Role of Bangladesh Government in Making Accountability Effective (2009-Present)

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A R T I C L E I N F O

A B S T R A C T

The Bangladesh government has played a significant role in making accountability effective since 2009 through various initiatives and policies aimed at improving governance and transparency. In this study, we have endeavored to find out the problems and limitations of the government th```````at hinder making the government accountable. Numerous Constitutional Provisions ensure accountability including Articles 55, 56, 70, 76, 77, 93, and 94. Governmental and Non-governmental institutions are also concerned with making the government accountable and answerable like the Right to Information Act. 2009, Anti-government Commission, Information and Communication Act, Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), and so on. However, the government's commitment to promoting accountability and transparency is crucial in building public trust, fostering development, and combating corruption in the country. Finally, we proposed a model that will ensure accountability if the policymakers take it immediately.

INTRODUCTION`

Since 2009, Bangladesh has been undergoing a transformative journey in its socio-political landscape, marked by concerted efforts by the government to strengthen accountability mechanisms (Hasan, 2020). In this context, examining the role of the Bangladesh government in fostering accountability becomes imperative, considering its implications for governance, transparency, and socio-economic development. This introduction sets the stage for a comprehensive review of scholarly literature, empirical studies, and policy analyses concerning the government's endeavors to promote accountability from 2009 to the present. The foundation of effective governance lies in ensuring that those in power are answerable for their actions, decisions, and use of resources (Rahman & Sobhan, 2018). Accountability serves as a cornerstone in this regard, acting as a mechanism to hold individuals, institutions, and governments responsible for their conduct and performance (Ahmed & Islam, 2018). In Bangladesh, a country with a complex socio-political landscape and a history of governance challenges, enhancing accountability has emerged as a critical imperative for sustainable development and democratic consolidation (Khan, 2016). Over the past decade, the Bangladesh government has embarked on various initiatives aimed at bolstering accountability across different sectors. These efforts span institutional reforms, legal and policy frameworks, civil society engagement, and the integration of technology in governance processes. By understanding the scope, effectiveness, and challenges associated with these initiatives, it becomes possible to assess the trajectory of accountability in Bangladesh and identify areas for further improvement. This study seeks to delve into the scholarly discourse surrounding the role of the Bangladesh government in promoting accountability from 2009 onwards. Drawing on a range of academic contributions, empirical studies, and policy analyses, it aims to provide insights into the strategies, successes, and shortcomings of government-led efforts to strengthen accountability. By synthesizing existing knowledge in this field, this study aims to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the dynamics shaping accountability in Bangladesh and inform future policy directions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past decade, Bangladesh has witnessed significant socio-political transformations, with the government undertaking various initiatives to strengthen accountability mechanisms. This literature review aims to explore the role of the Bangladesh government in promoting accountability from 2009 to the present, highlighting key scholarly perspectives, empirical studies, and policy analyses in this field. Several scholars have analyzed the institutional framework for accountability in Bangladesh. (Alam, Siddique & Khanam, 2017) examined the role of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in combating corruption and promoting accountability. They found that while the ACC has made some progress, challenges such as political interference and resource constraints hinder its effectiveness. Researchers have also focused on legal and policy reforms aimed at enhancing accountability. (Rahman, 2019) explored the impact of the Right to Information Act (2009) on transparency and

accountability in Bangladesh. The study revealed that while the law has improved access to information, implementation challenges, and bureaucratic resistance remain obstacles to accountability. The role of civil society and media in promoting accountability has been a subject of scholarly inquiry. (Ahmed & Islam, 2018) analyzed the contribution of civil society organizations (CSOs) in monitoring government activities and advocating for accountability reforms. They highlighted the importance of CSO-government collaboration in addressing governance challenges. With the increasing use of technology in governance, scholars have examined the role of e-governance initiatives in enhancing accountability. (Hossain & Rahman, 2020) investigated the impact of digitalization on service delivery and citizen engagement. They found that while e-governance has improved efficiency, concerns regarding data security and privacy need to be addressed to ensure accountability. Several studies have identified challenges and opportunities in promoting accountability in Bangladesh. (Khan, 2016) discussed the role of political will and institutional capacity in tackling corruption and improving governance. The study emphasized the need for comprehensive reforms and multi-stakeholder engagement to address systemic issues.

1. Research Goals

1. To scrutinize the present condition of the accountability of the government of Bangladesh.
2. To find out the problems and limitations of the government that hinder making the government accountable.
3. To build an effective Roadmap for the government as well as the people to be effective and accountable administration.

METHODOLOGY

To identify the issues and constraints facing the government in its efforts to be an accountable administration, we have employed both qualitative and quantitative methodologies in this study. For this research, information was gathered from books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and reports from governmental and non-governmental, international, and authoritative bodies, along with specific articles from print and digital news outlets. Microsoft Office Home and Student (2019) was used for data scrutiny and analysis.
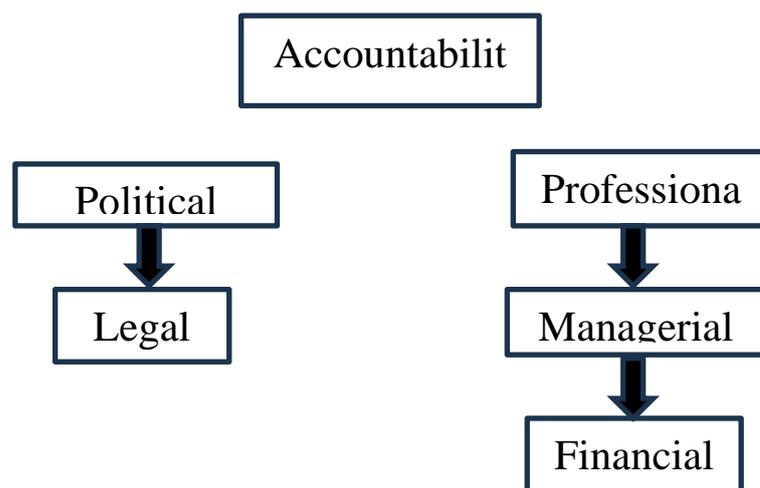
RESEARCH RESULT

1. **Why accountability is mandatory in every single country to be an accountable and transparent government?**

It is determined that accountability is a necessary component of a successful government. It can be difficult to set up a governance structure that guarantees an efficient, just, and responsive government in new states without a long history of operating under an operational system of accountability. Following its declaration of independence in 1971, Bangladesh has experienced a

multitude of issues. The nation's progress has been hampered by military involvement, political unrest, natural disasters, overcrowding, corruption, and
 a host of other issues. The British and Pakistani governments' post-colonial legacies have proven to be a significant barrier, and attempts to guarantee effective governance have been ineffective due to a peculiar combination of factors and situations (Huque, 2011). In Bangladesh, bureaucratic accountability is nothing new. The public's annoyance and unhappiness with Punjabis' military bureaucratic domination and the widening divide between Pakistan's two wings culminated in the establishment of Bangladesh in 1971. Bangladesh thus faced a pressing need to build, among other things, a responsible administration suitable for the altered socio-political atmosphere at the time of independence (Hossen, 2023). What is transparent to one is monitored by another. Persecutors are those who hold others accountable (Fox, 2007).

Figure 1. The figure shows the typology of Accountability.

Source: Day and Klein, 1987

Table 1. Accountability Framework.

Internal		External	
Formal Mechanism	**Informal Mechanism**	**Formal Mechanism**	**Informal Mechanism**
❖ **Rules.** ❖ **codes of conduct.** ❖ **Hierarchies.** ❖ **performance reviews.**	❖ organizational culture. ❖ professional ethics. ❖ peer pressure	❖ Legislative committees and parliamentary questions. ❖ authority of political leaders over government organizations. ❖ administrative courts and ombudsman.	❖ public hearings, interest groups. ❖ opinion polls. ❖ media

(Source: Huque, 2011)

Political accountability refers to the obligation of individuals or organizations to answer to elected officials or governing bodies, ensuring alignment with public interests and policies. Financial accountability involves the transparent management of resources and the responsibility to report on financial matters. Professional accountability pertains to adherence to ethical standards, codes of conduct, and professional norms within a specific field. Managerial accountability entails the responsibility of managers to achieve set objectives, utilize resources efficiently, and oversee organizational operations effectively. Legal accountability involves compliance with laws, regulations, and legal obligations, ensuring actions are within the boundaries of the law.

Romzek and Dubnik (1991) classified accountability according to the degree of control (tight or loose) and the source of control (internal or external). DeLeon asserts that "different accountability mechanisms are appropriate in different circumstances." And stated that it is contingent "upon the nature of the issues it is intended to address" (DeLeon, 1998, p. 553). To guarantee more responsibility to citizens for public activities and outcomes, a variety of techniques and strategies may be taken into consideration for nations like Bangladesh. When citizens have greater access to information, there is more pressure to improve accountability in several areas, including prioritizing national spending, ensuring that quality schools are accessible, ensuring that roads are constructed once plans are finalized, and ensuring that medications are supplied and available in health centers. For impoverished individuals and pro-poor coalitions to be able to demand accountability from both public and private sector organizations, they must have access to laws and fair justice.

The present condition of accountability of the government of Bangladesh
1. Parliament and Accountability

The role of the Bangladesh government in ensuring accountability is crucial for maintaining transparency, integrity, and good governance within the country. The constitutional basis for ensuring accountability in Bangladesh can

be found in several provisions of the Constitution of Bangladesh, adopted in 1972.

Article 55: This article of the Constitution outlines the principle of collective responsibility of the cabinet to the Jatiya Sangsad (National Parliament). It states that the cabinet, headed by the Prime Minister, is collectively responsible to the parliament.

Article 56: Article 56 delineates the duties of the Prime Minister. It specifies that the Prime Minister shall be appointed by the President and must be a member of parliament who, in the President's opinion, commands the confidence of the majority of the members of parliament.

Article 70: Article 70 has been a subject of controversy in Bangladesh regarding the accountability of lawmakers to their respective political parties. It stipulates that a member of parliament elected as a candidate of a political party shall vacate his or her seat if he or she resigns from that party or votes against the party whip in parliament. This provision has been criticized for potentially stifling dissent and inhibiting the accountability of lawmakers to their constituents.

Article 76: The Bangladesh Constitution requires a minimum of two parliamentary committees:
1. A Public Accounts Committee
2. A Privileges Committee

Standing committees are permanent legislative committees that establish various policies and provide legislative oversight. They can enhance legislation, manage public expenditures, and generally oversee the Executive. Committees are the expanded legislative branch's operational arms. Every governmental agency and department's financial statements are under the scrutiny of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Standing committees are indispensable in fostering governmental accountability within parliamentary systems. By specializing in various policy domains, these committees facilitate thorough examinations of government actions and decisions. Through regular reviews, inquiries, and oversight, they ensure transparency and responsiveness from the executive branch to the legislature and the public. Standing committees serve as watchdogs, scrutinizing budget allocations, legislative proposals, and executive conduct, thus deterring corruption, incompetence, and abuse of power. Additionally, their investigative powers empower them to summon officials, conduct hearings, and gather evidence, holding government actors accountable for their actions. Moreover, standing committees offer a platform for citizen engagement, allowing diverse voices to influence policy formulation and implementation. In essence, these committees act as critical guardians of democratic principles, reinforcing governmental transparency, integrity, and trustworthiness in the eyes of the public.

Article 77: The Ombudsman is a constitutional institution. Bangladesh Constitution ensures to creation of the post for the development of administration accountability. Ombudsman serve as essential guardians of accountability by providing impartial oversight and redress mechanisms in

governmental affairs. Their role is paramount in ensuring that public officials and institutions uphold ethical standards, adhere to legal frameworks, and remain transparent in their actions. By investigating complaints of maladministration, corruption, or abuse of power, ombudsman hold government entities accountable to the public, promoting fairness and equity in decision-making processes. Furthermore, ombudsman act as intermediaries between citizens and the state, offering accessible avenues for grievances and concerns to be addressed. Through their independence and authority, they foster public trust in governmental institutions and enhance the legitimacy of democratic governance. Ultimately, the ombudsman plays a vital role in maintaining the checks and balances necessary for accountable, responsive, and ethical governance, thereby safeguarding the rights and interests of citizens.

Article 93: At any time when (Parliament stands dissolved or is not in session), if the president is satisfied the circumstances exist which render immediate action necessary, he may enact and promulgate Ordinances as the situation seems to call for. Once an Ordinance is enacted, it will have the same legal effect as a Parliamentary Act.

Article 94: Article 94 There shall be a Supreme Court for Bangladesh (to be known as the Supreme Court of Bangladesh) compromising the Appellate Division and the High Court Division. The Supreme Court of a country typically holds a pivotal role in its legal and governmental system. One of the primary roles of a Supreme Court is to interpret the constitution of the country. It decides on the constitutionality of laws, executive actions, and governmental policies. In many legal systems, the Supreme Court serves as the highest court of appeal. It reviews decisions made by lower courts and has the final say on legal matters. The Supreme Court plays a crucial role in upholding the rule of law. It ensures that laws are applied fairly and consistently across the country, thereby promoting stability and justice. Supreme Courts often protect fundamental rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitution. They may strike down laws or government actions that infringe upon these rights. Supreme Courts typically have the power of judicial review, allowing them to review the constitutionality of legislative and executive actions. This power serves as a check on the other branches of government. By exercising judicial review and serving as a check on the actions of the legislative and executive branches, the Supreme Court contributes to the system of checks and balances within a government. These constitutional provisions establish the framework for the accountability of the government to the parliament in Bangladesh. However, the effective implementation of these principles often depends on various factors, including the political dynamics within the country.

Accountability Techniques

1 *Separation of Powers*

The Constitution of Bangladesh provides for a separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. This separation ensures a system of checks and balances, with each branch holding

the others accountable. For instance, the legislature (Parliament) scrutinizes the actions of the executive through various mechanisms such as question sessions, debates, and parliamentary committees. The Jatiya Sangsad, or National Parliament, holds legislative authority, while the executive power is vested in the President, serving as the ceremonial head of state, and the Prime Minister, as the head of government. The judiciary, embodied in the Supreme Court, operates independently to interpret laws, adjudicate disputes, and ensure constitutional adherence. This system fosters checks and balances, preventing the concentration of power in any single branch and promoting accountability, transparency, and the rule of law in Bangladesh.

2 *Anti-Corruption Measures*

The government of Bangladesh has established institutions such as the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to combat corruption and ensure accountability within the government and public sector. The ACC is tasked with investigating and prosecuting cases of corruption, thereby holding public officials accountable for their actions. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in Bangladesh is tasked with combating corruption across various sectors of society. Its primary role includes investigating allegations of corruption, prosecuting individuals involved in corrupt practices, and preventing corruption through awareness campaigns and educational initiatives. The ACC has the authority to conduct inquiries, summon witnesses, and gather evidence to uncover instances of corruption. Furthermore, the ACC collaborates with other law enforcement agencies and government departments to address systemic issues contributing to corruption. It also works closely with international organizations and foreign governments to tackle cross-border corruption and money laundering. The Commission plays a crucial role in promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity in Bangladesh's public and private sectors. By holding individuals and institutions accountable for corrupt behavior, the ACC contributes to fostering a culture of honesty, ethical governance, and fair play in the country.

3 *Legal Framework*

The government has enacted various laws and regulations to promote accountability and transparency. For example, the Right to Information Act, of 2009, provides citizens with the right to access information held by public authorities, enabling greater transparency and accountability in government activities. The Right to Information Act (RTI Act) of Bangladesh was enacted in 2009 to facilitate access to information held by public authorities, promoting transparency, accountability, and good governance. The Act was a response to the need for increased transparency and citizen participation in government processes. It establishes citizens' right to access information held by public authorities and mandates proactive disclosure of certain categories of information. The formation of the RTI Act involved extensive consultations with civil society organizations, legal experts, and stakeholders to ensure its effectiveness in promoting openness and accountability in governance. The Act provides mechanisms for citizens to request information from public authorities

and establishes Information Commissions at both national and sub-national levels to oversee its implementation and address disputes. The primary task of the RTI Act is to empower citizens by providing them with access to information about government policies, decisions, and actions. By fostering transparency and accountability, the Act strengthens democratic governance and enhances public trust in institutions. Additionally, the Act helps combat corruption by enabling citizens to scrutinize government activities and hold public officials accountable for their actions.

4 *Right to Information Act, 2009*

The Right to Information Act 2009 was enacted by the Government of Bangladesh in the first session of the 9th Parliament. Government and non-government organizations can greatly increase their responsiveness to citizens by making use of the opportunities presented by the Act. The Act was passed in response to both domestic and international demands for greater transparency within the various sectors. The main political parties in Bangladesh have placed a strong emphasis on policy, and the problem of governance has dominated the country's politics for the past 20 years. Reform in their manifestoes. Among other things, both of the major political parties have made increasing public access to information a top priority on their agendas. The most challenging part of any new law or policy is putting it into practice, even though adopting the RTI legislation was an important first step. The implementation stage is much more of a challenge than that of drafting or the passage through the legislature, Some of the implementation challenges of a right-to-information act are (a) The attitude of the officials entrusted with providing information; (b) Capacity limitations concerning the creation and maintenance of records; (c) Inadequate infrastructure and resources to execute the Act: (d) the need for training and capacity of staff and (e) the need for public awareness about the Act. Any institutional framework for the RTI Act's implementation in Bangladesh must consider these elements as they are all relevant. A significant institutional step has been made under the Act: essential rules and regulations have been formulated and an independent Information Commission has been constituted. After the enactment of the RTI Act, the government promptly established the Information. Commission (IC) and designated two additional Commissioners in addition to the Chief Information Commissioner (CIC). The IC has undertaken several very important activities since its inception. The Information Commission has created the relevant regulations, while the Ministry of Information has developed the rules required by the Act. Designated Officers (more than 20,000 in December 2014) have been appointed by various organizations to provide information under the RTI Act. The media, especially electronic media, has been effectively engaged by the IC to motivate people to utilize the recently created right to obtain information. By holding public meetings in every district to increase public awareness and by training Designated Officers, the IC is making significant strides toward implementing the RTI. 4. Despite the advancements, a 2013 poll revealed that the public's understanding of the RTI Act is low, which in turn results in a low number of RTI requests being filed. In addition, the Information Commission's annual

reports note that more than 10,000 RTI requests were filed annually, but many of these related to general information requests which could have been handled by proactive disclosure. More accurate numbers have been provided in the IC's most recent yearly reports. On the supply side, the survey revealed that a significant number of Designated Officers were unaware that they had been appointed as such, and only 25% of them claimed to have received any RTI training. This suggests that, despite the introduction of RTI training in the Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre's (BPATC) regular program for officials, this has not been adequate. To guarantee that there are more strategic and long-lasting efforts to implement the RTI Act, the Government and the IC have collaborated to create this Strategic Plan 2015–2021. Representatives from the Cabinet Division, Information Commission, and Ministry of Information formed an RTI Working Group in 2014. This Strategic Plan for implementing the RTI Act has been developed under the direction of the Working Group. The Information Commission will take the lead in putting the Act into practice as an independent statutory organization. In the spirit of the National Integrity Strategy and the application of the RTI Act 2009, the Cabinet Division has committed to offering full cooperation to the Information Commission and all other stakeholders. Additionally, they have brought together the relevant parties, such as the Information Commission, several line ministries, and district and upazila administrative units, by using their convening power and leadership. In summary, a great deal has happened in the six years since the RTI Act was first proposed. Nevertheless, for the Act to be implemented, additional deliberate and long-lasting efforts will be needed.

5 *Information and Communication Technology Act*

The 2013 amendment of the Information and Commission (ICT) Act, 2006 is another byproduct of the Right to Information in Bangladesh. The Awami League as a political party before forming the government promised in 2008 to build a 'Digital Bangladesh' (Karim, 2010), and this ICT Act was amended to institutionalize that political agenda into reality. This Act directed all public offices to have their websites including the offices of elected representatives and publish all information (including the financial and budgetary). This legal framework was a landmark for ensuring accountability through a transparency mechanism (Khan, 2015). The making of digital Bangladesh brought new mechanisms of transparency and accountability. Access to Information (a2i), a jointly run project by the Government of Bangladesh and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been working to make all important information disclosed before the public. In 2014, Bangladesh launched the largest public web portal in the world containing 25,000 websites of public offices at the national, regional, and local levels (Islam, 2014). These websites are continuously updating information about necessary information that helps political leaders to explain their decisions and policies as well as to bring transparency. Due to this political commitment to bring transparency and accountability through e-governance, the whole accountability organism got improved. Freedom of information and proactive disclosure are the key factors here. Before political leaders (national

and local level representatives such as MPs, local government leaders, and politically nominated or elected officials) used to receive funds for implementing varied development projects. Now, the information regarding who got what is all published on their respective ministry or government office websites. Information regarding budget, tendering, job opportunities, and beneficiaries gets published. Social safety net programs can be cited as a good example. Before, local political leaders used to utilize programs like cash transfers as a means of providing benefits to their relatives and supporters. Now, the list of beneficiaries gets published on local government websites. This transparency helps make political leaders accountable (Khan, 2010). Proactive disclosure has also enforced accountability to the top leaders of the government including the ministers and advisors. An excellent illustration of how it functions as a one-stop shop for all information pertaining to foreign assistance in Bangladesh is the Aid Information Management System (AIMS). Information from donors about the nation's development initiatives and associated aid flows is logged and processed by AIMS. Several years back people did not have an idea how much foreign aid money was coming to the country and how much of it was being spent on particular projects. Journalists had to use their investigative skills to reveal the information before people. Now, the AIMS web portal publishes all this information including aid and projects allocated for ministries, MPs, and local political leaders. Besides these proactive actions, as Uddin (2015 p, 36) noted electronic tendering has created opportunities to make the whole public procurement process transparent and accountable. The ICT institutions within the sphere of political commitment towards good governance through electronic means have paved the way for civil society organizations and news media to ask questions to the political leaders on behalf of the citizens. Nowadays, before making any decisions regarding a policy, law, or -bill, the government publishes a draft on its respective public website where people can criticize, suggest, or comment on the policy. If there is anything flawed, civil society organizations and media can make it a public agenda and ask the government to change or adjust it before it passes through the Parliament or the Cabinet. Thus, the whole information and disclosure system is helping elected political leaders be accountable before citizens.

6 *Judicial Oversight*

Judicial review in Bangladesh refers to the power of the judiciary to examine the actions of the legislative and executive branches of government and determine whether they are consistent with the constitution. This power is crucial for upholding the rule of law, ensuring the separation of powers, and safeguarding individual rights and liberties (Hossan et. al., 2023). The concept of judicial review in Bangladesh is rooted in its constitution, which provides for an independent judiciary and grants the Supreme Court the authority to interpret the constitution and adjudicate disputes between branches of government. Article 102 of the Constitution of Bangladesh explicitly vests the High Court Division of the Supreme Court with the power of judicial review. It states that the High Court Division shall have the authority to issue writs, orders, and directions for the enforcement of fundamental rights and to review

the constitutionality of laws, executive actions, and administrative decisions. This provision empowers the judiciary to scrutinize governmental actions and strike down those that violate the Constitution or infringe upon fundamental rights.

One notable example of judicial review in Bangladesh is the case of Anwar Hossain Chowdhury v. Bangladesh (2016). In this case, the petitioner challenged the constitutionality of certain provisions of the Vested Property Return Act, 2001, which allowed the government to confiscate property belonging to religious and ethnic minorities. The High Court Division, exercising its power of judicial review, declared the provisions unconstitutional as they violated the fundamental rights guaranteed by the constitution, including the rights to equality and non-discrimination. The court's decision underscored the importance of judicial review in safeguarding minority rights and preventing government overreach.

Another significant case demonstrating judicial review in Bangladesh is Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) v. Government of Bangladesh (2010). In this landmark case, BELA, an environmental advocacy group, challenged the legality of the lease agreements granted by the government for the extraction of natural gas in the Sundarbans, the biggest mangrove forest in the world and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The High Court Division, upon reviewing the case, found that the lease agreements were granted without conducting proper environmental impact assessments and without obtaining the requisite approvals from the relevant authorities. As a result, the court nullified the lease agreements, emphasizing the government's obligation to protect the environment and uphold sustainable development principles. These cases illustrate the vital role of judicial review in Bangladesh's legal system. By subjecting governmental actions to constitutional scrutiny, the judiciary acts as a check on the executive and legislative power, ensuring that they remain within the bounds of the Constitution and respect individual rights and liberties. Judicial review promotes accountability, transparency, and the rule of law, thereby strengthening democratic governance and promoting respect for human rights (Hossan, 2023).

In conclusion, judicial review is an essential feature of Bangladesh's constitutional framework, empowering the judiciary to uphold the supremacy of the constitution and protect individual rights. Through landmark decisions, such as those discussed above, the courts have demonstrated their commitment to ensuring that governmental actions are consistent with constitutional principles and serve the public interest. As Bangladesh continues to evolve as a democratic society, the institution of judicial review will remain indispensable in safeguarding the rights and liberties of its citizens (Hossan, 2024).

7 *Civil Society and Media*

The government also recognizes the role of civil society organizations and the media in promoting accountability and transparency. These actors act as watchdogs, monitoring government activities, exposing corruption and malpractice, and advocating for accountability measures. Social media plays a significant role in ensuring accountability in Bangladesh by providing a

platform for citizens to voice their concerns, hold public officials and institutions accountable, and facilitate transparency in governance. With the widespread adoption of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, citizens in Bangladesh have found new avenues to express their opinions, share information, and organize movements for social and political change. Social media enables real-time dissemination of news and information, allowing citizens to quickly uncover and expose instances of corruption, abuse of power, or misconduct by public officials. Moreover, social media serves as a tool for citizen journalism, empowering individuals to report on events and issues that may not receive coverage in traditional media outlets. Through citizen-led initiatives and online activism, social media users in Bangladesh can mobilize public support, pressure authorities to address grievances, and demand accountability from government institutions. Additionally, social media platforms provide a space for public discourse and debate, allowing citizens to engage directly with policymakers, elected representatives, and government agencies. By amplifying citizen voices, fostering transparency, and facilitating public scrutiny of government actions, social media contributes to strengthening democratic accountability and promoting good governance practices in Bangladesh. However, it's essential to acknowledge the challenges, such as the spread of misinformation and the potential for online harassment or intimidation, which need to be addressed to maximize the positive impact of social media on accountability efforts.

8 *Transparency International Bangladesh*

The independent, non-governmental, nonpartisan, and nonprofit organization Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) was founded in 1993. It is a national chapter of the global anti-corruption NGO, Transparency International. The current 2014-2019 strategy, Building Integrity Blocks for Effective Change (BIBEC)15 aims to strengthen a series of mutually supportive and reinforcing "integrity blocks" to effectively reduce corruption"Blocks" in this context refer to the nation's major institutions, laws and policies, training programs, ethics, and values—above all, its citizens (TIB 2014). It is now the only organization in Bangladesh that focuses exclusively on combating corruption and engages in both policy and research. TIB conducts diagnostic studies, household surveys, as well as national integrity system and Sustainable Development Goals assessments. In addition, it operates a parliament watch program and issues a citizen report card (TIB 2018a). TIB also has an option on its website to report corruption (TIB 2018a) and states that though the organization has no power to act on the incidents being reported, the information is used for research purposes and the ACC is informed about them as well (TIB 2018a).

9 *SHUJAN - Citizens for Good Governance*

Shujan, which identifies itself as a non-partisan pressure group, was founded in 2002 by a group of concerned citizens to encourage transparent

politics, accountable government, electoral reforms, democracy, and decentralization (SHUJAN 2018). It seeks to present the "voice of the people" to the government, policymakers, and service-providing institutions (SHUJAN 2018). It consists of a decentralized network of committed individuals from the capital city down to the villages (Hossan and Alom, 2024). It is not supported by donors but is a volunteer-based movement in which citizens invest time and money to continue their work (Hossan et. al., 2024).

The Challenges in Making Accountability Effective

The Bangladesh government faces several challenges in making accountability effective across various sectors. These challenges include:

Corruption and Political Interference: Corruption remains pervasive in Bangladesh, undermining accountability efforts. Political interference often hampers the independence of oversight institutions, hindering their ability to effectively investigate allegations of corruption and hold accountable those responsible, especially if they are politically connected.

Weak Legal Frameworks and Enforcement: Despite existing laws and regulations, the legal framework for ensuring accountability is often weak and inadequately enforced. Loopholes in legislation and lax enforcement contribute to impunity for wrongdoing, discouraging compliance with ethical standards and accountability measures.

Limited Resources and Capacity: Many government institutions tasked with ensuring accountability lack sufficient resources, expertise, and capacity to fulfill their mandates effectively. This includes anti-corruption agencies, audit offices, and judicial bodies, which often struggle to handle the volume and complexity of cases, leading to delays and inefficiencies in the accountability process.

Culture of Impunity: A culture of impunity persists in Bangladesh, where individuals responsible for corruption and malfeasance often go unpunished or receive lenient sanctions. This erodes public trust in government institutions and undermines efforts to promote accountability, as perpetrators feel emboldened to engage in corrupt practices without fear of consequences.

Lack of Transparency and Access to Information: Limited transparency and restricted access to information pose significant obstacles to accountability. Government agencies often withhold critical information from the public, hindering citizens' ability to monitor government activities, scrutinize decision-making processes, and hold public officials accountable for their actions.

Whistleblower Vulnerability: Whistleblowers who expose corruption and wrongdoing face significant risks, including harassment, intimidation, and retaliation. The lack of robust whistleblower protection mechanisms leaves individuals vulnerable to reprisals, discouraging them from reporting misconduct and inhibiting the detection and prosecution of corrupt practices.

Political Will and Leadership: Despite commitments to combat corruption and promote accountability, political will and leadership remain inconsistent and sometimes lacking. Political leaders may prioritize short-term gains over long-term reforms, compromise accountability measures for political

expediency, or fail to hold themselves and their colleagues accountable for misconduct.

Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from the Bangladesh government, civil society, and international partners. Strengthening legal frameworks, enhancing the independence and capacity of oversight institutions, promoting transparency and access to information, and fostering a culture of accountability are essential steps toward improving accountability across sectors in Bangladesh. Additionally, investing in anti-corruption measures, whistleblower protection, and promoting ethical leadership are crucial for overcoming the challenges and building a more accountable governance system in Bangladesh.
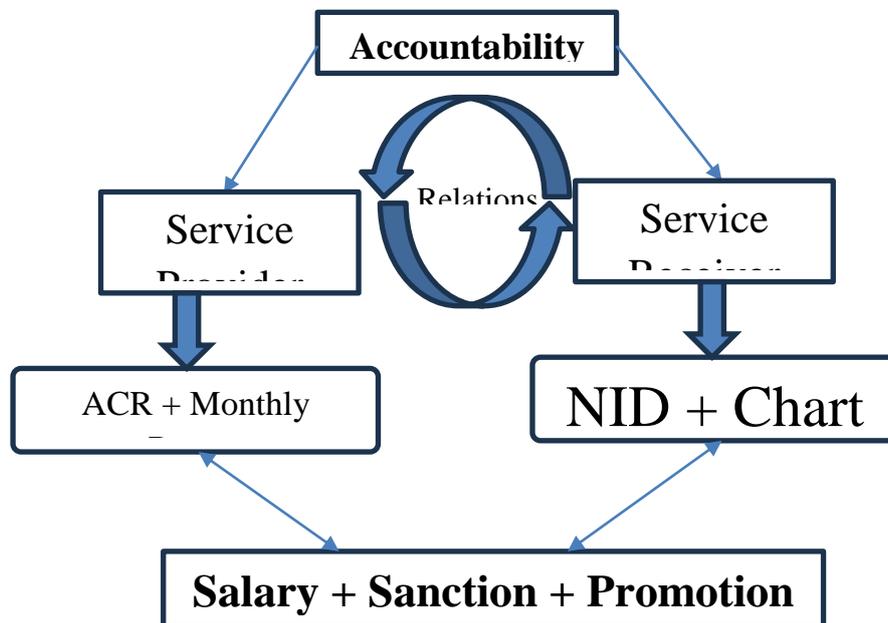
4. The Proposed Model of Accountability

Figure 2. The proposed figure indicates accountability.

There are two actors in the context of accountability one Service Provider and another Service Receiver. They must have a good understanding as well as a relationship. The monthly activities of the Service Provider will remain in their profile as like Annual Confidential Report (ACR). The Service Receiver will hold their services on their profile also. All the mechanisms must be visible online. Service Provider's Salary and Promotion will depend on their performance level. If this model is applicable, the administration or authority will be transparent as well as accountable.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the Bangladesh government has made significant strides in enhancing accountability from 2009 to the present, although challenges persist. Through legislative reforms, institutional strengthening, and anti-

corruption measures, the government has demonstrated a commitment to promoting transparency, integrity, and good governance. The enactment of key legislation such as the Right to Information Act (2009) and the establishment of institutions like the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) have laid the foundation for accountability mechanisms in the country. Additionally, initiatives such as digitalization of government services and e-governance have improved accessibility and efficiency, reducing opportunities for corruption and enhancing public trust. However, the effectiveness of accountability measures is hindered by factors such as political interference, weak enforcement mechanisms, and limited resources. The government must prioritize the implementation of existing laws and policies, strengthen oversight mechanisms, and foster a culture of accountability across all sectors. Furthermore, there is a need for greater transparency in public procurement processes, financial management, and decision-making to address systemic challenges and root out corruption. Civil society engagement, media freedom, and public participation are also crucial for holding the government accountable and ensuring that citizens' voices are heard. Moving forward, sustained efforts to strengthen accountability, promote transparency, and combat corruption are essential for fostering inclusive development, upholding the rule of law, and building a prosperous future for Bangladesh. By working collaboratively with stakeholders, embracing innovation, and upholding democratic principles, the Bangladesh government can continue to make strides towards achieving greater accountability and good governance for the benefit of all its citizens.

Conflict of Interest
The authors have stated that they have no conflicting interests.

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