

Participatory budgeting practices and governance effectiveness: A study at rural local government institutions in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examines the effectiveness of public participation in budgeting practice at the local rural level in Bangladesh.

Methodology: This study uses a mixed-methods research design (social survey method and in-depth interview) as data collection instruments. Simple random sampling method has been used to collect survey data from 180 respondents from two Union Parishads (e.g., Karimgonj & Jafrabad) under Karimgonj Upazila in the Kishoregonj district. In this study, the data has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data has been collected using a semi-structured questionnaire under the quantitative approach and an in-depth interview under the qualitative approach. Thematic analysis was used to assess qualitative data, while the SPSS was used to study quantitative data. On the other side, the study's secondary data and information included a variety of published sources. **Findings:** The major findings revealed that participatory budgeting at the rural-local level is moderately effective, as some of the study respondents were somewhat satisfied. However, most of the respondents wanted more from the budget-making process. The result shows that several factors negatively influence the participatory budgeting practices in Bangladesh. Negative factors include corruption, undue interference of local political leaders, absence of monitoring & supervision, lack of public awareness, lack of access to information, the dominant role of elected representatives, lack of proper leadership training, the influence of elite people, and lack of civic education.

Practical implications: The study recommends several policy recommendations to ensure effective and participatory budgeting practices in rural areas of Bangladesh.

Keywords: Participation budgeting, governance effectiveness, rural local level, local government institutions.

1. Introduction

Participatory budgeting (PB) has become a popular topic of discussion and a significant field of innovation in the nations that are currently engaged in democracy and local development. In most developing countries, participatory budgeting is brought about in various forms, designed by academicians and budget experts as a crucial tool for democratic and accountable governance. The notion of participatory budgeting was developed in 1989 by the Brazilian Worker's Party, and the municipality of Porto Alegre in Brazil implemented this process (Shah, 2007). However, many other parts of the world, including Asia, Europe, and America, have embraced this method. It got established as a technique for advancing rational decision-making and strengthening a ruling class to overcome capitalism (Novy & Leubolt, 2005). It is a good example of participation that has emerged as a new paradigm in the case of participation, especially at the local level all around the world (Hossain et al., 2014). Furthermore, now it has emerged as a proven democratic innovation, and creating a meaningful bridge between the citizens and the authorities of local government. Because of this, participatory budgeting can be the best framework for public engagement and also may be a better way to combat corruption and inefficiencies within local government (Hossain, 2019).

On the other hand, Participatory Budgeting (PB) is thought to be the driving force in the context of local governance, where the common people get the opportunity to come into contact with government officials and share their views on different issues and thereby collectively plan for rural-local development (Novy & Leubolt, 2005). Being a direct-democratic method of budgeting, participatory budgeting creates an opportunity for citizens to access information about government operations and, at the same time, exercise influence on government policies. It also allows people to ensure the proper distribution of public resources and thus bring the government into accountability.

On the other hand, the Union Parishad (UP) is the lowest stage in Bangladesh's rural local government structure. Moreover, under the Union Parishad (UP) Act-2009, the general public has the right to participate in the planning and budgeting process at the union Parishad level, which offers them the opportunity to become directly involved at the ward level and highlight issues related to their livelihoods. Under each Union Parishad, there are four types of UP committees, i.e., Ward Committee (WC), Planning Committee (PC), Standing Committee (SC), and Union Development and Coordination Committee (UDCC). The UP Act of 2009's articles 4 and 5 also permit each Ward Committee (WC) to organize a Ward Shava (WS) at least twice a year, which must consist of every person on the voter registry.

In Bangladesh, officials of Union Parishad should be accountable to the people. Still, there was no legal framework in place before the local government act of 2009 to hold a representative responsible & accountable to the concerned public. For the very first time, the local government act also makes Ward Shava (WS) a compulsory event where people and their representatives can sit on the same platform. As a result, Ward Shava is seen as a successful method of accountability in grassroots democracy. It becomes a provision for ensuring participation in the development activities at the Union Parishad level. It is a public meeting where community members can share their opinions, discuss problems, and find solutions. It is conducted by the Union Parishad Chairman to engage the community in development activities.

Additionally, every Union Parishad (UP) should hold Open Budget Meetings (OBMs) at least two times a year, similar to Ward Shava (WS). Through the WS and OBM, local government representatives inform their constituents and encourage participation in rural income-expenditure and budget statements. Through WS and OBM citizens can raise any questions to their representatives which ultimately acts as a method of ensuring accountability and transparency in the governing process of UPs (Chowdhury & Panday, 2017). Most importantly, the WSs and OBMs offer the opportunity for the participants (electorates/voters) to come into direct contact with the ward members and promote the opportunities for the participatory decision-making process of the budgetary system. Additionally, participatory budgeting enables the general public and local government entities to work more efficiently to build capability and trust. That is why the concept of participatory budgeting is getting immense popularity in developing countries for the last few decades and has been identified as a great practice for fostering decentralized participatory development in many regions of the world. Moreover, an effective participatory budgeting system is viewed as an indispensable provision for promoting good governance, especially at local government levels, and has made considerable progress in this area.

2. Literature review

The local government's effectiveness and responsiveness largely depend on the effective participatory budgeting process where citizens can be involved in public affairs. Therefore, it is apparent that public participation is crucial in the decision-making process as they can influence the budget-making process and policy formulation process, improve the service delivery process, support pro-poor policies, emphasize poverty, and ultimately facilitates the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the long run. Understanding sustainable development as a comprehensive approach and guiding principle that seeks to address issues in the domains of the economy, society, and environment seems crucial. In the 2030 agenda, it is emphasized that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) must be inclusive and localized. Therefore, participatory local government at the local level (especially in underdeveloped and marginalized areas) is essential for achieving the SDGs. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a

collection of 17 worldwide objectives that the United Nations adopted in 2015, with a target completion date of 2030. Participatory budgeting can be applied to achieve many global goals and may give the community direct control over public budgets. It could accelerate the achievement of numerous SDGs and is closely related to SDG 16's (target 16.7), which aims to ensure inclusive, participative, responsive, and representative decision-making at all levels. As a result, local government can adopt a nondiscriminatory public policy through participatory budgeting, allowing for citizens' involvement and participation in the formulation of policy (SDG target 16.7). So, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) must be implemented locally and with inclusiveness, according to the 2030 agenda. Therefore, participatory local government at the grassroots level, especially in poor and underprivileged areas, is essential for achieving the SDGs (Khan et al., 2018).

Participatory budgeting can contribute to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN (SDGs). Building long-term engagement and fostering trust is considerably easier to achieve through participatory budgeting (Dias: 2018). It can also enhance good governance practices by ensuring responsiveness, reducing discretionary authority, reducing corruption, improving the delivery of public services, and ensuring an open, inclusive, pro-poor decision-making process (United Nations, 2005). The lowest local government level is the Union Parishad (UP), which also significantly promotes democracy and the long-term development of rural areas. Moreover, Union Parishad (UP) Act, 2009 states that the Ward Shava provision in the UP helps the Parishad ensure better public involvement in the development planning and implementation process. Participatory budgeting as a decision-making process actively involves the public in deciding how to spend public funds and where all or some of the available public resources will have to go. However, it serves as a distinctive and inclusive citizen engagement in public decision-making. It is necessary to build effective, responsible, and inclusive institutions at all levels and promoting healthy and democratic societies for sustainable development. In particular, it has the potential to assist nations in achieving SDG Target 16.7 (to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and responsive institutions).

In any country, without citizens' participation, the development of all sectors cannot be achieved. In this case, local institutions play a vital role in assuring people's participation at the grassroots level. People's participation, a crucial component of good governance, enables decision-makers to adopt decisions more responsive to citizens' demands (Blair, 2000). By closing the gap between the public and government in development activities, people's participation encourages people to get involved in specific initiatives or programs and holds officials accountable to voters (Mahmud, 2004). Additionally, it offers the chance for decision-making and policy implementation, both of which ultimately promote sustainable development (Rahman & Hasan, 2014). Participatory

budgeting can also be viewed as an inclusive method of citizen engagement in public decision-making, which deliberately includes citizens in prioritizing the expenditures of public funds and makes the citizens informed about available public resources (Cabannes 2018:2). It is a new technique of modern governance since it gives localities a chance to effectively participate in determining their demands (Hossain et al., 2014) and also acts as a catalyst that allows the people to observe public spending and promotes citizen participation in discussion and negotiation about the distribution of public resources (Wampler, 2000). A properly implemented participatory budgeting process at the local level guarantees that resources are distributed fairly (Wampler, 2007).

Moreover, participatory methods are now becoming recognized as a crucial strategy to promote good governance, assure more accessible and equitable policies, and enhance public spending (Schaeffer & Yilmaz, 2008). It also promotes the rule of law and a democratic system of governance, enhances openness and transparency, and strengthens the citizens' voices (Beale et al., 2020). Furthermore, a collaborative effort between the government and citizen participants ensures social justice by emphasizing participation and enables the government to allocate resources equitably to the needy. In the participatory budget-making process, low-income citizens have greater access to resources (Shah, 2007). The participatory budgeting method is employed as a social accountability tool to improve governmental responsibility (Verite Research, 2017). However, in Bangladesh, the budget-making process is not transparent and highly influenced by bureaucratic officials where the elected representatives have a very limited role in prioritizing development-related projects or programs (Rahman et al., 2004). Even though these projects were chosen based on public demand, the local people of Bangladesh have relatively few opportunities to engage in the budget-making process, notably in selecting projects.

Since independence, the Bangladesh government has formed more than five committees and commissions to develop strategies for guaranteeing effective public interaction. However, the local government's commitment to discuss with community stakeholders is jeopardized by 'strong conditionality' to inter-governmental transfers. Besides, the financial dependence of local governments on the national government has undermined Bangladesh's participatory budgeting system (Yasmin & Kamal, 2021). Like Bangladesh, most developing nations have local government institutions plagued by several issues (such as corruption, a lack of representation of residents' interests, and a heavily centralized administration, etc.) that ultimately impede the economic and socio-political development of the country. The local government entities must increase their ability to provide services to the general public (Haque, 2009). Some individuals, particularly in cases of Participatory Planning (PP) and Open Budget Meetings (OBM), influence the decision-making process at the rural level (Union Parishad) by abusing their political influences and positions known as 'Dalal chakra' (Chowdhury, 2017). However, it is

known to all that the primary goal of the participatory budgeting system is to include the general public's needs in the national budget's design and the allocation of funds to meet those demands. However, in Bangladesh, in the case of the participatory budgeting process, there exists party politics, nepotism, and a lack of monitoring in the policy-making process and budgeting process, which is why so many plans that are taken remain unimplemented (Panday & Chowdhury, 2017).

3. Significance of the study

Although local governments are required to ensure the people's participation in the planning and implementation of a variety of development projects, it is a common phenomenon that the budget is prepared without any participation of the local people, as well as the central government always delays in releasing funds for the rural local government. On the other hand, it is widely assumed that rural people are unaware of budget allocations (both central and local allocations). They have very little or no knowledge of the budget-making process at the national or local level. Additionally, citizens' expectations are still need to be met. In that case, there is a risk that they may feel disregarded and that members of a community group will refuse to participate in local planning and budgeting. As a result, it becomes impossible to accomplish development projects and programs timely. Besides, the local government representatives in rural areas need more dedication and budget-making skills.

On the other hand, the citizens are deprived of quality services and facilities from rural local governments as there is a lack of accountability and transparency in the expenditure of funds. People's participation and participatory budgeting processes within local government institutions that constitute a bottom-up approach are interconnected and interdependent (Chowdhury, 2015). Moreover, participatory budgeting is an instrument of engaging and empowering the citizens to strengthen the local democratic governance system. In the context of local governance, participatory budgeting is a factor in assessing the needs of the common people. If we want to manage our local resources effectively and efficiently, we have to ensure the participatory budget-making process of local governance. As a result, accountability and transparency will be ensured, and inefficiency and corruption will be reduced. Thus, people's involvement in the budget-making process becomes a key factor that has a significant potential to advance the idea of good governance since it increases openness in case of local government expenditures and decisions over public funds. Moreover, it is the sole responsibility of local government representatives to ensure an effective participatory budgetary process for local development as it results in better policy outcomes through rational decision-making. In this case, access to information is a vital pre-condition for ensuring a participatory budget-making process in the local government which can guarantee equitable distribution of public resources. This study would be important for explaining all the factors and assessing how they affect Bangladesh's rural local government's

participatory budget-making process. Through this study, the government, non-governmental organizations, and other institutions can effectively meet the requirements for a successful participatory budgeting process, and the processes for formulating policies and developing plans would be unaffected. Furthermore, governments interested in justice and democracy will find it valuable for improving national and grassroots democracy and the government's responsiveness. Additionally, it can be a chance for policymakers to take the necessary actions to guarantee that the local development budgeting process is effective. Besides, future researchers and learners who want to investigate how well a participatory budgeting system promotes good governance will find this study useful. Because of the above reasons, this study is highly relevant for the researchers, policymakers, government, and non-government sectors.

4. Objective of the study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the effectiveness of a participatory budgeting system that fosters good governance practices at the rural-local level in Bangladesh. To achieve the broad objective, there are some specific objectives too, which are as follows:

- To know the impact of Ward Shava (WS) and Open Budget Meeting (OBM) in ensuring an effective participatory budget-making process at the rural-local level in Bangladesh.
- To find out the factors of an effective participatory budget-making process at the rural-local level in Bangladesh.
- To identify the main constraints in the participatory budgeting practice and to offer suggestions for ensuring an effective participatory budgeting practice in Bangladesh.

5. Methodology

This study has been carried out using an explanatory and descriptive design under the research objectives. The study was conducted based on empirical data gathered from Karimgonj Union Parishad and Jafrabad Union Parishad under the rural-local government (RLG) body of Karimgonj Upazila in the Kishoregonj district of Bangladesh. These two bodies (Karimgonj Union Parishad and Jafrabad Union Parishad) were selected randomly from thirteen (13) unions of Karimgonj Upazila under the Kishoregonj District. In this study, the social survey method and structured interview schedules (open and close-ended questions) have been used to collect primary data. Moreover, a limited number of Likert-scaling-type questions have also been used in the questionnaire. Voters, elected representatives, and administrative officials of these two bodies have been considered as the population of this study. The study's sample size was 180, and the respondents of this study were selected following a simple random sampling method (using the voter list of the concerned areas). Collected data were analyzed by SPSS software. A mixed approach (qualitative and quantitative) has also been followed

in this research. Secondary data for this study was collected from published books, journals, newspapers, articles, reports, relevant documents, and publications of government agencies that are related to the study. Quantitative data has been processed using SPSS software, and thematic analysis has been used to assess qualitative data.

6. Results

The demographic information and criteria of the respondents of this study are illustrated in the following tables (Table 1 and 2).

Table 1: Demographic information of the respondents (N=180)

Variables	Parameter	Common people (N=151)		Officials (N=29)	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Gender Distribution	Male	106	70.20	23	79.31
	Female	45	29.80	6	20.69
	Total	151	100.0	29	100.0
Age Distribution	Under 20 Years	13	8.61	0	0
	20- 30 Years	90	59.60	0	0
	30- 40 Years	31	20.53	11	37.93
	40- above	17	11.26	18	62.07
	Total	151	100.0	29	100.0

Table 2: Categories of selected respondents (N=180)

Respondents' Categories	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Officials</i>		
Chairman of two Union Parishads	(1*2)=2	6.89
Ward Member (general) of two Union Parishads	(9*2)=18	62.07
Women Ward Member (reserved) of two Union Parishads	(3*2)=6	20.69
Secretaries of two Union Parishads	(1*2)=2	6.89
Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO)	01	3.45
<i>Sub-total</i>	29	100.0
<i>Common People</i>	151	100.0
Total Respondents= (Officials & Administrative officials + Common People)	180	100.0

Table 3: Interest of people to participate in budget making process (n=180)

Responses	Opinion of Officials (n=29)		Opinion of Common People (n=151)	
	No. of Respondents	Percentage	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	21	72.41	103	68.21
No	02	6.89	11	7.29
Partially	06	20.7	37	24.5
Total	29	100.0	151	100.0

From the field survey, 72.41 percent of the total respondents from officials assumed that common people are interested in taking part in the budget-making process of their locality, and 20.7 percent of respondents partially support this. In comparison, the rest of the respondents (6.89 percent) regretted that the common people were not interested in this process. Conversely, among the common people, most respondents (68.21percent) replied that they would like to involve themselves in the budget-making process and 24.5 percent of respondents partially support this. However, only 7.29 percent of respondents said against this statement (Table 3).

According to one of the respondents:

The public is less interested in finding out their rights. If their demands are not met, they may feel disregarded and quit participating in the local budget-making process (Elected representative, Interview 13, October 9, 2022).

Another respondent opined that:

The officials always try to ensure the participation of their close friends, local political leaders, local elite groups, elderly and well-known members of the community, and influential and wealthy members. Moreover, people who are powerless and poor have a very low chance of influencing the decision-making process (Citizen, Interview 9, and October 11, 2021).

Public engagement is another crucial issue for democratic and decentralized governance, where citizens are active in the development process through planning, decision-making, budgeting, monitoring, and assessment. However, in Bangladesh, the majority of the leaders belong to the 'trustee' category because they prefer to act independently and disregard public opinions as they feel that doing so will place them in danger. So they are not interested in ensuring citizens' participation (Chowdhury & Aktaruzzaman,

2016). In this study, the majority of respondents (93.10%) of the officials believed that the general public's opinion is taken into account during the budget-making process. In comparison 6.9 percent of respondents believed that local common people's opinions are partially reflected in the budget-making process in their locality. On the other side, 37.75 percent of the common people replied that their opinions are taken into account in the budget preparation process while the rest 13.25 percent of the respondents opined that their views are reflected partially in budget making process in their locality. However, 49 percent of the respondents regretted this (Table 4).

One of the respondents claimed that:

Though participatory budgeting gives disadvantaged and excluded social groups the chance to influence on public decision-making, but we had no opportunity to engage in the Union Parishad's decision-making process, which demonstrates the reality that exists (Citizen, Interview 13 and October 15, 2021).

Table 4: Consideration of public opinion during budget making process (n=180)

Responses	Opinion of Officials (n=29)		Opinion of Common People (n=151)	
	No. of Respondents	Percentage	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	27	93.1	57	37.75
No	00	00	74	49
Partially	02	6.9	20	13.25
Total	29	100.0	151	100.0

Table 5: Citizens' active involvement in the budget-making process (n=180)

Responses	Opinion of Officials (n=29)		Opinion of Common People (n=151)	
	No. of Respondents	Percentage	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	19	65.52	106	70.20
No	03	10.35	30	19.87
Partially	07	24.13	15	9.93
Total	29	100.0	151	100.0

Participatory budgeting ensures an inclusive government system by enabling underprivileged and marginalized groups to participate in public decision-making on local financial statements at their locality. The participation of the public in participatory budgeting is one of the most crucial elements since it ensures that officials are held accountable to the people (Islam et al., 2014). According to this study, among the total respondents of officials, 65.52 percent answered that citizens' have active involvement in the budget-making process, and 24.13 percent of respondents partially supported this, but 10.35 percent of respondents said against this. However, among the total respondents of common people, 70.20 percent of respondents said that they could actively take part in the budgeting process in their constituency, and only 9.93 percent of respondents replied that they have partial access, but 19.87 percent respondents regretted this (Table 5).

One of the respondents stated:

Although the Local Government (Union Parishad) Act of 2009 allows for direct public engagement in identifying problems and making decisions at the local level, the local government representatives are less likely to invite and notify citizens to share their opinions in the budget-making process, ward-based local planning, or some other development initiatives in their constituents (Citizen, Interview 7, and October 17, 2021).

Table 6: Impact of Ward Shava (WS) and Open Budget Meeting (OBM) on participatory budgeting process (n=180)

Responses	Opinion of Officials (n=29)		Opinion of Common People (n=151)	
	No. of Respondents	Percentage	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	29	100.0	103	68.21
No	00	00	11	7.29
Partially	00	00	37	24.50
Total	29	100.0	151	100.0

Effective functioning of Ward Shava and open budget meetings enable citizens' active participation, which is crucial in building social accountability. The concept 'Ward Shava' (WS) refers to a Shava that is held twice a year within the territory of a ward and requires the attendance of 20% of voters (including both male and female voters) (Biswas & Danesh, 2020). Most of the Ward Shavas are arranged without notifying all of the voters in that ward, and the voters remained oblivious to the gathering. On the other hand, the process of preparing the budget under Sections 57(1) and (2) of the UP Act (2009) is the open budget meeting where anyone is welcome to ask questions and voice

concerns about any aspect of the budget proposal and plan during the open budget session (Ahmed et al., 2016).

This study found that 100 percent of the official respondents supposed that Ward Shava (WS) and Open Budget Meeting (OBM) play an important role in the participatory budget-making process. On the contrary, most people (68.21%) supposed that Ward Shava and the open budget meeting have an impact on the participatory budget-making process, and 24.50 percent of respondents partially support this. However, only 7.29 percent of respondents said against this (Table 6).

Table 7: Method of ensuring public participation in WS and OBM (n=180)

Methods	Opinion of Officials (n=29)		Opinion of Common People (n=151)	
	No. of Respondents	Percentage	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Announcement via microphone	2	6.9	14	9.27
Personal contact (over the phone)	8	27.59	52	34.44
Sending letters to voters	3	10.34	13	8.61
Invitation through social media	2	6.9	31	20.53
Above all	14	48.27	41	27.15
Total	29	100.0	151	100.0

It has been pointed out that the government has been working actively to encourage public participation by providing opportunities for citizens to discuss financial issues and public policies and to take appropriate actions (Hossain et al., 2014). Citizens can participate in the planning processes in several ways, such as by disseminating information and allowing them to participate in decision-making, operation, or assessment (Chowdhury & Aktaruzzaman, 2016).

According to this study, officials use various methods to guarantee successful public participation in Ward Shava and open budget meetings. In this study, 6.9 percent of the officials invited people by announcing through the microphone, 27.59 percent of the officials invited people personally contacting over the phone, rest of the respondents (10.34%) said that they invited people by sending a letter to voters and 6.9 percent respondents replied that they invite people through social media like Facebook, Instagram, etc. Moreover, 48.27 percent of respondents supported all of the methods mentioned above to ensure public participation in Ward Shava and open budget meeting.

Contrarily, from the viewpoint of common people, 9.27 percent percent respondents said they participate in Ward Shava and open budget meetings by hearing announcement by the microphone, and 34.44 percent of respondents said they get invitations over the phone from the concerned officials, but 8.61 percent respondents said that they get an invitation through the letter from their concerned officials, and 20.53 percent respondents said that they participate in the budget making process by getting information from social media and the rest of the respondents (27.15%) opined that they have firsthand experience with each of the techniques mentioned above for participating in Ward Shava and open budget meetings to ensure a participatory budgeting process in their community (Table 7).

One of the respondents replied:

Most people must be aware of who can participate in the budget-making process. They have lower participation since they are less interested in taking part and many of them are not interested at all (Elected representative, Interview 11, and November 2022).

Table 8(a): People having more interest in the participatory budget-making process (n=151)

Higher Participant Types	Number (%) of the respondent (Highly satisfactory = 5, . . . , Highly dissatisfactory = 1)					Mean (SD)	Total
	Highly satisfactory	Satisfactory	Neutral	Dissatisfactory	Highly dissatisfactory		
Politically conscious people	14 (9.3)	113 (74.8)	2 (1.3)	18 (11.9)	4 (2.6)	3.76 (0.88)	151
Politically unaware people	20 (13.2)	96 (63.6)	8 (5.3)	25 (16.6)	2 (1.3)	3.71 (0.94)	151
People engage in the party in power	27 (17.9)	47 (31.1)	39 (25.8)	31 (20.5)	7 (4.6)	3.37 (1.13)	151
People engage in opposition political parties	8 (5.3)	25 (16.6)	50 (33.1)	58 (38.4)	10 (6.6)	2.75 (0.99)	151
Local people	28 (18.5)	75 (49.7)	8 (5.3)	38 (25.2)	2 (1.3)	3.59 (1.10)	151
Rented people	4 (2.6)	8 (5.3)	88 (58.3)	36 (23.8)	15 (9.9)	2.67 (0.83)	151

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Male	52 (34.4)	91 (60.3)	4 (2.6)	4 (2.6)	-	4.26 (0.64)	151
Female	-	8 (5.3)	1 (0.7)	52 (34.4)	90 (59.6)	1.52 (0.76)	151

*Highly satisfactory=5, Satisfactory=4, Neutral=3, Dissatisfactory=2, Highly dissatisfactory=1

Table 8(b): People having more interest in the participatory budget-making process (n=29)

Higher Participant Types	Number (%) of the respondent (Highly satisfactory = 5, . . . , Highly dissatisfactory = 1)					Mean (SD)	Total
	Highly satisfactory	Satisfactory	Neutral	Dissatisfactory	Highly dissatisfactory		
Politically conscious people	8 (27.6)	15 (51.7)	3 (10.3)	2 (6.9)	1 (3.4)	3.93 (1.00)	29
Politically unaware people	2 (6.9)	16 (55.2)	7 (24.1)	3 (10.3)	1 (3.4)	3.52 (0.91)	29
People engage in the party in power	2 (6.9)	12 (41.4)	14 (48.3)	1 (3.4)	-	3.52 (0.69)	29
People engage in opposition political parties	1 (3.4)	7 (24.1)	15 (51.7)	5 (17.2)	1 (3.4)	3.07 (0.84)	29
Local people	9 (31.0)	13 (44.8)	4 (13.8)	1 (3.4)	2 (6.9)	3.90 (1.11)	29
Rented people	2 (6.9)	3 (10.3)	8 (27.6)	10 (34.5)	6 (6.9)	2.48 (1.15)	29
Male	7 (24.1)	16 (55.2)	2 (6.9)	3 (10.3)	1 (3.4)	3.86 (1.03)	29
Female	1 (3.4)	2 (6.9)	5 (17.2)	12 (41.4)	9 (31.0)	2.10 (1.05)	29

*Highly satisfactory=5, Satisfactory=4, Neutral=3, Dissatisfactory=2, Highly dissatisfactory=1

Tables 8(a) and 8(b) represent the views of common people and officials on the rate of public participation in the budget-making process. Here, five point Likert scales have been used, ranging from highly satisfactory (value 5) to highly dissatisfactory (value 1). It was found from the study that (from the standpoint of both common people and

officials) the rate of 'male' participants (mean value 4.26 and 3.86 respectively) is higher than that of 'female' participants (mean value 1.52 and 2.10 respectively) in the budget making process at their constituency. On the other hand, both common people and officials of this study opined that 'politically conscious people' (mean value 3.76 and 3.93 respectively) are more interested to participate in the budget-making system in their locality than that 'politically unaware people' (mean value 3.71 and 3.52 respectively).

Besides, this study reveals that (from the viewpoint of both common people and officials) the 'local people are more eager to take part (mean value 3.59 and 3.90 respectively) than that 'hired people' (mean value 2.67 and 2.48 respectively) in case of budget making system at Union Parishad level in Bangladesh.

Both groups of respondents (common people as well as officials) identify that the rate of 'people engaged in the party in power' (mean value 3.37 and 3.52 respectively) is comparatively higher than that of people engage in opposition political parties' (mean value 2.75 and 3.07 respectively) in the budget making process at Union Parishad level in Bangladesh (See Table 8(a) & 8(b)).

This study attempted to identify the views or opinions from the viewpoint of both common people and officials regarding essential factors for ensuring citizens' involvement in the rural-local budget-making process. Tables 6.9 (a) and 6.9 (b) elucidate the views of common people and officials in this regard, respectively. Here, five point Likert scales have been used, ranging from highly satisfactory (value 5) to highly dissatisfactory (value 1).

According to the survey, both common people and officials believed that 'citizen's education & awareness' (mean values 3.76 and 4.41 respectively) considerably impacted the participatory budgetary system. Likewise, the study's participants (both common people and officials) expressed the opinion that the 'involvement of persons having diverse political views' has a greater effect on the budget-making process at the rural-local level. Additionally, this study found that 'participant's willingness' (mean values 3.10 and 4.38 respectively) is crucial for ensuring an effective budget-making system. Moreover, the 'responsiveness of officials' is also identified as a component of Bangladesh's Union Parishad's participatory budget-making process (mean values 3.79 and 4.62 respectively).

However, this study also demonstrates that 'appropriate monitoring and assessment procedure' (mean values 3.30 and 4.34 respectively) is crucial for maintaining a successful participatory budgeting system in their constituency from the standpoint of both common people and authorities. Likewise, the study revealed that a 'vigilant civil society' (mean values 3.34 and 4.17 respectively) significantly influences participatory budgeting by the general public and officials.

Moreover, both participants (common people and officials) considered 'possession of civic skills' (mean values 3.42 and 4.28 respectively) a crucial component of the budget-making process. Similarly, they (both common people and officials) also believe that

‘commitment of the common people’s participation in decision-making’ (particularly poor & underprivileged) (mean values 3.09 and 4.03 respectively) also has an impact on the participatory budget-making process at Union Parishad level. Moreover, respondents (both common people and officials) also asserted that ‘appropriate leadership

Table 9(a): Key factors for effective participatory budgeting practice (n=151)

Factors for ensuring effective participatory budgeting practices	Number (%) of the respondent provides suggestion (Highly satisfactory = 5, . . . , Highly dissatisfactory = 1)					Mean (SD)	Total
	Highly satisfactory	Satisfactory	Neutral	Dissatisfactory	Highly dissatisfactory		
Citizen’s education & awareness	14 (9.6)	109 (74.7)	10 (6.6)	14 (9.6)	4 (2.7)	3.76 (0.85)	151
Involvement of all people having different political ideologies	16 (10.6)	100 (66.2)	11 (7.3)	22 (14.6)	2 (1.3)	3.70 (0.89)	151
Participant’s willingness	8 (5.3)	55 (36.4)	43 (28.5)	34 (22.5)	11 (7.3)	3.10 (1.04)	151
Responsiveness of officials	21 (13.9)	97 (64.2)	16 (10.6)	14 (9.3)	3 (2.0)	3.79 (0.87)	151
Proper monitoring and evaluation process	20 (13.2)	34 (22.5)	73 (48.3)	19 (12.6)	5 (3.3)	3.30 (0.96)	151
The vigilance of civil society	12 (7.9)	76 (50.3)	20 (13.2)	38 (25.2)	5 (3.3)	3.34 (1.05)	151
Possession of civic skills	20 (13.2)	51 (33.8)	55 (36.4)	23 (15.2)	2 (1.3)	3.42 (0.95)	151
The commitment of mass people’s participation in decision-making (especially poor & underprivileged)	18 (11.9)	35 (23.2)	50 (33.1)	38 (25.2)	10 (6.6)	3.09 (1.11)	151
Proper leadership skill	22 (14.6)	40 (26.5)	44 (29.1)	36 (23.8)	9 (6.0)	3.20 (1.14)	151
Absence of maliciousness & compassion for each other	19 (12.6)	33 (21.9)	74 (49.0)	20 (13.2)	5 (3.3)	3.27 (0.96)	151
Sense of equality in the society	15 (9.9)	49 (32.5)	37 (24.5)	39 (25.8)	11 (7.3)	3.12 (1.13)	151

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Proper allocation and utilization of resources	28 (18.5)	40 (26.5)	47 (31.1)	27 (17.9)	9 (6.0)	3.34 (1.15)	151
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*Highly satisfactory=5, Satisfactory=4, Neutral=3, Dissatisfactory=2, Highly dissatisfactory=1

Table 6.9 (b): Key factors for effective participatory budgeting practice (n=29)

Factors for ensuring effective participatory budgeting practices	Number (%) of the respondent provides suggestion (Highly satisfactory = 5, . . . , Highly dissatisfactory = 1)					Mean (SD)	Total
	Highly satisfactory	Satisfactory	Neutral	Dissatisfactory	Highly dissatisfactory		
Citizen's education & awareness	12 (41.4)	17 (58.2)	-	-	-	4.41 (0.50)	29
Involvement of all people having different political ideologies	10 (34.5)	15 (51.7)	4 (13.8)	-	-	4.21 (0.68)	29
Participant's willingness	12 (41.4)	16 (55.2)	1 (3.4)	-	-	4.38 (0.56)	29
Responsiveness of officials	18 (62.1)	11 (37.9)	-	-	-	4.62 (0.49)	29
Proper monitoring and evaluation process	11 (37.9)	17 (58.6)	1 (3.4)	-	-	4.34 (0.55)	29
The vigilance of civil society	8 (27.6)	18 (62.1)	3 (10.3)	-	-	4.17 (0.60)	29
Possession of civic skills	12 (41.4)	13 (44.8)	4 (13.8)	-	-	4.28 (0.70)	29
The commitment of mass people's participation in decision-making (especially poor & underprivileged)	8 (27.6)	15 (51.7)	5 (17.2)	1 (3.4)	-	4.03 (0.78)	29
Proper leadership skill	13 (44.8)	16 (55.2)	-	-	-	4.45 (0.51)	29
Absence of maliciousness & compassion for each other	9 (31.0)	18 (62.1)	2 (6.9)	-	-	4.24 (0.58)	29
Sense of equality in the society	5 (17.2)	14 (48.3)	7 (24.1)	3 (10.3)	-	3.72 (0.88)	29

Proper allocation and utilization of resources	10 (34.5)	17 (58.6)	2 (6.9)	-	-	4.28 (0.59)	29
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*Highly satisfactory=5, Satisfactory=4, Neutral=3, Dissatisfactory=2, Highly dissatisfactory=1

skill' (mean values 3.20 and 4.45 respectively) also significantly affects the budget-making process. Furthermore, in this study, the 'absence of maliciousness & compassion to each other' (mean values 3.27 and 4.24 respectively) is also recognized as an important component for the participatory budget-making process from the outlook of both categories of respondents. Similarly, 'the sense of equality in the society' (mean value 3.12 and 3.72 respectively) is mentioned by both categories of respondents (common people and officials) as a crucial element of the participatory budget-making process. Finally, this study also found that 'appropriate allocation and utilization of resources' (mean values 3.34 and 4.28 respectively) have an impact on the participatory budget-making system in their constituency from the viewpoint of both common people and officials (See Table 9(a) & 9(b)).

7. Findings and discussion

An effective participatory budgeting system can foster good governance practices (by ensuring an open, responsive, inclusive, & pro-poor decision-making process) at the rural-local level in Bangladesh. Participatory budgeting, as a democratic process, allows local citizens to share their ideas and decides how to spend the public budget. According to this study, the result shows that most respondents (both the officials and common people) are willing to participate in the budget-making process. However, the general public is unaware of their rights and responsibilities. This study also reveals that almost all of the respondents (both common people as well as officials) agreed with the statement that Ward Shava (WS) and Open Budget Meeting (OBM) play a vital role in ensuring an effective participatory budget-making process. Because, Ward Shava at the union Parishad level is a provision for ensuring peoples 'participation in the development activities. An open Budget Meeting (OBM) is a participation process that enables ordinary citizens to make decisions about budget allocations (Yasmin & Kamal, 2021). These (both WS & OBM) provisions also open up the possibility of the localities effectively participating in determining their needs. Besides, most of the respondent (common people) replied that by receiving telephone invitations from their elected representatives, they get the chance to participate in the budget-making process at the Union Parishad level.

According to the field study, males rather than females have greater access to participating in the budget-making process. It is also claimed that educated and wealthy people, powerful and politically aware individuals, individuals from the ruling party, and

local elite groups also have more access to participate in the local level budget-making process at their constituency. They are given more attention, and the authority prioritizes their demands, etc. As a result, poor or disorganized individuals cannot raise their demands, and their opinions should be given more weight. However, a greater proportion of respondents (common people) claimed that the authorities must meet their expectations and consider their views while making the budget. Therefore, they completely lose interest in participating in the preparation of the union Parishad level budget. Some citizens claimed that officials often ignore inviting them to their constituency's budgeting process.

Although public participation is a new aspect of the current government, the level of public participation in the budget-making process is limited in Bangladesh. Several obstacles prevent the public from effectively participating in the budget-making process, including a limited amount of time on the part of the public, lack of trust in the government, shortage of information, incompetency, unsatisfactory interactions between the government and the public, and imperfectly stated goals (Chowdhury & Aktaruzzaman, 2016). In addition, low public participation is related to several factors (from the organizational aspects), including characteristics of the participant's participation, lack of political assistance, political power and influence, absence of empowerment, maintenance of a hierarchy of the organization, lack of mutual trust, lack of civic education, insufficient technological knowledge and experience, inadequate accessibility, and lack of infrastructural amenities, etc. (ODPM 2002; Yang & Callahan, 2007; Yang & Pandey, 2011; Aulich, 2009; Bherer, 2010).

Moreover, this study also identifies some key factors (from the perspectives of both common people and officials) such as citizen's education & awareness, involvement of people having different political ideologies, willingness to participate, officials' responsiveness, proper monitoring and evaluation process, a vigilant civil society, possession of civic skills, the commitment of common people's participation in decision-making (especially poor & underprivileged), proper leadership skill, absence of maliciousness & compassion to each other, sense of equality in the society, proper allocation and utilization of resources, etc. which have a significant impact on effective participatory budgeting practices at the rural-local level in Bangladesh. Moreover, in Bangladesh, we all have noticed that common people always experience difficulties and challenges in the budget-making process, and their opinion is somehow neglected.

8. Conclusion and Proposed Strategies

The present condition of participatory budgeting practice in Bangladesh is still not satisfactory. This is partially a result of the absence of citizens' interest in case of budget preparation and the disjointed planning of the budgeting procedures. Besides, sometimes the decisions taken at WS and OBMs are not implemented. But political goals and objectives are given precedence during the budget implementation phase. Additionally, insufficient funding, a lack of accountability and transparency, citizens' ignorance, political interference, etc. are also responsible for an unsuccessful participatory budgeting

system. However, an effective participatory budgeting promotes people's participation and ensures good governance at the local level. If any state can implement participatory budgeting practices properly, then this state will be a developed welfare state after a certain time. Moreover, participatory budgeting can directly ensure eight factors of good governance (such as participation, the rule of law, responsiveness, transparency, accountability, consensus, inclusiveness, and effectiveness). Its goal is to lessen inequality within and between nations so that everyone can live in a healthier and happier world. Additionally, Participatory Budgeting (PB) is a multifaceted tool that has the potential to assist the government in achieving the SDGs of the 2030 agenda. So, this study also suggests some strategies that are essential for ensuring an effective participatory budgeting system like citizens' capacity must be developed by ensuring their involvement from the beginning of budget formulation through discussion, raising awareness, empowering citizens through holding meetings, providing access to information, improve officials' responsiveness, proper monitoring and evaluation process, the commitment of common people's participation in decision-making, proper leadership skill, etc. However, every country should take the necessary steps to implement this important system in its constituency, which can ultimately ensure good governance through the establishment of an appropriate legal framework for local government budgeting.

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