
Public Policy Implementation Challenges in Bangladesh: A Governance Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines sequential issues of governance with regard to the execution of a public policy in Bangladesh. However, despite the impressive development in certain economic policies in line with SDGs, Vision 2041, and Delta Plan 2100, there is a huge gap between policy development and implementation on the ground. By utilizing qualitative, descriptive, and interpretive methodology and relying solely on secondary sources, the paper identifies five basic barriers to governance: bureaucratic incompetence, corruption, Interference by political activities, weak local governance, and lack of citizen input. The problems are examined using various theories of governance and public administration, implementation theory, principal-agent theory, and the good-governance theory. The main issue with all these ambitious international declarations is that the report indicates that the main barrier to sound policy by the people is not a problem of vision, but rather the absence of accountable, flexible, and receptive governance structures in which different stakeholders can engage. The paper concludes with some policy-based suggestions on systemic changes to assist in aligning the policy implementation ambition with its results.

1. Introduction

Policy as a practice is an important factor determining national development trajectories. Policy in Bangladesh has been one of the few significant drivers of much of the progress achieved in poverty reduction, education expansion, resilience to natural disasters and digital transformation at a time when the world is becoming increasingly pointing fingers at the development policy (Aminuzzaman, 2013). Bangladesh has been very successful over the past 2 decades in drafting policies that do not only respond to but also adapt to the global narrative, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Vision 2041 and Delta Plan 2100. The nation has developed several ambitious state initiatives to support inclusive growth and social development, including poverty reduction or digitalization (Rahman, 2021). These strategies are designed to address the need that has been identified, but the gap between policy and reality remains an issue. Many well thought out policies fail to reach the intended goals because they are watered down by the hurdles to good governance in most nations (Ferdaus, 2023).

In Bangladesh, the policies of the government at the national level are key in shaping the national approaches in most sectors, including education, economic growth, environmental management, human resources, and international relations. Since independence, the national policy agenda has been broadening gradually to address the transformation

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in needs of the country and the global challenges. However, in this context in Bangladesh, virtually every process in the policy cycle, elements of agenda-setting, design, implementation and evaluation are fraught with issues (Silulwane, 2019).

More specifically, agenda-setting remains extremely politicized. Ideally, it would be the largest public goods of citizens, extensively participatory with stakeholders, civil society, and media, and NGOs and subject-matter experts (Zhang and Bhattacharjee, 2024). But, as a matter of fact, policy-making is usually top-down and controlled by political elites and party interests. This generates national preoccupations that are not based on what is actually happening in the nation.

Policy formulation involves complexities long in nature, and extensive research, consultation, and examination of evidence options. There are still numerous critiques of poor consultation, inadequate specialist input, poor policy analysis, and rise of bureaucratic/political interests against scientific wisdom (Swapan, 2016). In cases where expert panels are assembled, there is usually lack of meaningful cooperation. As a result, design is dominated by self-serving decision making rather than accommodations and data-driven planning.

This upstream dysfunctionality of policy process, particularly being evident in setting and formulation of agendas, leads to policy implementation weaknesses. Unless accompanied by both an inclusive design process and powerful governance mechanisms, the public policies can be at risk of losing touch with the interests of the targeted beneficiaries (Mulvale et al., 2019).

The central aspects of policy delivery are governance-the mechanisms, frameworks and agencies through which decisions are made and implemented. Effective implementation of Bangladesh public policy is frustrated by inefficiency in the bureaucracy, a lack of institutional capacity, corruption, political interference and poor accountability mechanisms in public service organisations (Mulvale et al., 2019). Policies with good intentions, solid evidence, and wide support across politics are frequently undermined during implementation because of structural weaknesses at various levels of government (Swapan, 2016).

Nealson (2023) claims that Pulse of the Planet unites transnational perceptions and critique, whether narrow or wide focus, global or local manifestation of faith and hope, but shared and ultimately undercut by the multiplicity of unafraid, first-intuition responses to global collaboration, citizen engagement, under-resourced local governments, and the unchanging gap between the ambition in policy and practical reach (Momen & Ferdous, 2023). It continues by stating that these obstacles are not only technical in nature but are deeply embedded in the political economy of the nation and require wide-scale structural changes and dedication (Aminuzzaman, 2017). In addition, a sub-section named the comparative lessons in India and Nigeria has been included to provide the results of the study with a greater international application. In this section, a broader picture of the perspective of governance problems and reforms have been presented using two cross-country research studies.

This paper discusses some of the major context-based implementation challenges of public policy in the context of Bangladesh, especially the governance dimension. The paper also discusses other conceivable routes to reform and contends that without solid and accountable governance, even the brightest policies are only so much hope on paper. Focusing on the interaction between policy objectives and governance constraints, we seek both to identify the obstacles to effectiveness and to underline the possibilities for effective public policy in a Bangladesh context (Biswas & Rahman, 2018).

1.1 Background of the study

Bangladesh has made major strides as far as policy formulation, economic growth, and social development are concerned since gaining its independence in 1971. Governments around the world have implemented an endless array of national agendas to tackle poverty, strengthen education, improve healthcare, develop infrastructure, enhance climate readiness and drive digitalization over the years (Hossain et al., 2023). Hossain, M. (2022) observed that the colorful outlook of the nation as embodied in ambitious development plans, such as the Vision 2021, Vision 2041, Digital Bangladesh and Delta Plan 2100, is an indicator of the commitment of the nation to inclusive and sustainable

development. Those policy frameworks are usually aligned with international agendas such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

These policy initiatives are noble in ambition and scope, yet they have never been easy to execute. There is an incessant gap between policy intentions and policy outcomes. However, despite good strategic perceptions, the majority of them do not provide policy, and their design trick fails in the socio-technical problem of governance in action (Zafarullah & Banik, 2016). These include institutional fragmentation, overlapping mandates, bureaucratic inertia, political involvement, corruption and ineffective monitoring and accountability systems. This leads to misappropriation of resources, procrastination in program provision, substandard service delivery and failure to achieve developmental goals (Sarker et al., 2017).

One of the simplest governance issues that impacts on implementation is the division of the administrative structure. Ministries and departments are usually operating in isolation with very low coordination and lack of accountability (M. S. Islam & Mahmud, 2015). Locally based governance, although tasked with applying national policies in practice, often lacks the autonomy, resources or capacity to respond to, recover or prepare against the shocks that accompany these climate change impacts. Top-down decision making also limits local policy responsiveness and ownership.

There is the added problem of political interference. Regarding the employment of civil service, hiring civil servants, promoting and even setting the priorities of implementation is most of the time overridden by political allegiance, true or purported, (Sarker et al., 2017). On the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index released on a regular basis, Bangladesh also ranks in the lowest category, which proves that the problem is systematic. An absence of accountability and transparency coupled with poor enforcement, further undermines the role of service delivery to the people. Inertia has drawn back some gains that Bangladesh had made in terms of governance, e-governance, decentralization and institutional reforms. The concept of exploiting the online platforms and online communication service delivery tools has not been globalized and deployed large-scale yet (S. Islam and Ahmed, 2015). This paper identifies the main governance-related challenges leading to the implementation gap and provides triggering recommendations for reform. It hopes to thereby enable more effective, inclusive and accountable policy delivery to ensure that the needs of the Bangladeshi people are met.

1.2 Research Objectives

This study aims to explore governance issues in the implementation of public policy in Bangladesh.

1. To identify the salient governance-related constraints that deter effective public policy implementation in Bangladesh.
2. To explore how inefficiencies in institutions, corruption, and political interference translate into deliverables in terms of policy.
3. To examine pragmatic governance reforms and methods that may strengthen the execution of public policies.

1.3 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following key questions in the context of governance and policy implementation in Bangladesh:

1. What are the major governance challenges in Bangladesh affecting the potential delivery of public policies?
2. How does bureaucratic laxity, corruption and political interference affect the results of policy?
3. What are some governance reforms or approaches that will make public policy implementation in Bangladesh more effective and accountability driven?

2. Literature Review

Driving developmental outcomes through effective public policy implementation is at the centre of many policy agendas globally, yet, in most developing countries, including Bangladesh, it remains one of the biggest governance challenges today. This review of literature on policy implementation showed the global and local approach with a governance perspective to meet the research objectives of the study.

2.1 Governance-Related Challenges in Policy Implementation

The challenge of implementing public policy in Bangladesh is both de facto and systemic. The absence of strategic vision and policy ambition is not the issue - recent national budgets unambiguously show a broad spectrum of development priorities (Silulwane, 2019). Instead, at its heart, the problem is with governance: systemic, structural

failures in the quality-of-service delivery. While there are hundreds of national policies focused on these areas to pursue poverty reduction, climate resilience, digital innovation, and education reform, the distance between policy intent and real-world impact is vast (Ferdaus, 2023).

A lot of the barriers stem from the fragmented institutional landscape. Bureaucracy appears to be unnecessarily large, but serves overlapping mandates and co-mandates poorly between central and local agencies, leading to siloed implementation (Liton & Habib, 2015). It results in the misallocation of resources and turf battles between agencies and stalls implementation, particularly in areas that cut across sectors such as urban planning or climate policy.

According to Silulwane (2019), mechanisms for transparency and accountability are also similarly weak. There are anti-corruption organisations like the Anti-Corruption Commission, but these are limited because of the political context. There is widespread manipulation in public procurement in important sectors, and performance audits either do not take place or are poorly constructed.

This is compounded by the politicization of the civil service, with political loyalty trumping merit. Working bureaucrats are put under a lot of pressure to work towards party interests, which stigmatizes neutrality and stifles out-of-the-box thinking. This creates a risk-averse culture, slows reforms and undermines the machinery of public administration (Zahid, 2022).

The process of developing the public policy in Bangladesh is challenged by governance issues, mainly bureaucratized inefficiency, corruption, political influence, poor local governance, and lack of citizen involvement. According to Van Schie (2024), the inefficiency of the bureaucratic system based on colonial structures negatively affects flexibility and the speed of decision-making, provoking a delay in service delivery and a decrease in the quality of policy outcomes. Poor implementation of policies is also aggravated by the fragmentation of ministries and divided mandates. The procurement corruption and corruption in the course of execution of the projects intensify the inefficiency, as public funds have been misused or misappropriated to get personal benefit. This is compounded by political influence, whereby appointments and decisions are often made on political grounds as opposed to professionalism and the long-term development objectives (Behzadifar, 2019).

Moreover, the lack of efficiency in local governments exposes local governments to be less efficient in implementing national guidelines, especially in rural regions, since they have limited resources, freedom, and strength. Local responsiveness is suppressed in the centralized mode of making decisions (Basu et al., 2018). Lastly, the lack of citizen involvement in policy-making also leads to the policy-implementation gap. Although there are laws such as the Right to Information Act, they are poorly enforced, which restricts the capacity of the citizenry to keep the government on its toes thus policies which do not resonate with the demands of the citizenry are not made. Such structural problems include a great divide between the intentions and results of policies (R. Islam & Walkerden, 2017).

2.2 Bureaucracy, corruption, political interference

The most pernicious challenges of governance in Bangladesh are bureaucratic, corrupt, and politically induced, and still present barriers to successful application of public policies. In most aspects, the extensive and thick bureaucracy of the nation is strict and hierarchical whose values consider procedure superior to performance. It is an ongoing (and painful) decision-making process that can hardly be experimented or adapted to the new requirements of the policy (Uddin et al., 2021). This state of bureaucratic inertia is exacerbated by the reality that the broader environment is now so politicized that promotions and postings, even administrative decisions, are subject to political interest instead of institutional interests (Holbrook and Meier, 2015).

Holbrook and Meier (2015) have suggested that corruption adds to Dysfunction. Whether it is rent-seeking behaviour is rife in public procurement or project approvals.

Taken together, these problems impede an effective public administration and stifle the national development (Hossen et al., 2022). However, the Bangladeshi bureaucracy is hierarchical and process-driven, as opposed to performance-driven. Policy-making is consequently slow, rigid, and unable to respond to changing policy needs. The seniority and

process-driven nature of the system fail to foster the necessary innovation and responsiveness required for effective governance (Hossen et al., 2022).

Moreover, in BD, Corruption is a systemic disease in the public sector in Bangladesh. Bribery and rent-seeking behaviours abound, from land administration to tax collection. For example, firms often face informal payment requests when obtaining permits to build or register property. It undermines public confidence and siphons off potential development resources into private pockets (Zafarullah & Banik, 2016).

In addition, increased governance challenges are caused by political interference. Civil service appointments and promotions are widely regarded as being based on political rather than professional considerations, severely compromising professionalism and accountability (Zafarullah & Banik, 2016). Politicisation leads to the expectation of loyalty from the civil service to the relevant political player over loyalty to the public interest, and as a consequence, harming the dogma of republicanism and the efficiency of the public administration. People are unhappy with how the system is operating. According to Borthakur (2024), 56% of those questioned identified political meddling as the biggest barrier to a citizen-oriented administration, compared to 42% who believe corruption to be the biggest hindrance. Moreover, 96% think that public administration is not fully transparent and accountable, and 84% believe reforms are in order.

Lastly, there have been certain reforms to these difficulties by the interim government led by Muhammad Yunus. Such activities include, among others, depoliticizing the civil service and strengthening anti-corruption initiatives (Borthakur, 2024). However, the pace of change has been very slow and the results of such reforms have not yet been realized. There is too much bureaucracy and political patronage that a baby step towards the right direction is a major impediment.

2.3 Reforms of Strategies and Governance

To achieve superior execution of governance policies in Bangladesh, we need to embrace courageous governance reforms, which not only address structural constriction, but also structural behavioral restrictions. To reduce the bureaucracy to a modern and non-obligatory one is one of the steps towards that purpose. The process of recruiting, promoting and deploying civil services should be based on merit performance and professionalism, and not be dependent on political loyalty (Ali, 2018). The answer is performance incentivization, regular training, technical isolation of vested interests and institutional barriers against bias/confusion of interests to improve efficiency and rebuild trust among the citizens (Swapan, 2016).

Another area that needs material reform is decentralization. empower the local governments with the financial autonomy, the planning ability, and the human resources needed to adjust the national policies to the local context (Rahman, 2021). Without actual decentralization, however, there is no point in the implementation, and the community does not own anything going down the ground.

Technology has replaced it, as well as as far as transformation of lives is concerned! Corruption can be curbed through wider e-governance (e.g. digital procurement, project dashboards, grievance redressal systems etc.) as well as improving transparency and further enhancing service delivery. Technology should be developed that has the ability and access to proper law, that it becomes not a Band-Aid (Zhang and Bhattacharjee, 2024).

Finally, the responsiveness can be enhanced by social accountability mechanisms. Action is the result of collaboration with individuals who have an interest in the final result and contributing to the listening of ideas. Also, due to their colonial histories, India and Nigeria have been moving in opposite directions as far as governance and public policy are concerned. As Cohn (2023) explains, the introduction of disaster management system by India through its application of appropriate legal and institutional rules has allowed it to handle disasters in a more effective way than the approach used by Nigeria. With this comparison, the importance of the quality of the institutions in a governance process comes out (Cohn, 2023).

In addition, comparative examination of the system of development planning in India and Nigeria indicates that there are a few discrepancies in the process of developing sustainable development between the two nations (Borthakur, 2024).

2.4 Theoretical Analysis

To explain the perennial problems of public policy implementation in Bangladesh, it is important to ground the discussion in the existing theories of governance and public administration. Several theories mentioned in this section are relevant as they attempt to explain the challenges and gaps between the formulation and the execution of policy in the context of Bangladesh.

On the other hand, one of the most well-known and foundational frameworks for implementation is Pressman and Wildavsky's (1973) Theory of Implementation, which highlights the participatory aspect of implementation as a process with many decisions, people, and institutions involved in translating a policy into action (S. Islam & Ahmed, 2015). To the extent to which the structure of administration is fragmented, the more likely it is that policy will devolve. This theory is relevant to Bangladesh because there is poor level of inter-ministerial coordination, and the Bangladesh bureaucracy is highly congested. The central, divisional, district and local administrative layers rescue agencies into additional decision points that further postpone, distort or derail policy execution.

Another useful source of insight is Principal-Agent Theory. It sees public administration as a delegation system: elected officials (principals) delegate actions to bureaucrats (agents). But in contexts such as Bangladesh, the agents (bureaucrats) tend to work without adequate checks and balances (oversight or accountability measures) in place, which leads to moral hazard, inefficiency and corruption. Lack of monitoring based on performance, coupled with politicized postings, reduce the motivation of agents to work for the public good, thereby preserving bureaucratic status quo (Borthakur, 2024).

In a similar vein, Good Governance Theory, proposed by institutions like the World Bank and UNDP, promotes transparency, accountability, the rule of law, participation and efficiency as the cornerstones of effective governance. While this framework has been adopted in Bangladesh through several national plans (e.g., Vision 2041, Digital Bangladesh), the application of these tenets is often disparate (Hossain, 2022). It argues that unless institutions are reformed to support these values, policy implementation will continue to be plagued by crises of legitimacy, corruption and poor delivery of public services (Khan, 2017).

Fit with Institutional Theory, it also serves to explain resistance to reform and innovation within the bureaucratic system. It implies that institutions have a strong bias to maintain existing norms, rules, and routines even when they are inefficient, a problem often known as "path dependency." In Bangladesh, the colonial legacy of administration, the obsolete pyramidal hierarchy and the lack of a no-excuse exit will mitigate the feature of adaptive governance. Reforms pose a threat to vested interests and, to this end, are often not followed through or even sabotaged (Uddin et al., 2021).

Lastly, there is the Participatory Governance theory which underlines the importance of citizen involvement at each phase of the policy cycle, including setting the agenda and monitoring. This model is particularly vital in Bangladesh because we have a top-down policy making process with little public participation (S. Islam & Ahmed, 2015). Participatory governance has the potential to improve legitimacy, responsiveness of policy to the needs of the community and can readily translate into implementation outcomes. The preconditions of actual participation are however institutional, juridical and political in nature and those institutions, laws and politics remain unstable in Bangladesh.

Combined, each of these theoretical prisms of implementation theory, principal-agent relations, norms of good governance, institutions, and participation help explain why Bangladesh cannot transform its robust formal system of public policy formulation and implementation into a substantive reality (Holbrook and Meier, 2015). These theories present a more holistic view of what is missing in reform and how policy can be more fully implemented.

2.5 Research Gap

The literature on various aspects of Bangladesh public policy and governance is particularly extensive, with scholars and organizations dedicating attention to a wide range of topics-including administrative decentralization to corruption, inefficiency within the bureaucracy and policy delivery in educational, health and disaster management sectors. Development is slowed down by bureaucratic rigidity and politicized ways of governance (Holbrook and

Meier, 2015; Silulwane, 2019). The distinction here is that, compared to most studies, this one documents the problems in question, as is customary with most studies, but it also suggests context-specific and theoretically- and practically-grounded reforms (Aminuzzaman, 2017).

However, much of the available literature is either sector-focused or only covers individual aspects of governance that does not provide us with much information on how various governance failures may be linked together and influence each of the steps in the policy implementation cycle. Second, qualitative research is extremely rare and the vast majority of studies are quantitative either as a matter of default, using statistical data, governance index or budget utilization measures (Rahman, 2021). Such strategies are useful, yet they usually lack the qualitative systemic political features of the implementation environment in Bangladesh.

A final significant gap is in the same breath considering policy implementation as an administrative or technical process. Very little research has been conducted on how deep-rooted political interference, informality, or patron-client relationships affect the behavior of implementing agencies and distort natural resource allocation (Liton and Habib, 2015). There was, however, some appeal to decades of focus about the decentralization with regard to the line of governance approach and utilized minimal research to evaluate the way power differences between central and local players finally affect the impact of implementation on the ground.

In this regard, the current study takes a qualitative, descriptive and suggestive approach to fill these gaps. It takes a closer look at the problem of cross-sectoral, cross-policy governance (Hossen et al., 2022). It uses secondary sources, academic literature, policy reports, media inquiries and online archives to investigate how institutional fragmentation and politicization of bureaucracy in association with lack of transparency and poor monitoring systems collude to prevent the implementation of policies. The difference here is that, unlike the majority of research, this study records the issues at hand, as is the case with most research, but also proposes context-specific and theoretically- and practically-based reforms (Aminuzzaman, 2017).

Hopefully, by connecting the scattered literature on governance to the lived experience of policy in Bangladesh, this paper will help to establish a more approachable and, ultimately, practical sense of how governance reform can facilitate better public policy.

3. Methodology

This study is qualitative, descriptive and suggestive about the governance-related challenges in public policy implementation in Bangladesh. It is based exclusively on secondary sources, from books, research reports, newspapers, periodicals, as well as from digital publications both national and international. In this case, Internet-based resources were important for accessing recent studies and policy documents. It should also demonstrate critical use of available literature in secondary research, comparison, and provision of relevant framework, though it should not be used as a summary. It is an interpretive study that tries to identify a set of enduring governance issues, and offers relevant reform propositions, based on pertinent literature, theoretical insights and practical experiences on the ground.

3.1 Research Design

The purpose of this study was to learn about governance concerns in the process of implementing public policy in Bangladesh through a qualitative, descriptive and investigatory research design. It is a research work based on the analysis of documents with secondary sources only, through a method of documentary analysis and examination of the information presented in scholarly literature, policy reports, news articles and online materials. The paper employs thematic and interpretative methods of analysis to establish the governance issues confronting the Bangladesh public sector, and noteworthy reform suggestions. In this type of design, it is easier to see the types of institutional weaknesses, political favors and bureaucratic wastefulness which impede policy implementation in Bangladesh.

3.2 Data Sources

This study simply utilizes secondary data comprised of all the various valid national and international sources. They consist of scholarly books, journal articles that are reviewed by peers, institutional research reports (BIDS, CPD, World Bank, et cetera), policy publications, newspapers, and online publications. Preference was placed on materials concerned with governance and administration of the people, and policy implementation in the context of Bangladesh. Sources related to current publications and policy developments were found as useful as web-based sources. The breadth of the sources both offered a balanced picture of the challenges and provided the opportunity to triangulate and validate recurring themes.

3.3 Analysis Techniques

Thematic and interpretive analysis of secondary data. The thematic analysis was conducted manually to extract and categorize the most important ideas, issues surrounding governance and governance reform suggestions. Content analysis of e.g. academic literature, media and policy/advocacy was used to investigate the representation of these themes in different types of sources. And to enhance credibility, it was also combined with triangulation because, based on the analysis of results that have been drawn by a number of different sources, it may be possible to reinforce trends and even reduce bias. The discussion relied on governance theory and frameworks of public administration to address findings within institutional and political contexts.

4. Results and Discussion

This chapter provides and reviews the findings of the research, which sought to address issues of governance concerning the individual subject of public policy in Bangladesh. Thematic and interpretive analysis of the diverse secondary data sets (academic and grey literature, research reports, policy documents and media coverage) yielded a range of related and repeated concerns which we extracted. They are divided into five major themes and discussed within the framework of the theories of governance and public administration.

Key Governance Challenges in Public Policy Implementation (Thematic Overview)

Theme	Description	Root Causes	Impacted Policy Areas
Bureaucratic Inefficiency	Rigid procedures, slow decision-making, lack of innovation	Path dependency, hierarchy, colonial legacy	Education, Infrastructure, Health
Corruption	Rent-seeking, manipulation of procurement, and inflated costs	Weak oversight, politicization of watchdogs	Procurement, Public services
Political Interference	Partisan influence over administration and policy priorities	Elite capture, patronage system	Civil service, Budget allocation
Weak Local Governance	Lack of autonomy and capacity at local levels	Centralized authority, underfunding	Rural development, Local services
Limited Citizen Participation	Top-down policymaking, weak feedback mechanisms	Lack of institutional channels, token consultation	All sectors

Figure 1: Key Governance Challenges in Public Policy Implementation

4.1 Bureaucratic Inefficiency and Institutional Inertia

The public administration of Bangladesh operates in highly inflexible processes, and as such.

makes very slow and very centralized decisions and has virtually no innovation. Path dependency, colonial administrative legacies and entrenched hierarchies are the common attribution for these inefficiencies. This causes delays in service delivery and misalignment with local needs.

- Key Reasons: Path dependency, inflexible hierarchies, colonial-era bureaucratic formation
- Impacted Areas: Education, Infrastructure development, Health services

4.2 Corruption and Weak Accountability

Corruption is rife, especially in public procurement, procuring project, and delivering services. There is rampant rent-seeking, over-pricing, and cronyism in selecting contractors. These problems are due to low-level institutional supervision, limited implementation, and the political nature of anti-corruption agencies.

- Root Causes: Weak regulation, limited transparency, Politicization of enforcement agencies

- Affected areas: Procurement processes, delivery of basic public services

4.3 Political Interference

Partisan interests capturing policy implementation is often obstructed by partisan interests, as political elites manipulate the administrative processes. Getting rid of positions, assigning resources, and even designing programs are subject to political expediency and not merit or need, undermining neutrality and functionality (Basu et al., 2018).

- More reasons: Elite capture, patronage networks, politicization of public institutions
- Affected Sectors: Operations of the civil service (state authorities) and Budget Planning and Implementation

4.4 Weak Local Governance

The multiplicity of local government institutions, limited financial resources, weak human capital, and lack of managerial autonomy limit the ability of local governments in Bangladesh to implement national policies at the local level. Too much centralization hobbles taxpayer responsive governance at the local level and limits ownership of public services by the community (Momen & Ferdous, 2023).

- More reasons: Centralization, underfunding of local bodies, absence of institutional mechanisms
- Affected Sectors: Projects in rural development, local-level delivery of public services

4.5 Limited Citizen Participation

When citizen participation is involved in the policy process, it is very minimal and when it is, it is tokenistic. Policymaking is generally top-down and there are very limited feedback mechanisms or avenues of inclusive deliberation. Good faith is undermined by institutional limitations and weaknesses in law enforcement despite the passage of laws such as the right to information act.

- More Reasons: No participatory institutions, opportunistic society.
- Sectors Affected: Policy (all areas of planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring)

5. Discussion

This paper concludes that Bangladesh is a very governance challenged country in regard to extracting the best out of government policy. These issues are not technical, but structural, interrelated and problems of political economy.

• Bureaucratic Inefficiency: Reform-Resistant Structures

Bureaucratic Bangladesh is inflexible, rigid, and fits the description of what the Institutional Theory clarifies about path dependency, i.e., institutions cannot alter, but they persist with what they have always operated on, they are inert to change. The policy can explicitly be long-term, but there are procedural bottlenecks that result in stalling implementation (Holbrook and Meier, 2015).

• Corruption: A Governance Failure Between the System

Corruption also emerged as a status quo at all levels of governance. Such is an environment in which few constraints exist on accountability of the public officials (agents) by citizens or elected officials (principals). Bangladesh has a small number of these institutions of control whose functions and autonomy are disrupted by the politics (Khan, 2017).

This increases the project costs and lack of trust in government institutions. Also, the performance audit is as scarce as the hens-teeth, the procurement process has become institutionalised and is the victim of the rent-seeking culture, and so on. Add to that impunity and corruption is turned into a high pay and low risk game.

• Political interference: Neutrality and continuity out the window

Bangladesh has a very political public administration. Indeed, promotional, posting, and allocation impetuses are more likely to be affected by partisanship rather than merit or resource demands. That still leaves it evolving into a system of civil servants being made to serve the political masters as opposed to serving the people.

With such priorities, as defined in the literature on governance, elite capture compromises the integrity of institutions. The issue is the political cycle that creates inconsistency, under-investment or lack of interest in longer-term development programs. The objectivity of the bureaucracy, which is a condition of stable implementation, is systematically destroyed.

- **Poor Local Governance Decentralization**

Although decentralization is provided in the constitution, this is also not the case. Central governments continue to appoint policymakers on the local level, finance local governments, staffing them and granting them the authority to make decisions required to provide services. This is the opposite of what the Good Governance Theory policy states that local empowerment is the most important one and that the policy framework (TGBD) must be context-sensitive.

Fiscal and administrative autonomy stifles the ability of local bodies to tailor national schemes to the needs of the locals. Scarcity of human and financial resources is likely to further weaken grassroots governance.

Minor Citizen Participation: Democracy Without Participation

- The policy process has little significant inclusion. Decision-making remains primarily a top-down innovation and consultation to the people is simply a formality. Among them is the law regarding the Right to Information written in document and, in fact, not followed properly in practice and people feedback systems do not work properly.
- This is contrary to the Participatory Governance Theory that argues that the more the citizens participate in decision making, the more legitimate the policy is; the priorities to be considered are those that satisfy the needs of members of society; and that the question of accountability is neutralized. Without engagement, transparency and trust, implementation in Bangladesh falls into the grip of elite- and other -narratives.

The Missing Middle is Cross-Cutting Insight Governance

Combined, these results indicate that the issue is not the absence of policies, but the absence of a government with the ability to enforce the policies. When the institutions that drive it are largely inefficient and politicized to an extent that the rest of the population is not engaged in it, creating the reality behind visionary plans like SDGs, Vision 2041, or Digital Bangladesh is not easy.

This gives us a full-grown policy environment up there, but one which is broken at the point of delivery. The best policies that can be developed will not be able to serve the citizens unless the governance systems are reformed.

- **Indian and Nigerian Comparative Lessons**

Empirical evidence of Transparency International 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) and enactment of the Right to Information (RTI) Act in Bangladesh has been employed to support the analysis presented in the study. Bangladesh recorded a CPI of 24 out of 100 in 2023, compared to a record low of 24 in 149th position in the world in 2012. The fall itself is a sign of system-wide issues with governance and corruption in the government. According to the index, Bangladesh is one of the top ten poorest countries, meaning that corruption is a major problem to overcome (Cohn, 2023).

One of the legislations that have been implemented to promote transparency and accountability in government institutions is the RTI Act, which was enacted in 2009. But its implementation is disputed. However, amazingly, in case we look at the Information Commission that administers the RTI Act, it has not had an appointed commissioner in the past six months, hence has impacted on its work. However, the RTI Act has ensured that citizens have the right to information to ensure the provision of better governance with more transparency (Cohn, 2023).

These empirical conclusions form the sound basis in the acquisition of knowledge of issues of governance in Bangladesh and the direction of recommendation of changes. The study by relying on real life findings, gives a clearer image of the actual events surrounding the systemic issues in the country in relation to the public policy and governance.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

With regard to the aspect of governance, the paper surveyed the status quo on the issues of the public policy implementation in Bangladesh. Although significant strides have been made since the turn of the millennium, which are reflected in long-term visions such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, Vision 2041 or Delta Plan 2100 Bangladesh is constrained in important ways in its efforts to translate policy into practice. Utilizing secondary data

assisted the research in establishing the structural and institutional obstacles to successful implementation through a qualitative, descriptive and interpretive methodology.

One can determine five most significant issues in governance and thematic analysis which include, the bureaucratic ineffectiveness, political interference and corruption, poor local governance, poor citizen engagement. However, the process of going through them also reveals some latent systematic vices and political facts that frustrate even the best designed public policies to achieve their alleged objectives.

Historical problems of dysfunction in the Bangladesh public sector include rigid bureaucracies, politicized decisions, rent-seeking behaviour and extremely centralised decisions. These results show that the Bangladeshi government is primarily top-down, hierarchical and sometimes secretive, themselves inhibiting responsiveness, accountability and citizen action. The response to the behavior itself will in effect close the top-end of the implementation gap, which is where top-level political ambitions or big economic reforms are not turning into positive effects on the ground, be that in the delivery of services or social impacts.

A number of theoretical notions guided the interpretation of these findings in study. In their Implementation Theory, Pressman and Wildavsky stated that lack of coordination and nested decision making lead to failure of the same policy, therefore, causing chaos. Principle- Agency Theory deals with bureaucratic discretion in the absence of adequate checks and balances. The Good Governance Theory is founded on the two core principles of transparency, accountability and citizen participation none of which is present at all in Bangladesh. The research findings show that the main problem in Bangladesh is not in the policies, but in the way the government works. The government structure creates obstacles to change and wants to remain in the same state. There is no direct participation of the people, due to which the policies are not implemented effectively. To make the policies successful, the active participation of the people must be ensured.

Bangladesh has many modern and progressive policies, but without proper reforms, they will not be successful or long-lasting. This requires building strong institutions, creating a professional and impartial bureaucracy, reducing political interference and giving importance to the voice of the people.

Therefore, governance reform is not just a technical development, it is a political necessity. It is not enough to just say "good governance"; deep reforms must be made in reality. Otherwise, Bangladesh's development will stall, and the gap between plans written on paper and real-life experience will increase.

Recommendations

- **Responsive Civil Service Reforms and a Dynamic Bureaucracy**

Necessary Reforms in Bangladesh Civil Service Bangladeshi Government Reforming the bureaucracy by depoliticization would ensure the better implementation of the more effective government through bureaucracy. The most critical delays and inefficiencies may be avoided with the increased inter-ministerial cooperation generated through simplification of administrative operations. We need to get rid of the system whereby government employment is given out on political basis and in its place clear system of recruitment and promotion system based on the belief that the civil service must be neutral and accountable to the state and to the people. Further, regular performance score, widespread professional growth, and culture of innovation among the populace will reduce bureaucracy to less rule-focused unwilling organization to more performance-focused civic organization based governance. These kinds of reforms are necessary to ensure the benefits of a well-crafted public policy become a wider reality.

- **Enhance Anti-Corruption Systems and Control**

It is highly important to fight corruption and enforcement of state policy in Bangladesh by strengthening anti-corruption infrastructures (oversight systems). The Anti-Corruption Commission and other oversight authorities must be free of any political interference by being independent, legally empowered, and adequately resourced. Public spending can be made more transparent through the introduction of digital procurement solutions and real-time spending dashboards, decreasing the human factor and providing fewer opportunities to manipulate the process. Additionally, this can be done, in a way that, performance audits of all government work must be implemented as compulsory and published transparently, which will instill accountability, demoralize doing things in a bad manner and regain the trust of the people and the government. This is imperative to create good and clean policy space.

- **Reduce Political interference in Administrative Processes**

In order to have a good and decent civil service of Bangladesh politics must keep their hands out of the administration process. It must ensure an effective institutional distance between the political and the administrative leadership in order that government officials are not exposed to partisan pressures and that appointments and promotions are not based on loyalty but on merit. The law needs to be changed to limit political interference in appointments and transfers, and the distribution of projects in the state sector. Additionally, integrity, professionalism and accountability in governance can be established through enforcing nonpartisan training and ethics programs among elected and appointed officials, including the Joint Taskforce Training Frameworks (JTTF).

- **Rapid Decentralization**

To ensure that policies are better implemented at the local level, the Bangladesh decentralisation strategy would be to delegate actual fiscal and administrative power to local governments, in particular planning, budgeting, and service provision. Local institutional delegating is too often nothing more than nominal: it must be sanctioned by legislation, and structural reform, so as to enable, not merely devolve responsibility. There are also such programs that look into development of programs that will assist to develop more of the capacity of local officials and the staff that in turn will prepare the staff respond better to all the needs that are coming forth of the community. In the meantime, however, legal frameworks must be demystified to allow decentralisation which is autonomous, accountable and transparent, in other words, enhancing citizen faith and community ownership of development programmes.

- **Make Citizen Participation Institutionalized**

Engagement of citizens in more open and responsive public policy is an institutional process that Bangladesh has to consider through the whole policy cycle. It also ensures voluntary community consultation and stakeholder engagement at important agenda, environment, implementation and evaluation phases to normalize policies to community interests. Similarly, the Right to Information (RTI) Act must be strengthened; the citizen and civil society must be assured access to quality, timely and complete information that is easy to understand (i.e. data made available in formats that can be easily worked on) by the government that is participatory, democratic and performance based in governance.

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