

Obstacles to Political Participation of the Elected Female Representatives in the Local Governance of Bangladesh

Imdadul Haque Talukdar¹³

Abstract

This paper addresses three areas of interest: how do existing studies define female political participation in the local governance of Bangladesh? What is the availability and quality of these studies: and what are the obstacles to effective female participation? A systematic, search strategy using search keys and boolean operators were used for finding out the studies which met the main questions of the review. A step by step process followed by a specifically defined inclusion-exclusion criteria was used for synthesising the final studies for the review. From a large number of studies, the present review finally included ten studies which were most relevant to the central purpose of the review. The reviewed studies which defined political participation from diverse perspectives have been synthesised here. The quality of the reviewed studies were assessed based on four criteria: study design, sample size, data collection methods, and data analysis. Based on these evaluation criteria, most of the reviewed studies were found to have small sample size, unspecified study design, vague mode of data collection, and superficial data analysis. The key barriers to the female political participation were found to be institutional, economic, socio-cultural and psychological in nature.

Keywords: Empowerment, institutional, socio-cultural, economic, psychological

Background

Association between gender equality and good governance has been a common debate over the decades (Morna, 2002). It can be strongly asserted that economic and social empowerment of women is interconnected with their inclusion in the political decision-making process (Husain & Siddiqi, 2002). With a view to including women in governance, the Government of Bangladesh has taken different measures. One of the most notable measures is reserving seats for women in the local government under the Local Government Ordinance of 1976 (Begum, 2012). After this primary initiative, the government has also reformed the acts and provisions for politically empowering women to a greater extent (Begum, 2012). Proclamation of the Local Government (Union Parishads) Ordinance, 1983, reformed in 1992 and 1997, and finally the Local Government (Union Parishads) Act, 2009 have facilitated women's stepping up the power structure of the Union Parishads, the third tier of the rural local governance of Bangladesh (Begum, 2012). Consequently, female political participation has been increased significantly in recent times (Zaman, 2012). However, it is being pondered over the issue that whether females are merely representing the governance or effective participators in actual decision

¹³ Assistant Commissioner, Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Comilla

making, resource and responsibility allocation, and other core arenas of involvement in the political arena. From the very beginning of females' involvement in entry into politics, it is being reported that they have been lagging behind the males due to psychosocial, institutional, legal, cultural, and other barriers to participating actively in the sense of agency over the deserved authority (Panday, 2008).

Purpose and scope of the review

To explore main barriers to female effective political participation in the rural local governance of Bangladesh, the present review addresses three main areas. First, the term "participation" is defined in the light of the synthesised studies. Second, scientific studies conducted in this area were collected, and then their quality was analysed. Third, the synthesized studies were reviewed in order to trace the barriers to female effective participation in the local governance of Bangladesh. The main research questions of this review are:

- 1) How do existing studies define female participation in the rural local governance of Bangladesh?
- 2) What is the quality of these studies?
- 3) What are the obstacles to female effective participation?

Methodology

Search Strategy

A review process including both database or electronic and hand searches were applied. The reference lists in the key articles and the documents found in the related institutions in Bangladesh were also included.

Academic Search Premier, Sage Journal Online, and Web of Science were systematically searched with key words and phrases. Science Direct, Social Scientific Index, and JOSTOR were also searched with the same key words, but no relevant studies were found.

Hand searches included the official websites of Asian Development Bank, World Bank Bangladesh, UNIFEM, UN Women, and UNDP which are also concerned with the female political participation in the local governance of Bangladesh. Google Scholar was also searched with different key words, terms, and phrases as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 3: Search terms for Women's effective political participation in the local government of Bangladesh

Political Participation Local Government Hurdles to Participation

Obstacles to Political Participation of the Elected Female Representatives in the Local Governance of Bangladesh

female participation	local government	hurdles
OR	OR	OR
women participation	local governance	obstacles
OR	OR	OR
female political participation	union parishad	barriers
OR	OR	OR
reserved seats	pourashabha	hindrances
OR	OR	OR
Quota	city corporation	limitations
OR	OR	
decision making	parliament	
OR		
political empowerment		

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria: The study included the articles which fulfilled the following criteria:

Region: Bangladesh

Language: English or Bengali

Political Organizations: Local Government (Union Parishad, Pourashabha (Municipality.), and City Corporation)

Population: Both men and women.

Exclusion Criteria: The review process excluded studies in other languages, focused on other countries in Asia, other regions like Africa, Sub-Saharan, Eastern Asia, Latin America, Australia, and the developed countries across the globe. It also excluded the studies concerned with female political participation in national government or parliaments.

Screening Process: Using the aforementioned search terms (in Figure 1), 5717 hits were found in three databases—Academic Search Premier, Sage Journal Online and Web of Science. With hand search, 45 studies were found using the same search terms.

In the first phase, screening was conducted skimming through the titles only. In this stage, most of the titles were found not to be relevant to the main focus of the review. Even many were found to be too far from the local governance, female political participation, and other themes of the review. So, 31 studies were found to be relevant to the present review.

In the second phase, the abstracts were carefully read, and exclusion-inclusion criteria were used to find out the relevant studies. In this stage, 21 studies were found to be relevant. In the final stage, full texts of the screened studies (21 studies) were scrutinized carefully and excluded 11 studies which were not found to be relevant to the research question of the present review. A diagram of total screening process is provided in Figure 1 below:

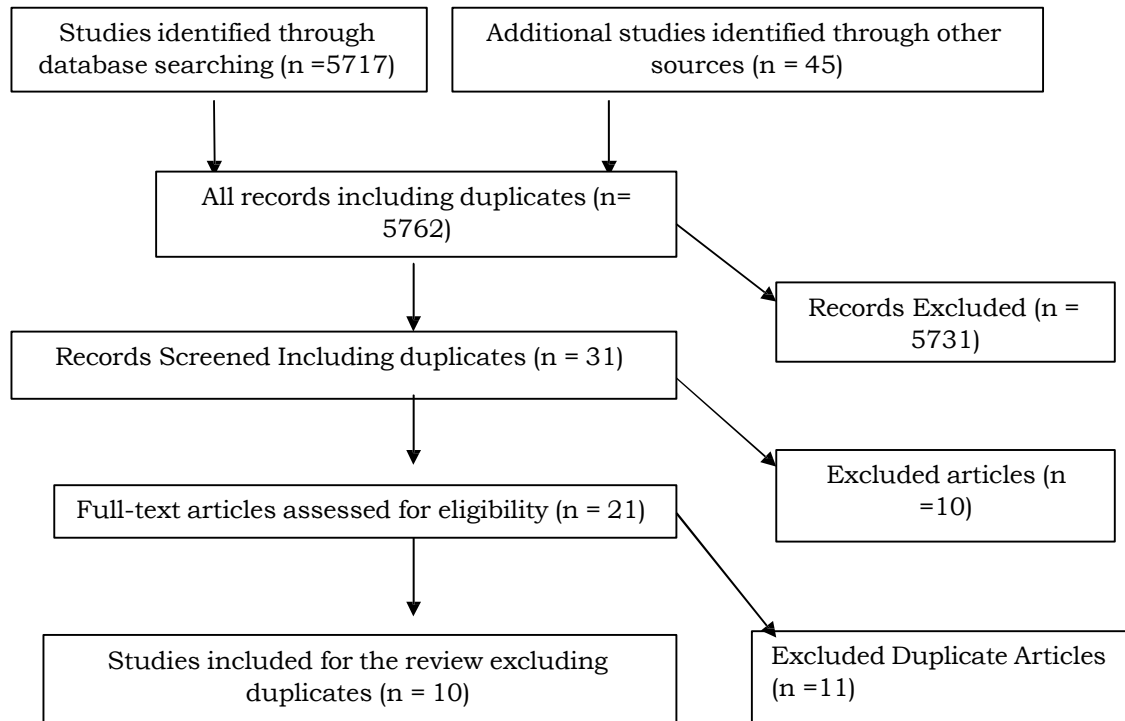


Figure 1: Step by step screening process of the studies

Findings

Definition of Female Political Participation

In the realm of development discourse, the concept of participation has got momentum in recent decades (Rahman, 2014). For being a wide concept, it is defined both generally and specifically in different aspects of social, political and administrative settings.

Hossain (2012) provided a definition by describing a general sense of participation. It denoted participation as people's involvement in policy making, developing and implementing plans and programmes (Hossain, 2012). It is a dynamic process of collective effort to problem solving and decision making (Hossain, 2012). It is having both voices and choices of an individual within an organizational or any other group settings (Hossain, 2012). It also includes democratic involvement of people in formulating, implementing, and evaluating any policy. In regard to participation as a tool for political empowerment, Panday (2010) categorized three levels of women's political participation: having the right to political involvement and

Obstacles to Political Participation of the Elected Female Representatives in the Local Governance of Bangladesh

exercising the right of voting at the household level; having the right to political involvement and exercising the right of voting at the community level; and finally having female representation in regional and national bodies of government at a broader level.

Though the centre of attention of the present review is female participation in the local governance of Bangladesh, it attempts to draw a synthesized definition of participation based on the reviewed papers. Most of the studies defined participation as taking part in the decision-making process of the local governance institutions of the country (Begum, 2012; Hossain, 2012; Panday, 2008; Prodip, 2014). Without providing in-depth definition, Panday (2008) implied a clear differentiation between representation and participation in the paper titled "Representation without Participation". It points out that representation in the governance process does not necessarily ensure participation. Hossain (2012) and Prodip (2014) included implementation of development activities and taking part in the policy making process respectively as participation. Participation in different activities like rural arbitration and regular meetings as a people's representative is also defined as participation (Hossain, 2012). Begum (2012) coined the term "genuine participation" in her study, but it was defined without further explanation.

Reviewing all papers, some segments of the definition of participation were found regarding the arena of female participation in the local governance of Bangladesh. The concept "participation" can be categorized into three broader arenas: participation in voice-raising in the decision-making process, participation in allocation and implementation of the assigned projects and responsibilities of the central governance, and finally, participation in the evaluation of the implemented projects. To synthesize the definitions, it was found that the studies defined political participation as the scope of raising voice in the different forums, getting the opportunity to implement the assigned projects, and having the lead to evaluate the projects implemented by them for ensuring further transparency of the projects.

Availability and Quality of the Reviewed Studies

Applying all inclusion and exclusion criteria, 10 articles out of 5762 were finally reviewed. Though the keywords resulted in Rephrase to clarify the sense of the searching process a very few studies were found on female participation in the local governance (Union Parishad, Pourashava and City Corporation) of Bangladesh. Among the studies, 9 (Rahman, 2014; Prodip, 2014; Hossain, 2012; Begum, 2012; Islam, & Islam, 2012; Panday, 2008; Panday, 2010; Khan, & Ara, 2006; Shamim & Kumari, 2002) were about women's obstacles to participation in the rural local governance (i.e. Union Parishads). Only one study (Zaman, 2012) was conducted on City Corporation. Unfortunately, no study was found to be conducted on urban local governance (i.e. Paurashavas).

The quality of the included studies was assessed based on four criteria: study design, sampling methods, data collection process, and data analysis.

Design of the Reviewed Studies

The study design of the reviewed articles was mostly found to be qualitative in nature. Only two studies (Zaman, 2012; Shamim & Kumari, 2002) used both qualitative and quantitative methods. Two papers (Panday, 2008; Pradip, 2014) discussed women's different hurdles to participation based on evidences found from secondary sources. One study (Begum, 2012) did not provide clear information about the study design.

Sampling and Sample Size

Most of the reviewed studies (Hossain, 2012; Islam & Islam, 2012; Panday, 2010; Rahman, 2014; Zaman, 2012) followed the purposive sampling due to limited time and resource availability. Only a single study (Shamim & Kumari, 2002) followed the stratified random sampling. The sample size of most of the reviewed studies was very low. Islam and Islam (2012) and Hossain (2012) included 15 and 33 participants respectively in their studies. Zaman (2012) included 60 participants in his study on two city corporations of Bangladesh. Rahman (2014) included 19 Union Parishads in his study, but did not mention the exact sample size at all. On the other hand, the sample size of the study of Panday (2012) was found 107, and the study of Shamim and Kumari (2002) was what?

Data Collection Method

Most of the qualitative studies used structured or semi-structured interviews (Panday, 2010; Hossain, 2012; Shamim & Kumari, 2002), focus group discussion (FGD) (Rahman, 2014; Hossain, 2012) or observational and case studies (Hossain, 2012; Rahman, 2014). The quantitative studies mostly used questionnaires for collecting responses. However, it was noticed that the questionnaires were not constructed using any specific and rigorous statistical methods. Descriptions of the items of the questionnaires were not provided in the articles. Some papers (Begum, 2012; Khan & Ara, 2006; Panday, 2008; Prodip, 2014) which were reviews of the relevant documents were found not specifying the sources well.

Analysis of Data in the Reviewed Studies

The review-type papers based on secondary source (Islam & Islam, 2012; Khan & Ara, 2006; Prodip, 2014) describe the reported obstacles to female participation in the local governance in narrative ways. The qualitative studies (Hossain, 2012; Islam & Islam, 2012; Rahman, 2014) analysed limitations and obstacles in the same way. However, the studies (Shamim & Kumari, 2002; Zaman, 2012) which used both qualitative and quantitative methods also analysed the data in quantitative ways. However, the analyses of these studies were limited to percentage and frequency analysis, and no rigorous statistical methods were used to analyze the quantitative data.

The Main Obstacles and Their Impact on Female Effective Participation

For the sake of comprehensiveness, the obstacles will be presented in four major headings: institutional obstacles, sociocultural obstacles, psychological obstacles, and economic obstacles. These are discussed below.

Obstacles to Political Participation of the Elected Female Representatives in the Local Governance of Bangladesh

1. **Institutional Obstacles**

Legal Obstacles: The Local Government (Union Parishads) Act from 1997 was the first initiative to reserve three seats for females in the rural local government of Bangladesh, while the Local Government (i.e. Union Parishads) Act from 2009 sought to ensure the inclusion of female representatives in the decision-making process (Begum, 2012). In spite of legal assurance, a great confusion about their role still exists in the councils among both male and female representatives (Panday, 2008). Each female is elected from three wards and three more male members are also elected from each of these three same wards moreover. It creates a big confusion about the division of responsibilities to be assigned to males and females (Panday, 2008; Khan & Ara, 2006). The law has defined few specific tasks for females, and no separation of responsibility has been made for male and female members, which has created legal obscurity (Panday, 2008). The key guideline, the Manual of Local Government, has not defined the roles and responsibilities of female members in its provisions (Prodip, 2012). Another legal constraint appears in the voting system of taking decisions in which females are a minority (Begum, 2012). Seven votes out of twelve are required for taking any decision, but there are only three women; thus the women are not enough to influence the decisions (Begum, 2012; Rahman, 2012). Even if the females are not present in the meetings, decisions still can be made, since it requires only 60% members' presence for Coram- the minimum number of presence of the council members that makes the meeting legally valid (Khan & Ara, 2006).

Organizational Culture: A repressive organizational culture (Hossain, 2012) was found to be another institutional obstacle which keeps females apart from decision making and other functional process. Lower access to information was found to be a very common scenario, with female representatives not being informed about meetings (Shamim & Kumari, 2002); they are not provided with sufficient information about their responsibilities (Islam & Islam, 2012; Prodip, 2014). Females also reported that they did not get enough scope of raising their voice in the discussion at the meetings (Shamim & Kumari, 2002; Zaman, 2012). Assigning unimportant tasks (Zaman, 2012), systematic bias (Khan & Ara, 2006), indirect threat (Zaman, 2012), and laughing at them with insulting gestures (Zaman, 2012) were commonly found occurrences in the studies.

Corruption: A high rate of corruption is another barrier to women's political participation in the local governance (Zaman, 2012). Members need to pay a bribe for getting projects from chairmen. Since the females are not well off and financially dependent on their husbands, it is difficult for them to provide the illegal money for getting projects (Rahman, 2014).

2. **Socio-cultural Obstacles**

Negative Social Attitude: Social allegiance to the negative values about females' role in the society leads them not to participate actively in the political arenas (Begum, 2012). Female involvement with community and

political activities was not found well perceived by the society (Hossain, 2012). Rather, it was found that females were not well accepted as people's representatives (Islam & Islam (2012). Though the membership to the union councils was found to be able to change their attitude, the common social attitude was found to remain unchanged (Panday, 2010).

Patriarchy: *The patriarchal social structure fosters unequal power relations between males and females (Begum, 2012), suppresses women and does not encourage them to participate actively in the political arena. Domination, hegemony (Rahman, 2014), and a rigid division of labour (Begum, 2012) are reported to keep women apart from many political activities. Since women are identified as women rather than as persons in the society, it is assumed that they are not capable of doing the same tasks as males can (Panday, 2008). Hegemonic attitude of the society also leads to proxy participation where husbands take part in the activities of the councils on behalf of their wives; this also deprives females of active participation (Hossain, 2012).*

Lack of Family Cooperation: Family issues are the primary sources motivating women to participate in the political sphere. But in some cases, negative family attitudes towards their political involvement (Islam & Islam, 2012) and lack of cooperation (Prodip, 2014; Shamim & Kumari, 2002) have been found to be an obstacle to female active participation.

Lack of Education: Education makes people conscious of own rights and responsibilities. Lack of education was reported to be a common barrier to female effective participation in the activities of councils (Khan & Ara, 2006; Panday, 2008; Prodip, 2014). It was found that more educated women were more aware of their roles that foster their voice raising and other types of political participation (Panday, 2008).

Lack of Social Mobility: Limited social mobility was found to be a very common barrier to women (Hossain, 2012; Islam & Islam, 2012; Panday, 2008). Due to the patriarchal social system and lack of security, females have less freedom of movement and less access to public sphere as compared to males (Islam & Islam, 2012). Due to the underdeveloped infrastructure, transportation and negative attitude, they also have restrictions on their social mobility (Panday, 2008).

3. Psychological Obstacles

Stress: In some cases, females were found to be stressed due to their dual role as a homemaker and a people's representative (Hossain, 2012).

Awareness and Confidence Level: In the study of Zaman (2012), 33% of the men and 67% of the women responded that they did not know the actual number of standing committees (Zaman, 2012). They were also not aware of their rights and responsibilities as representatives (Panday, 2008; Khan & Ara, 2006). In the study of Panday (2008), it was found that some females felt lack of confidence in attending meetings (Panday, 2008).

Harassment: In many studies, it was found that female representatives were harassed by the male members and chairmen when they tried to raise their voice and protest against illegal and unequal distribution of projects (Panday, 2008; Begum, 2012). Begum (2012) reported that there was insufficient legal basis for them to challenge a work environment that

Obstacles to Political Participation of the Elected Female Representatives in the Local Governance of Bangladesh

promoted hostility and abusive practices against women (Begum, 2012). The common types of harassment were verbal and attitudinal harassment (Begum, 2012), sexual harassment (Begum, 2012), and spreading negative rumours about their sexuality (Panday, 2008). In some cases, females reported of being victimized and assaulted by their counterparts whenever they raised their voice about their rights (Panday, 2008).

4. Financial Obstacles

Poverty and Financial Dependency: In the study of Begum (2012), poverty was found to be a barrier to female participation (Begum, 2012). Though they were financially dependent on their husbands, proxy participation by husbands of female representatives happened in many cases (Hossain, 2012).

The key obstacles as identified in different studies are provided in Figure 2 below:

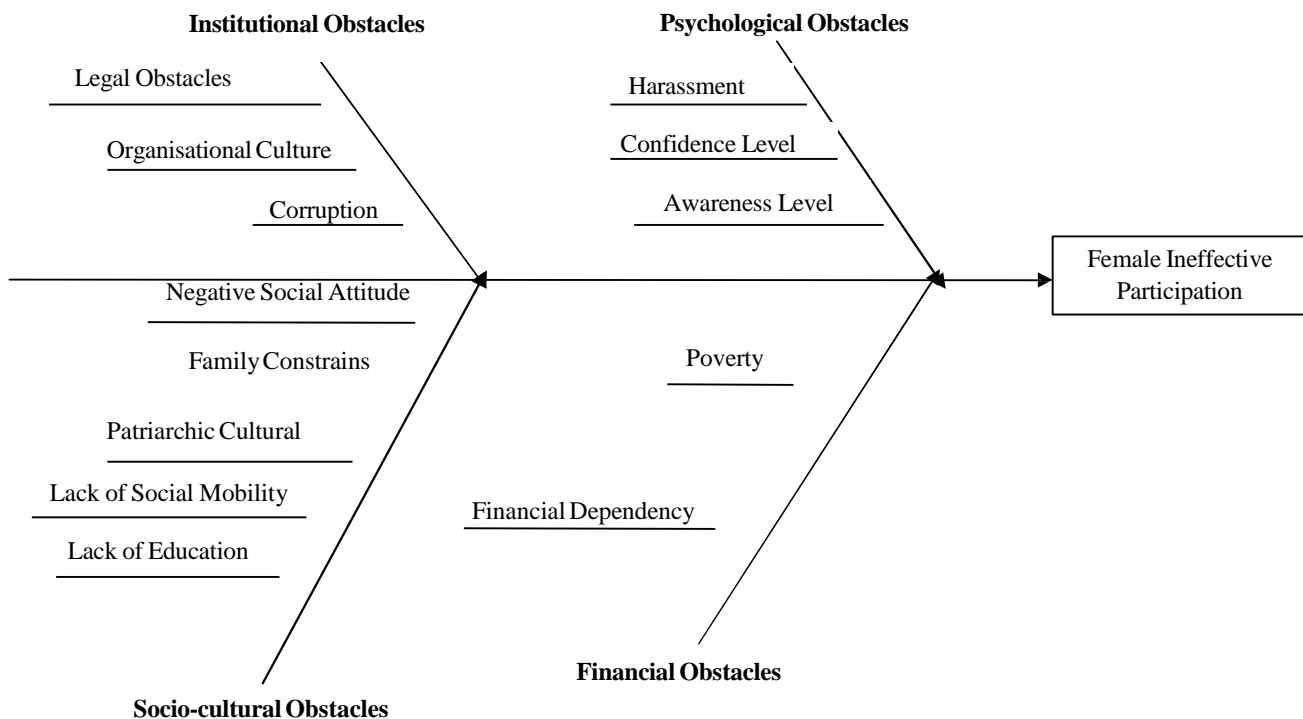


Figure 2: Key obstacles to female political participation in the local governance of Bangladesh, found in the review of the literature

Discussion and Conclusion

The present review aims at addressing three definite issues regarding female political participation in the local governance of Bangladesh. Firstly, it tries to synthesize an overall definition of female political participation in the local governance of Bangladesh. Secondly, it attempts to find out the availability

and quality of the studies conducted in this arena. And, finally, it identifies the main barriers to female' political participation in the country's local governance.

Various definitions of the term 'participation' have been found in the reviewed studies. In a broader perspective, participation denotes involvement of someone in policy making, developing and implementing plans and programmes of the government. It also includes a dynamic process of collective effort to problem solving and decision making. Within specific focus of this review, participation of female representatives in the local governance organizations implies participating in the core activities of the governance process assigned by the central government- planning, decision making, and implementing.

Going through a systematic search process, the review found only ten out of a large number of studies which specifically addressed the question of female participation in the local governance of Bangladesh. Quality of the selected studies was assessed from the perspectives of the study design, sample size, data collection methods, and method of data analysis. Most of the studies were found not to be defined with specific study designs. The sample size of these studies was also very small, and analyses were mostly qualitative in nature. The study design was not found to be well defined in the studies which used qualitative mood of analysis. On the other hand, the studies which used quantitative analysis were found to be limited in using simple percentage, and descriptive frequency. No further statistical prediction was made based on other tools of quantitative analysis.

The review has used almost all possible keywords and databases for finding out relevant studies in the target arena. It has also followed step by step process of screening out the most relevant studies based on an objectively defined exclusion-inclusion criterion. In evaluating the study quality, it has set out four specific and objective parameters of assessment of the reviewed studies - the study design, sample size, data collection methods, and method of data analysis. Finally, it has screened out the main barriers to female political participation in the local governance of Bangladesh. For more comprehension, it has also used a fishbone diagram of these barriers. It could be expected that the present review will be useful to the policy-makers, government agencies, and civil society organizations as well as academics who are concerned with good governance of the country. It can be a practical tool for policy analysis and implementation for the pertinent stakeholders of the local governance of Bangladesh.

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Obstacles to Political Participation of the Elected Female Representatives in the Local Governance of Bangladesh

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Appendix 1: An overview of Sample, Method, and Key Findings of the Reviewed Articles

Author	Sample	Method	Key Findings
Rahman (2014)	19 Union Councils (UPs) from different socio-cultural	Study Design: Qualitative	Major challenges were found in the study: ✓ Domination ✓ Patriarchy, Hegemony

Zones1 of Bangladesh.	Sampling: Purposive	✓ Corruption
		✓ Needed to pay money in getting projects from chairman
	Data Collection:	✓ Sharing profit of the projects among the members and the chairman
	Focused Group	
	Discussion (FDG)	✓ Faulty Legal Provision
	Content Analysis	
	Observation	
	Analysis: Narrative	
	Study Design: The study is based on secondary literature including books, journal articles and conference papers	Challenges to participation:
Prodip (2014)		✓ The manual of local government has not defined the roles and responsibilities of women:
		✓ Provision only have reserved the seats for women
		✓ Lack of social acceptance
		✓ Lack of family cooperation
		✓ Lack of education
		✓ Limited access to information
		✓ Unfriendly organisational environment
		✓ Patriarchic attitude
		✓ Systematic exclusion from the activities of the councils
		✓ Minority in number

Obstacles to Political Participation of the Elected Female Representatives in the Local Governance of Bangladesh

Hossain (2012)	<p>Two Union Parishads (rural local government organisation) and one upazila (sub-district)</p> <p>Sample Size: five male, five female and one chairman from each council.</p>	<p>Study Design: Qualitative</p> <p>Sampling: purposive</p> <p>Data Collection: primary and secondary</p> <p>Data Collection Method: Semi-structured Interview, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Observations</p> <p>Analysis: Narrative</p>	<p>Hurdles to Participation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Lack of social mobility ✓ Proxy participation (that is husbands were found to attend the meetings on behalf of their wives) ✓ Stressed with household works ✓ Negative community attitude toward ✓ Women's participation to political and community activities ✓ Repressive organisational culture
Islam & Islam (2012)	<p>15 elected female members from 15 Union Parishads of Bangladesh</p>	<p>Type: Qualitative</p> <p>Sampling: Purposive</p> <p>Data Collection: both primary (face to face interview) and secondary (review)</p> <p>Analysis: Narrative</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Lower social acceptance as people's representative ✓ Negative family attitude towards political involvement ✓ Less freedom of movement ✓ Lower access to public sphere ✓ Lower access to information
Zaman (2012)	<p>60 male and female representatives 48 (24 men, and 24 women) from Dhaka Municipal Corporation and 12 commissioners</p>	<p>Study Design: Qualitative and quantitative</p> <p>Sampling: Purposive</p> <p>Data Collection: Structured and unstructured</p>	<p>Attendance at the Meetings</p> <p>Attendance rate of attendance in the meetings by female councilors is more than male councilors.</p> <p>Causes of Irregularity:</p> <p>Male:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Forgot the schedule ✓ Stayed abroad

from questionnaire

✓ Did not get informed on time

Narayanganj

Female:

Municipality.

Analysis: Quantitative

✓ Illness

(only used

✓ Because female councilors do not get

percentages)

✓ floor to talk in the meetings

Participation in Meeting

Discussion

Male members fully participate in meeting discussions. But in case of female members, some participate partially and some do not participate in the discussion of meetings at all.

Standing Committees Headed by Female Councilors

A significant portion of men and women reported that they did not know the actual number of standing committees in their council.

In the case of Narayanganj Municipality, no standing committee was found to be headed by female members.

Obstacles Faced by Female Representatives

- ✓ Social obligations
- ✓ Financial constrains
- ✓ Immorality of chairmen in work distribution
- ✓ Partiality of chairmen
- ✓ Lack of security
- ✓ Restrictions in involving works

Obstacles to Political Participation of the Elected Female Representatives in the Local Governance of Bangladesh

Begum
(2012)

Study Design: not specified

Data Collection: secondary sources like laws, newspaper discussion etc.

Analysis: Qualitative

- ✓ High rate of corruption
- ✓ Poor honorarium
- ✓ Less responsibilities are given
- ✓ Less informed about responsibilities
- ✓ Less interest is shown by local elites on woman programmes
- ✓ Male commissioners laugh at female commissioners
- ✓ Indirect threat
- ✓ Ignoring women in financial affairs
- ✓ Assigning unimportant tasks

Key obstacles

- ✓ Unequal power relations
- ✓ Rigid division of labor
- ✓ Society's allegiance to the negative values about female role in the society
- ✓ Poverty
- ✓ Lack of education
- ✓ Insufficient legal basis for them to challenge a work environment that promotes hostility and abusive practices against women
- ✓ Having no indication of functioning the standing committees in the act
- ✓ In many cases, female are not given the scope to preside the standing committees.
- ✓ Female members are minority in voting system as it requires 7 out of 12 votes to make any decision.
- ✓ The standing committees which

Imdadul Haque Talukdar

are presided by a female member still have majority male members. So, female heads have an ornamental status there.

- ✓ Influence of male family member on female
- ✓ Absence of any monitoring authority
- ✓ Verbal and attitudinal harassment by the male members
- ✓ Sexual harassment
- ✓ Conflict between role playing as a caregiver of family and being a people's representative

Panday
(2010)

107 elected women representatives from 60 union councils (UP) in Rajshahi district of Bangladesh

Study Design:

Qualitative

Sampling: purposive

Data Collection:

structured interview questionnaire with both close and open ended questions and case study

Analysis: Qualitative

The membership to the UPs was found to change attitude of their own, but social attitude was found to remain unchanged.

Obstacles to Political Participation of the Elected Female Representatives in the Local Governance of Bangladesh

Panday
(2008)

Study Design: The paper is an evidence based discussion paper of the status of female political participation and hindrances

It has also discussed about 3 three case studies relating elected female representatives' experiences of exclusion from active participation and decision making in UPs.

Data Collection:
Secondary

Analysis:Qualitative

Major factors hinder women's involvement in politics:

Structural Deficiency: Though a reserved sit covers three words, it creates a role confusion between members of these three words and the female member of reserved seat in the charge of three seats at a time.

Legal Obscurity: The law has defined some specific tasks for women, but no separation of responsibility has been made for male members.

Education: More educated women are more concerned with their roles. Hence, education fosters their active participation and voice rising. It also creates the scope of own income, which also empowers them both in their family and institute.

Mobility: Scope of mobility is restricted due to underdeveloped infrastructure & transportation system and negative cultural attitude to freedom of woman mobility.

Patriarchic Cultural Setting: Women's role is perceived as solely a caregiver. They are not expected to be a politician at all.

Identity: Women are identified as women rather than persons to the society.

Awareness Level: Most of the female representatives are not aware of their rights and responsibilities as representatives.

Confidence: Lack of confidence in conducting meetings.

Sensitivity of sexuality: In some cases, females reported to be the victims of negative rumors about their sexuality.

Harassment: It was reported that female members were harassed, victimized and assaulted if they raised their voice to have their rights.

Khan &
Ara (2006)

The study was based on information collected from secondary sources like published books, reports, newspapers, and the internet.

Legal Constrains

Coram:

The decisions are taken according to the majority where Coram is formed with 60% members' presence. As females are a minority in number, they cannot influence any decision taken in the meetings.

Role Ambiguity

The provisional binding of making female members president of the standing committees, but no

Obstacles to Political Participation of the Elected Female Representatives in the Local Governance of Bangladesh

separation of roles has been provided.

Obstacles Found to hinder Women's Participation

- ✓ They are not given any specific duties.
- ✓ Lack of awareness about their own roles, rights and responsibilities
- ✓ The absence of operational guidelines
- ✓ Systematic bias
- ✓ Patriarchic social system
- ✓ Lack of education
- ✓ Social norms

Shamim & Kumari (2002)
UPs from 6 districts of Bangladesh and two districts of India

Type: Qualitative and Quantitative

Sampling: Stratified random sampling

Data Collection

Tools: Structured interview, Focused Group, Discussion (FDG), Case study, Observation

Analysis: Narrative and Quantitative

Hurdles to female participation:

- ✓ Not getting informed of the meetings
- ✓ Not giving responsibilities
- ✓ Lack of family support
- ✓ Misappropriation of allotments by the chairmen
- ✓ Non-acceptance of opinions in the meetings