

## Unveiling the Dynamics: Trends and Crises of Administrative Accountability in Bangladesh

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### ABSTRACT

This paper examines the trends and crises surrounding administrative accountability in Bangladesh from 2009 to the present. Bangladesh, characterized by its complex political landscape and socio-economic challenges, faces significant hurdles in ensuring transparency and integrity within its administrative institutions. Drawing upon a comprehensive review of academic literature, official reports, and empirical evidence, this study analyzes the evolution of administrative accountability mechanisms and explores the factors shaping their effectiveness. Key themes include the role of oversight bodies, legal frameworks, and institutional structures in promoting or impeding accountability within the Bangladeshi administrative system. The paper also investigates prominent crises and scandals that have exposed vulnerabilities in the accountability framework, highlighting their origins, impacts, and implications for governance. Through rigorous analysis and synthesis of existing literature, this study aims to contribute to scholarly discourse and policy debates on administrative accountability in Bangladesh. By identifying critical challenges and opportunities, it provides a foundation for informed decision-making and strategic interventions to strengthen accountability mechanisms in the country.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Administrative accountability, the cornerstone of effective governance, serves as a vital mechanism for ensuring transparency, integrity, and responsiveness within governmental institutions. In Bangladesh, a nation marked by its rich cultural heritage and dynamic socio-political landscape, the pursuit of administrative accountability has been both a perennial challenge and an evolving endeavor. This paper embarks on a comprehensive exploration of the trends and crises surrounding administrative accountability in Bangladesh from 2009 to the present. Whereas the constitution of Bangladesh ensures constitutional rules and regulations of accountability (Mahmud, Hossan, and Huda, 2024). Since the dawn of the new millennium, Bangladesh has experienced significant shifts across its political, social, and economic spheres. The period spanning from 2009 to the present has been characterized by notable political transitions, socioeconomic transformations, and advancements in governance structures. Amidst these changes, the question of administrative accountability has assumed heightened significance, as stakeholders grapple with the imperatives of transparency, efficiency, and ethical conduct within the administrative apparatus. If it is possible to ensure accountability, overall development would be possible (Hossan and Alom, 2024). Against this backdrop, it becomes imperative to dissect the prevailing trends shaping administrative accountability in Bangladesh. Notably, there has been a discernible emphasis on anti-corruption measures and the promotion of transparency initiatives during this period (Hossan, 2023). The establishment of oversight bodies, legislative reforms, and technological interventions reflect concerted efforts to fortify accountability mechanisms and curb malfeasance within the administrative framework. However, despite these endeavors, the specter of corruption scandals and institutional weaknesses continues to loom large, underscoring the formidable challenges in achieving substantive progress in administrative accountability.

Considering these multifaceted dynamics, grassroots mobilization and civil society activism emerge as potent catalysts for accountability reforms in Bangladesh. Civil society organizations, media advocacy, and citizen engagement serve as vital forces in exposing corruption, mobilizing public pressure, and driving systemic change within the administrative sphere. The citizens should be aware of the activities of Govt. to be good citizens in the modern era (Hossan, Islam, and Khatun, 2023). Thus, this study paper endeavors to delve into the intricate interplay of trends and crises shaping administrative accountability in Bangladesh. By interrogating the intersections of power, politics, bureaucracy, and societal dynamics, this paper aims to offer nuanced insights into the challenges and opportunities inherent in fostering administrative accountability within the Bangladeshi context. The integrated efforts would help to find out the limitations and problems of the government and how to solve and implement effective efforts to eliminate corruption across the country.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- a) To analyze the historical trends of administrative accountability in Bangladesh from 2009 to the present, identifying key developments, reforms, and challenges.
- b) To investigate the mechanisms and frameworks in place for ensuring administrative accountability in Bangladesh during the specified period.
- c) To assess the effectiveness of existing accountability mechanisms in the Bangladeshi administrative system, including oversight bodies, legal frameworks, and institutional structures.
- d) To identify the major crises or scandals that have impacted administrative accountability in Bangladesh during the study period, examining their causes, consequences, and implications for governance.
- e) To explore the role of political, social, and economic factors in shaping administrative accountability practices and outcomes in Bangladesh.
- f) To examine the relationship between administrative accountability and good governance in Bangladesh, highlighting areas of progress and areas needing improvement.

### **METHODOLOGY**

In this article, we have used qualitative research techniques. We collect information basically from peer-reviewed journals, books, news articles, governmental offices, and recent observances.

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Bangladesh, since its independence in 1971, has grappled with various challenges in establishing robust administrative accountability mechanisms (Hossan, Islam, and Khatun, 2024). The country emerged from a tumultuous period of conflict and political upheaval, seeking to build a democratic governance framework amidst economic hardships and social transformations. Bangladesh's administrative accountability was characterized by political unrest and military incursions in the early decades following independence, which frequently impeded the growth of open and accountable institutions.. The absence of strong democratic traditions and the legacy of authoritarian rule posed significant obstacles to effective governance. The 1990s witnessed a transition towards democratic governance, with the restoration of multiparty democracy and the introduction of electoral reforms. However, administrative accountability remained elusive, as entrenched political interests and institutional weaknesses continued to undermine transparency and integrity within the administrative apparatus. The period following the turn of the millennium saw renewed efforts to address the challenges of administrative accountability in Bangladesh. The government introduced various reforms aimed at enhancing transparency, combating corruption, and strengthening institutional oversight. Initiatives such as the establishment of anti-corruption commissions, enactment of access to information laws, and implementation of e-governance initiatives reflected a growing recognition of the importance of

administrative accountability in promoting good governance and sustainable development (Hossan, 2024).

In Bangladesh, administrative accountability has experienced both advancements and regressions since 2009. The government has undertaken various measures to strengthen accountability mechanisms, including the establishment of specialized anti-corruption courts, the adoption of digital platforms for service delivery, and the enactment of laws to promote transparency in public procurement processes. In summary, the historical background of administrative accountability in Bangladesh provides valuable insights into the complex socio-political dynamics and institutional challenges that have shaped governance practices in the country. Understanding this historical context is crucial for analyzing the trends and crises surrounding administrative accountability from 2009 to the present and identifying strategies for strengthening accountability mechanisms in the future.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is synonymous with answerability, culpability, liability, and the obligation to explain in the context of ethics and governance. As a part of governance, it has been at the center of discussions about issues in the public, nonprofit, private, and individual contexts. In leadership positions, accountability refers to taking ownership of and accountability for decisions, actions, outcomes, and policies, including administration, governance, and implementation. It also involves reporting, defending, and answering for any consequences that arise. Within the realm of governance, accountability has transcended the notion of merely being held accountable for one's conduct. The connection between two people is sometimes characterized as one of accounting; for example, "A is accountable to B when A is obliged to inform B about as (past or future) actions and decisions to justify them and to suffer punishment in the case of eventual misconduct." In other words, good accounting procedures are necessary for accountability to exist; in other words, improper accounting practices exclude responsibility. Another key area that contributes to accountability is good records management.

## DEFINITION OF ACCOUNTABILITY

**Here are some scholarly definitions of accountability:**

**According to David Mechanic,** "Accountability is the obligation to explain and justify one's actions to others. "

**According to James Coleman,** Accountability is the state of being answerable for one's actions or decisions".

**According to Joseph Raj,** Accountability is the act of holding someone responsible for their actions or decisions.

**According to Sissela Bak,** Accountability is a principle that emphasizes the importance of transparency, responsibility, and answerability in all aspects of life.

**A standard dictionary definition** of accountability reads as follows:

The trait or state of being accountable, particularly the duty or readiness to take ownership of one's acts and account for them, is known as accountability.

## TYPES OF ACCOUNTABILITIES

There are four types of accountabilities such as:

- a) Corporate accountability
- b) Political accountability
- c) Government accountability
- d) Media accountability

## ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY

With the expansion of democratic political systems in recent decades, administrative has become increasingly important. Accountable, transparent, and open public administration is necessary for a democratic society to function.<sup>5</sup> In order to effectively ensure a check on the power and authority wielded by the administrators, administrative accountability is essential. According to Smith, "Administrators have great power in most societies because of their proximity to political power, size of organization, permanence, and expertise." Additionally, administrators carry out policy implementation and are frequently in a position to apply policies with a great deal of discretion. This essay discusses administrative accountability, including how public officials and agencies carry out their responsibilities and how these individuals are held accountable. Thus, we can define administrative accountability as holding public employees accountable for their deeds. In a democracy, public servants typically serve the interests of the people in the government. It is crucial to hold public servants responsible for their actions and performance of their duties in order to achieve this. It is important to comprehend administrative accountability in relation to developing and carrying out public policies. It entails holding administrators accountable who assist in decision-making in any capacity.

### Key Components of Administrative Accountability

Several essential elements that come together to guarantee the efficient operation of public administration are included in administrative accountability. These components include:

- ❖ **Answerability:** Officials and organizations are responsible for their actions and decisions and must be able to justify and explain their behavior when necessary. Accountability ensures that individuals and institutions can be held accountable for their actions and are transparent in their decision-making processes.
- ❖ **Transparency:** Transparency is a cornerstone of administrative accountability and entails making choices, procedures, and information publicly available. Through openness, citizens can examine and assess the conduct of public servants and institutions, promoting confidence and thwarting dishonesty.
- ❖ **Rule of Law:** Administrative accountability is closely tied to the rule of law. When making decisions and taking acts, public servants and

organizations are required to follow the law, regulations, and established procedures. The rule of law guarantees that public administration functions within the bounds of the law and offers a framework for accountability.

### **TYPES OF ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY**

- a) **Internal Accountability:** One of the most common types of administrative accountability is internal accountability. This refers to the mechanisms and processes within an organization that ensure transparency and responsibility for decisions and actions. Internal accountability can take various forms, such as regular reporting, performance reviews and audits. For example, a company may have a system in which managers are required to submit regular reports on their department's activities and results. These reports may be reviewed by higher management or an internal audit team to ensure compliance with company policies and objectives.
- b) **External Accountability:** External accountability refers to the monitoring and auditing of administrative actions by external bodies, such as: B. Government authorities, regulatory authorities or the public. Organizations that adopt this kind of accountability are better able to act in the interests of their stakeholders and the larger community. A number of strategies, such as independent audits, public hearings, and legislative frameworks, can be used to achieve external accountability.
- c) **Professional Accountability:** Professional responsibility relates to individuals in particular professions or professions and their adherence to professional codes of conduct and ethical standards. Professionals such as doctors, lawyers and accountants are expected to act in the best interests of their clients and the public. Professional responsibility may be enforced through disciplinary authorities, peer reviews or licensing boards. For example, medical professionals must adhere to ethical guidelines established by medical associations and may face disciplinary action for professional misconduct.
- d) **Political Accountability:** Political accountability is about holding elected officials and government agencies accountable for their actions and decisions. This type of accountability is crucial in democratic societies because it ensures that those in power are accountable to the public. Political accountability can be achieved through mechanisms such as elections, parliamentary scrutiny and public inquiries. For example, elected officials can be held accountable through the ballot box, where voters can choose their representatives based on their performance and policies.

### **IMPORTANCE OF ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY**

Recent advances in public administration make it clear that accountability remains one of the key concerns of democratic political leaders (Smith, 198-81: 1163). The exercise of power and authority should be controlled by an ethos of strict responsibility and control. However, the reality is that

expectations of fair and democratic rule are often not met, as allegations continue to be made about a lack of accountability in the day-to-day work of government agencies and the public service. Issues related to civil service neutrality, public service anonymity, merit principle in public service appointments, management of human resources functions and public access to information - all key components of effective public accountability - arise regularly. The fact that there are problems suggests that no form of government can ignore the issue of accountability. Therefore, there are several explanations as to why accountability is important, particularly in an administrative context. Below are some of them: Ensuring administrative accountability is very important to ensure good governance, rule of law and people's rights and ensure people's participation in the government process and finally support democracy to defend the primacy the Constitution. Accountability should strengthen the rule of law. Everyone should be subject to the law including the government. Officials should be required to justify the legality, or otherwise, of their actions. They should not make decisions beyond the confines of the relevant rules, regulations, and working procedures.

Accountable government facilitates administrative competence. When there is accountability inside the system, officials seem to have access to sufficient training programs that enhance their proficiency. The purpose of training is to perhaps increase officials' motivation to carry out their tasks and obligations in an appropriate manner. Strong accountability encourages ministers and public servants to be more responsible and responsive. Taking responsibility means that you must provide a satisfactory report of the performance of your duties. Accountability requires effective regulatory oversight. A responsible administrator supervises his/her officer and similarly a supervisor supervises him or her. If there is effective regulatory oversight in all government departments, motivation is likely to be strengthened; For example, staff may be more willing to address case backlogs - and they may also be less inclined to disregard departmental policies and guidelines. Accountability plays an important role in detecting irresponsible behavior and misuse of public funds, approving sanctions for failure to fulfill obligations, or granting performance-related rewards. Officials are therefore obliged to take this into account when carrying out their duties and, if applied correctly, the system of sanctions/rewards can prevent the violation of rules and regulations, i.e. H. prevent the misuse of resources such as money, people, facilities, and power. Accountability improves performance management by measuring and evaluating the performance of subordinate officials in their assigned tasks. The evaluation focuses on an individual's performance based on objective criteria. Further, the effect of improved performance is a commitment on the part of the government to implement policies. If good governance is to be established, the importance of accountability needs to be considered by both the political and administrative leadership.

## ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY IN BANGLADESH

Following Bangladesh's independence, there was a brief period of pressure on the bureaucracy and public administration to function under political oversight. The bureaucrats' hold on power was reinforced throughout later stages of military control, which allowed them to retake their positions of power. The restoration of electoral democracy in 1991 paved the way for transparency and accountability of the executives to the parliament. The establishment of a parliamentary form of government institutionalized democracy but the misrule of two military regimes highly politicized the administration that recorded the norms and values of public administration. Several reform efforts have been initiated to enhance the accountability of the bureaucracy. However, Bangladesh achieved little success in assuring accountability in administration. Several mechanisms have been developed to control the growing power of bureaucracy to establish an accountable and responsible government both centrally and locally. Mechanisms may differ from society to society, as Simon, Smithburg, and Thompson "There will be differences even between democracies, as the processes in non-democratic forms of government will differ from those in democratic ones when it comes to the accountability process." To hold the bureaucrats to account, various mechanisms in the forms of departmental or administrative, legislative, judicial, etc. are in practice in Bangladesh.

## TRENDS OF ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY IN BANGLADESH (2009-PRESENT)

The landscape of administrative accountability in Bangladesh has undergone significant transformations since 2009. While challenges remain, there have been notable strides towards greater transparency, responsiveness, and public participation. Below is a summary of some significant trends:

### INCREASED LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS

- a) **Right to Information Act (2009):** Empowered citizens to request information from public authorities, fostering transparency.
  - b) **National Integrity Strategy (2011):** Outlined a roadmap for combating corruption and improving governance.
  - c) **Establishment of Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC):** Strengthened enforcement mechanisms against corruption.
  - d) **Local Government (City Corporation) Act (2009) & Local Government (Union Parishad) Act (2009):** Decentralized power and enhanced accountability of local administrations.
- 1) **Technological Advancements**
- a) **Online platforms for service delivery and grievance redressal:** Improved accessibility and efficiency of public services.
  - b) **E-filing of asset declarations:** Enhanced transparency in public officials' financial dealings.
  - c) **Right to Information online portal:** Facilitated easier access to information for citizens.

### 3) Civil Society Engagement

- a) **Rise of watchdog organizations:** Increased scrutiny of government actions and advocacy for reforms.
- b) **Active media:** Played a crucial role in exposing corruption and holding officials accountable.
- c) **Public demonstrations and protests:** Highlighted public dissatisfaction with the lack of accountability and demands for improvement.

## CRISIS OF ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY IN BANGLADESH (2009-PRESENT CRISIS)

### 1) Prevalence of Corruption

- a) Transparency International consistently ranks Bangladesh poorly on its Corruption Perception Index.
- b) Bribery and misuse of public funds remain widespread across various sectors, hindering development and public trust.
- c) Weak investigative mechanisms and political interference often shield perpetrators.

### 2) Political Influence and Impunity

- a) The ruling party's dominance weakens checks and balances within the administration.
- b) Political interference in investigations and prosecutions undermines accountability for wrongdoing.
- c) Politically motivated transfers and appointments limit the independence of officials.

### 3) Ineffective Bureaucratic Systems

- a) Outdated administrative procedures and lack of transparency create opportunities for misconduct.
- b) Weak grievance redressal mechanisms leave citizens with limited recourse against administrative failures.
- c) Insufficient training and capacity building for officials contribute to inefficiencies and vulnerabilities.

### 4) Limited Public Participation

- a) Restricted access to information and lack of awareness about citizen rights hinder public scrutiny of administrative actions.
- b) Weak civil society and media organizations face challenges in holding the government accountable.
- c) Limited space for public protests and dissent further curtails citizen engagement.

### 5) Challenges in Specific Sectors

- a) **Education:** Irregularities in teacher recruitment, exam irregularities, and misuse of funds.
- b) **Healthcare:** Shortages of essential medicines, poor service delivery, and corruption in procurement.

- c) **Land Administration:** Land grabbing, manipulation of records, and lack of transparency in acquisition.

## **THE ROLE OF CITIZENS IN ENSURING ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY**

### **1) Understanding the Importance of Citizen Involvement**

A vital component of every democracy is administrative responsibility. It guarantees that people in positions of authority are held accountable for their deeds and choices, advancing justice, openness, and the general welfare of the community. Although government institutions and officials bear the primary responsibility for administrative accountability, citizens are vital in guaranteeing that accountability is maintained. Their vigilante and engaged involvement can serve as a potent restraint on the misuse of authority and advance good governance

### **2)Engaging in Citizen Oversight**

One of the key ways citizens can contribute to administrative accountability is by actively engaging in oversight processes. This involves closely monitoring the actions and decisions of government officials, agencies, and institutions. To make sure that individuals in positions of authority are operating in the public's best interest, citizens can scrutinize official papers, attend public meetings, and ask questions. By doing this, people are able to see any possible wrongdoing, corruption, or inefficiency and demand that the necessary steps be taken to solve it.

### **3)Promoting Transparency and access to information**

The foundation of administrative accountability is transparency. By demanding access to information, citizens can play a critical role in advancing transparency. This can be done by promoting the adoption of open data policies or by submitting Freedom of Information Act requests. By actively obtaining information and making it available to the public, voters can hold elected officials accountable for their actions and decisions..

### **4)Participating in Public Consultations**

Public consultations give people a chance to express their thoughts and worries about issues that directly impact them. Through engaged participation in these consultations, citizens can provide insightful feedback, impact policy decisions, and hold decision-makers responsible for their actions. These discussions may cover everything from national policy changes to municipal zoning issues. For example, the laws that protect communities from pollution and other environmental threats are shaped by citizen participation in public consultations on environmental regulations.

### **5)Reporting Misconduct and Whistleblowing**

Citizens must report misbehaviour, corruption, or abuse of any kind occurring within government institutions or agencies. When misconduct is made public and proper inquiries and actions are permitted, whistleblowing may be a potent instrument in the fight to hold those in positions of authority

accountable. Whistleblowers, for instance, have been instrumental in exposing instances of fraud, embezzlement, and other misconduct, which has resulted in the prosecution of those responsible and the adoption of the required changes. For administrative accountability to be ensured, citizens are essential. Through proactive monitoring, openness, involvement in public hearings, reporting wrongdoing, and use of technology, citizens may hold those in positions of authority responsible and improve the general welfare of their communities. It is through their vigilance and active involvement that a robust system of administrative accountability can be established and maintained.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the examination of administrative accountability in Bangladesh from 2009 to the present underscores both progress and persistent challenges. Despite notable efforts to enhance transparency and combat corruption, significant hurdles remain. Political interference, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and endemic corruption continue to undermine effective governance. Civil society activism and media advocacy have emerged as crucial drivers of accountability reforms, highlighting the importance of grassroots mobilization in fostering transparency and integrity within the administrative apparatus. Moving forward, concerted efforts are needed to address systemic vulnerabilities and promote a culture of accountability. Depoliticizing administrative processes, strengthening institutional capacity, and fostering citizen engagement are critical steps towards building a more accountable governance framework in Bangladesh. By addressing these challenges, Bangladesh can pave the way for sustainable socio-economic development and democratic stability.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enhance Transparency Mechanisms: Implement transparent processes and platforms to provide easy access to information related to administrative decisions, expenditures, and performance metrics.
2. Strengthen Legal Frameworks: Enact and enforce robust laws and regulations that clearly define administrative responsibilities, establish accountability mechanisms, and outline consequences for non-compliance.
3. Empower Oversight Institutions: Provide adequate resources and authority to oversight bodies such as the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Ombudsman to effectively monitor administrative actions and investigate allegations of misconduct.
4. Promote Whistleblower Protection: Introduce legislation to protect whistleblowers who report instances of corruption, malpractice, or abuse of power within the administrative sector.
5. Invest in Capacity Building: Prioritize training and development programs for administrative personnel to enhance their understanding of ethical standards, best practices, and accountability principles.

6. Encourage Citizen Engagement: Foster a culture of civic participation by encouraging public feedback, consultation, and involvement in decision-making processes through avenues such as public hearings, consultations, and online platforms.
7. Implement Performance Evaluation Systems: Establish objective performance evaluation mechanisms for administrative officials based on key performance indicators, including efficiency, effectiveness, and adherence to ethical standards.
8. Utilize Technology: Leverage technology solutions such as e-governance platforms, data analytics, and digital record-keeping systems to improve administrative efficiency, transparency, and accountability.
9. Promote Independent Media: Safeguard press freedom and support independent journalism to facilitate investigative reporting and public awareness of administrative issues, ensuring that the media can act as a watchdog.
10. Empower a Culture of Integrity: Promote ethical leadership and integrity within the administrative sector by recognizing and rewarding exemplary conduct, while holding accountable those who engage in corrupt or unethical behaviour.

## Conflict of Interest

There is no interest in conflict.

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