complementary conditions, supervision is not sufficient to neutralize the systemic flaws, and the practices of corruption still exist even where formal checks and balances are present.

4.4 Political Impact and Bureaucratic Processes

There is a very high influence of political power in the performance of the anti-corruption institutions in Bangladesh. The approach of patronage, politicization of appointment, and interference in the judiciary processes is weakening both impartiality and institutional credibility. Qualitative data has shown that reforms which are implemented in a politically neutral environment have a greater level of compliance and enforcement as opposed to those introduced in a highly politicized environment, which tend to be symbolic. They can be seen through two very important

dimensions: how political elites can restrain prosecutor autonomy and how administrative discretion can be strategically used to defend allies or impede efforts to enforce. These dynamics underscore the nature of interaction between informal political structures and formal institutions with regard to determining whether reforms are successful or not. The major political and administrative factors are summarized in Table 4, which indicates its impacts on the institutional capacity and implementation of reforms.

Table 4: Political and Administrative Influence

| Factor | Effect | Evidence from Bangladesh |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Patronage networks | Weaknesses in enforcement | Political cover of corrupt officials |
| Judiciary politicization | Slow prosecution | Backlog and selective trial |

4.5 Bureaucracy Capacity and Implementation Problems

The limited bureaucratic capacity was also a major issue that limited the effectiveness of anti-corruption reforms in Bangladesh. Administered procedures, overlapping roles, and hard hierarchical lines often can slack decision-making and diminish the capacity of officials to implement policies uniformly. There is qualitative evidence that a lot of bureaucrats do not have the required training or technical knowledge and institutional support to go through reforms efficiently, and this raises the dependency on informal practices and networks in order to undertake the routine tasks. Such adjustive measures, though useful in the short-term, tend to bypass official rules and the establishment of corrupt procedures. Institutional design is dependent on administrative capacity because even a powerful effort to reform with a well-defined mandate and leadership cannot lead to the desired results without a bureaucratic capability. The results show that empowering human resources, offering lifelong professional growth, and facilitating the rules of the procedures are necessary in enhancing the implementation of reforms and maintaining integrity in all the systems of administration.

4.6 Comparison of Reform Outcomes

A comparative analysis shows that anti-corruption reforms are more effective according to institutional and political conditions. Programs with determined leadership, strong enforcement, and online disclosure are more successful, and those with political interference, bureaucratic apprehension, and poor institutional support do not yield desirable outcomes. Table 5 is a summary of the institutional factors of reform success or failure, which reflects the combination of political, administrative, and technological factors which play off to guarantee outcomes in Bangladesh.

Table 5: Reform Success and Failure Institutional Drivers

| Institutional Factor | Impact on Reform | Evidence from Bangladesh |
|------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Political interference | Negative | Curtails ACC autonomy and procrastinates prosecutions |
| Digital transparency | Positive | Less discretion and more monitoring |
| Leadership commitment | Positive | Makes sure that reforms are prioritized and implemented |

5. Discussion

The results of this research indicate that the institutional dynamic, political interference, and administrative capacity play a pivotal role in the success and failure of the anti-corruption reforms in Bangladesh. The success of reforms is achieved when leadership commitment, international accountability pressure, and digital transparency are consistent, which facilitate the effective implementation and institutional legitimacy. On the other hand, any form of political interference, bureaucratic opposition, and lax enforcement undermine reform implementation, which results in gaps between formal policies and real practice. The findings are in line with the institutional theory, which focuses on the interaction between regulatory, normative, and cognitive aspects of institutions in influencing behavior. Thematic analysis indicated that bureaucratic constraints and established informal networks in Bangladesh ensure that corruption still continues despite the well-constructed reforms, which is why the issue of institutional capacity is so important in facilitating reform results or limiting them.

Through comparative analysis, it has been revealed that the outcomes of reforms differ among countries because of the institutional strength, independence in politics, and efficiency in administration. The success of the reforms in Singapore is very successful due to the strong leadership, robust enforcement, and institutionalized integrity, which result in bureaucratic discretion and elite patronage in China. Similar issues affect South Africa and Bangladesh, where the political interference and restricted bureaucratic capability hamper the success of reforms. These distinctions indicate the necessity to harmonize an institutional design, administrative capacity, and political assistance. The main factors and outcomes are summarized in Table 7, which provides insights into sustainable anti-corruption governance in different situations.

Table 6: Comparative Anti-Corruption Reform Results

| Reference | Country | Key Institutional Factors | Reform Success |
|---------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| (Sakib, 2019) | Bangladesh | Political interference, bureaucratic weakness, informal networks | Limited, partial enforcement |
| (Gong & Yang, 2020) | China | Authority Centralized, bureaucracy, elite patronage | Mixed; selective success |
| (Quah, 2017) | Singapore | Powerful leadership, powerful enforcement of regulations, institutionalized integrity | High, sustained success |
| (Labik Amanquandor, 2024) | South Africa | Political interference, poor administrative alignment | Limited; inconsistent |

6. Conclusion

This paper presents a detailed consideration of the issues that are leading to the deterioration and success of anti-corruption reform in Bangladesh using a qualitative institutional approach. The results indicate that the combination of the three factors of leadership commitment, digital transparency, and international accountability pressure strongly influences the reform outcomes and leads to the strengthening of the institutional legitimacy, enforcement capacity, and public trust. On the other hand, political interference, bureaucratic opposition, lack of effectiveness in enforcement, and deep-rooted informal networks disrupt the effectiveness of reforms as persistent discrepancies between policies and real implementation are established. Theoretically, the study can be used to show how the regulatory, normative, and cognitive aspects of institutions interplay to clarify the unequal reform results in the context of developing countries, which clarifies the weaknesses of the formalistic view of anti-corruption governance. In practical terms, the findings indicate that it is necessary to enhance administrative capacity, train bureaucrats professionally, and incorporate digital surveillance and reduce political influence to enhance the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures and sustain their effectiveness. Although the research was based on secondary materials like government reports, policy documents, scholarly articles, corruption perception ratings, and media inquiries, the lack of primary field data and face-to-face interviews with stakeholders is a weakness that can be a source of limiting the contextual interpretation. Future studies may be designed as mixed methodology, including interview with policymakers, bureaucrats, and actors of the civil society, to bring more understanding on the informal processes influencing the results of the reform. Altogether, this study has demonstrated that the effective implementation of the anti-corruption reforms involves more than the institution and policies design because the political, administrative, and social environment should be aligned to provide the long-term benefits of governance and accountability.

Ethical Statements

Ethical issues: In this study, there was no use of confidential data. The information was limited to publicly available data in the form of government reports, policy documents, academic literature, and media. No individual or classified data was gathered.

Conflict of interest statement: The author states that there is no conflict of interest.

Data availability statement: All the sources referred to in the study are available publicly and have been referred to accordingly in the entire manuscript.

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