

Reforming Bangladesh's Public Administration

Insights from National Survey

Key Takeaways

- 84.4% of people believe that the public administration system in the country should be reformed. (page 6)
- **80.4%** of people believe that the public administration system of Bangladesh is **not people-friendly**. (page 6)
- **68.8%** of people perceive that public administration has **lacked impartiality** over the past 15 years. (page 6)

Political Interference and Corruption

- The **main barriers** to making the public administration system more people-friendly are **political interference (56%)** and **corruption (42%)**. (page 7, 9)

Accountability and Transparency

- **52%** of people consider **ensuring accountability** and **36%** believe **eliminating corruption** to be the most important factors for reforming the public administration system. (page 6, 8)
- **95.9%** of people report **experiencing a significant lack of transparency and accountability**. (page 8, 9)

Government Official's Behavior

- People's perception of government officials/employees' behavior reveals that **66.4%** treat citizens with a **ruler's attitude**, while **31.1%** **fail to display courteous behavior**. (page 7, 8)
- People's experiences in receiving services from government offices reveal that **52%** believe **services cannot be obtained without bribes**, and **46%** report **experiencing harassment**. (page 8, 9)

Decentralization and Local Government

- **75.9%** of people believe that **upazilas** need to be **strengthened as local government entities** to provide greater public benefits under the existing system. (page 9)

Decentralization and Local Government (Cont.)

- People believe that the existing **district council**, as a **local government entity**, is **not efficient at all (68.1%)**. (page 9)
- **More than 50%** of people believe that **strengthening the current local government system** is necessary to **reduce pressure on the capital, Dhaka**. (page 7, 9)
- **47%** of people believe that **union councils and municipalities** should be **strengthened** to increase public involvement in public administration. (page 10)

Public Engagement

- **36%** suggest fostering more interaction between the administration and social and development organizations to enhance public engagement. (page 10)

Neutrality

- **57%** of people believe that **strict laws are essential** to ensure government employees **remain impartial and free public administration from political influence**. (page 10)

Suggestion from the People

- Strong calls (**38.76%**) for **reducing political influence and corruption through strict laws and independent oversight mechanisms like ombudsman offices**. (page 13, 14)
- Emphasis (**23.20%**) on digitalizing services, ensuring equitable recruitment (**5.98%**), and fostering ethical, transparent, and citizen-focused public administration. (page 14, 16, 17)
- The pay and benefits thematic area highlights the need for equitable salaries, timely payments, and performance-based appraisals to motivate public servants and reduce corruption (**4%**). (page 17)
- **Systemic changes (41.88%), citizen-centric governance (20.81%), non-partisan public administration (17.67%), transparency (9.66%), and decentralization (2.98%)** are urgently needed to promote equity, merit-based recruitment, and effective governance. (page 16)
- Advocacy for **empowering local institutions (51.18%)**, such as **upazila councils**, to address inefficiencies caused by excessive centralization; proper training for govt. employees in increase their efficacy (**6.77%**) has been portrayed **miscellaneously** in the public opinion. (page 19)

Insights from National Survey



Contents

1	Introduction	3
2	Survey Procedure and Analysis	4
3	Quantitative Data Analysis	5
3.1	Key Insights	5
3.2	Findings	6
4	Qualitative Data Analysis	11
4.1	Key Findings	11
4.2	Word cloud Analysis	12
4.3	Thematic Analysis	13
4.4	Comparison with Quantitative Data	20
5	Key Findings	21
5.1	Summary of Trends	21
5.2	Challenges Identified	21
5.3	Opportunities for Reform	21
A	Appendices	23
A.1	Survey Questionnaire	23

Executive Summary

This report explores public perceptions and recommendations for reforming Bangladesh's public administration system, based on a comprehensive survey integrating both quantitative and qualitative data. The findings underscore significant public dissatisfaction with the existing system, as over **80%** of respondents perceive the **public administration system as not people-friendly**. Similarly, approximately **85%** of participants emphasized the necessity for **extensive reforms**. Furthermore, around **70%** of respondents believe that impartiality has been lacking over the past 15 years. **Transparency and accountability** emerged as the top priorities for reform, highlighted by **96%** of respondents. Among these, **accountability (48%)** and **the elimination of corruption (32%)** were identified as the **most critical areas requiring immediate attention**.

Key obstacles to reform include pervasive **political interference (53%)**, **corruption (39%)**, and centralized power structures, all of which undermine the system's efficiency and equity. More than **65%** of respondents expressed concerns about **officials adopting a domineering attitude toward citizens**. Reflecting these perceptions, **35%** of respondents reported that **accessing services often requires paying bribes**, while **28%** **encountered harassment during the service acquisition process**. Respondents called for measures such as enacting strict laws to separate politics from administration, establishing independent oversight mechanisms (e.g., ombudsman offices), and digitalizing services to enhance transparency and mitigate corruption.

Decentralization was identified as a crucial reform theme, with **75.9%** of respondents advocating for the **empowerment of upazila councils to strengthen local governance**. Regarding the **effectiveness of district councils as local government entities**, approximately **70%** of respondents rated them as **ineffective**. Additionally, **44%** of respondents emphasized the need to empower union councils and municipalities to foster greater public participation in public administration. To minimize **political interference in public administration**, **54%** of respondents advocated for the **implementation of strict laws to ensure the impartiality of government employees**.

Equitable recruitment processes, merit-based career progression, ethical conduct, and citizen-centric service delivery were also emphasized as fundamental components of reform. The qualitative analysis further highlighted the necessity for systemic changes to address cadre-based discrimination, enhance service delivery efficiency, and ensure financial accountability.

1 Introduction

The reform of public administration in Bangladesh has been an ongoing process since the country's independence in 1971. Initial efforts, such as the establishment of the Civil Administration Restoration Committee, sought to restructure the administrative framework of the newly independent state. Over the decades, successive governments have initiated various administrative reform measures, forming as many as 17 commissions to modernize the Bangladesh Civil Service.

In 1997, a Public Administration Reform Commission was established to address inefficiencies and challenges within the central government. A key recommendation of this commission was the creation of a permanent, independent Local Government Commission to oversee and enhance the functions of local government units. However, many of these recommendations have faced significant implementation barriers, including political resistance, bureaucratic inertia, and resource constraints.

In recent years, there has been renewed focus on reforming public administration to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving governance landscape. Notably, in 2024, the interim government reconstituted the Public Administration Reform Commission, expanding its membership by including three new members. The reconstituted Public Administration Reform Commission (PARC) in Bangladesh has been mandated to develop strategic recommendations aimed at enhancing the efficiency, accountability, and responsiveness of the country's public administration.

To ensure that its recommendations are both comprehensive and inclusive, the PARC has actively engaged with citizens from diverse professional backgrounds, soliciting their opinions on various priority issues for public administration reform.

The report is aimed to depict a clear picture from the national survey done to develop a consensus on the burning issues centring public administration.

2 Survey Procedure and Analysis

This study was designed to gather comprehensive insights into public opinion regarding the public administration in Bangladesh. A semi structured questionnaire was developed to assess various dimensions of administrative reforms, including transparency, efficiency, and accountability. The survey instrument consisted of both closed-ended and open-ended questions to capture quantitative and qualitative data. A voluntary response sampling technique was employed for the study. Short Message Service (SMS) was used to deliver to send the questionnaire to masses and it was also made available via government websites. The data was collected using Google Form. The questionnaire was administered in Bengali to ensure clarity and accessibility for respondents. The survey period spanned from **November 1** to November 15, 2024, allowing sufficient time for data collection across urban and rural areas. The survey accumulated 100579 responses. The identity of the respondent were kept anonymous and no personal/demographic data were collected in the survey. The questionnaire of the survey can be found in the appendix [A.1](#).

Quantitative responses were coded and analysed using R to generate descriptive and inferential statistics. Qualitative data from open-ended questions were analysed thematically, identifying recurring patterns

3 Quantitative Data Analysis

3.1 Key Insights

The quantitative findings of the survey provide a comprehensive understanding of public perceptions regarding the public administration system in Bangladesh and highlight critical areas for reform.

1. Public Administration Perception

The data reveal significant dissatisfaction with the current public administration system. A substantial 80.4% of respondents perceive the system as not being people-friendly, and approximately 70% **believe it lacks impartiality**. These findings underscore a pressing need for reforms to make the system more accessible and equitable. Furthermore, the overwhelming consensus (85%) **on the necessity of extensive reforms reflects a strong public mandate for change**.

2. Priorities for Reform

Respondents prioritize **accountability** (48%), **the elimination of corruption** (32%), and **impartiality** (17%) as the most critical aspects of reform. This distribution indicates that while corruption remains a significant concern, there is an equally strong emphasis on establishing mechanisms to ensure accountability. A smaller fraction (3%) recognizes the interdependence of all three factors, suggesting a nuanced understanding of systemic issues among a segment of the population.

3. Barriers to Reform

Political interference (53%) and **corruption** (39%) are identified as the primary barriers to a more people-friendly administration, with inefficiency (4%) playing a relatively minor role. These findings highlight the centrality of governance and integrity issues in hindering reform efforts. The emphasis on political interference aligns with the broader call for depoliticizing public administration to enhance its functionality and fairness.

4. Transparency and Accountability

The survey highlights pervasive issues with **transparency and accountability, as evidenced by 96% of respondents reporting significant deficiencies in these areas**. Public dissatisfaction with government officials' behavior further compounds this issue, with 65% **perceiving a domineering attitude** and 30% experiencing discourteous interactions. These findings suggest that improving interpersonal aspects of service delivery is as critical as structural reforms.

5. Local Government Effectiveness

Strengthening local governance emerges as a key reform area, with 75% **of respondents advocating for empowering upazila councils**. Additionally, the effectiveness of district councils is questioned, as 70% **of respondents consider them ineffective**. These insights underline the need for a decentralized governance model that empowers local entities to deliver public services effectively.

6. Public Involvement and Political Neutrality

The survey underscores the importance of public involvement in administrative processes, with 44% **supporting the strengthening of union councils and**

municipalities, and 34% emphasizing interaction between the administration and social partners. Furthermore, the call for strict laws (54%) and political commitment (25%) to ensure impartiality reflects public demand for measures to safeguard the neutrality of public administration.

7. Holistic Reform Approach

The multifaceted challenges identified, including bribery, harassment, and delays in service delivery, indicate the need for a holistic reform strategy. The support for an ombudsman system (17%) and the integration of various measures to remove political influence further reinforce the necessity for a comprehensive approach to public administration reform.

3.2 Findings

Figure 1 - 6 which corresponds to the question 1-13 of the survey questionnaire, illustrates the opinions of people on public administration reforms, including effectiveness and barriers of public administration system and expectations from public administrations for transparent and accountable system through structure questionnaire. In this survey, **80.4% of people believe that the public administration system in Bangladesh is not people-friendly**, while approximately **70% consider it to be lacking in impartiality**. Following a similar pattern, nearly **85% of people believe that significant extensive reforms are necessary in the public administration system**. When it comes to reforming the public administration system, **48% of respondents prioritize ensuring accountability**, **32% emphasize the elimination of corruption**, 17% focus on making public administration impartial, and 3% consider all three aspects equally important for achieving reform (fig 2).

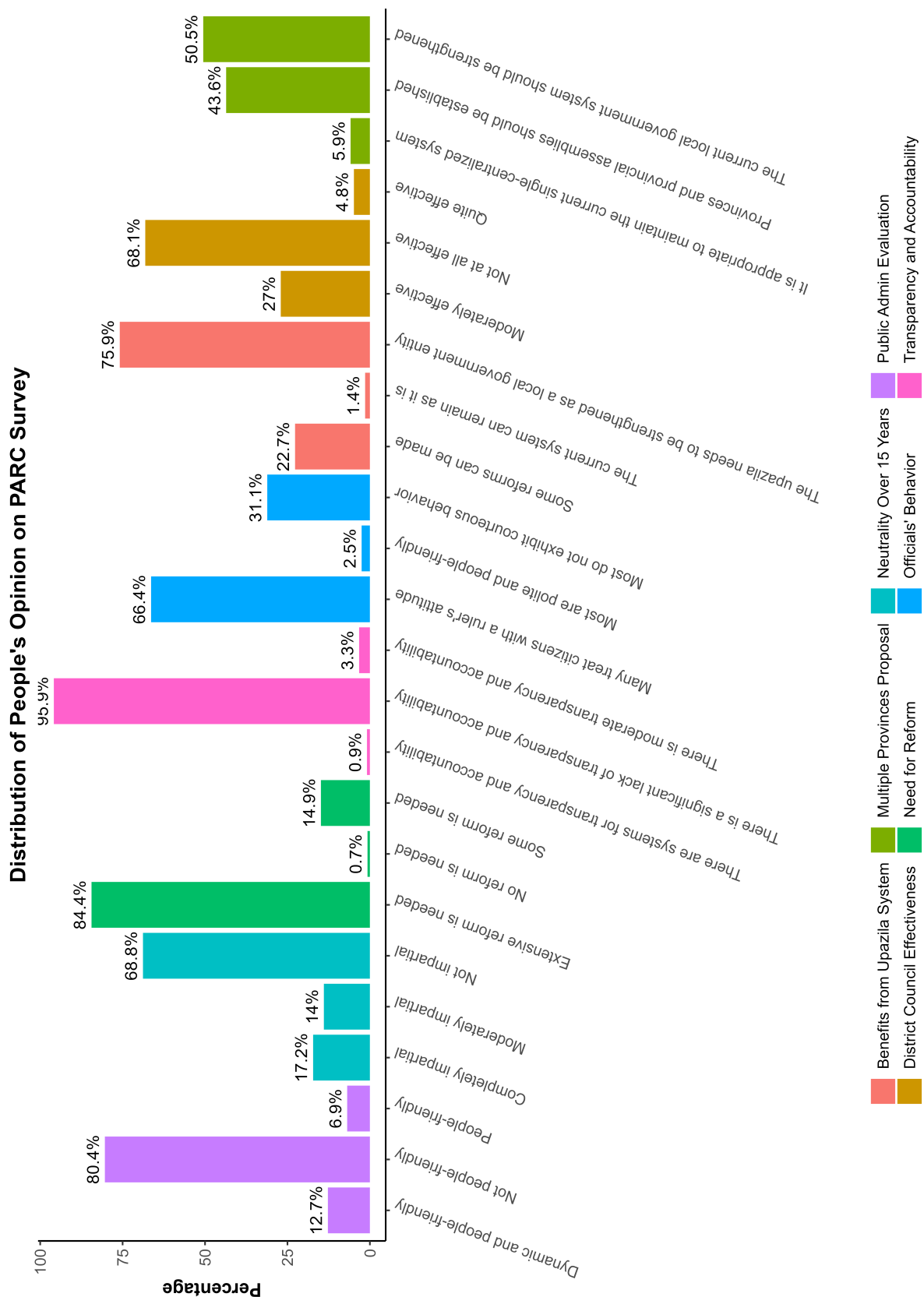


Figure 1: Distributions of People's Opinions on PARC Survey

The main barriers to making the public administration system more people-friendly are identified by respondents as follows: **53% attribute it solely to political interference**, **39% to corruption**, and only 4% to inefficiency(fig 3). Additionally, 2% of

respondents believe that all three factors collectively hinder the development of a more people-friendly public administration system. These findings align with the emphasis on accountability, corruption elimination, and impartiality as key areas for reform.

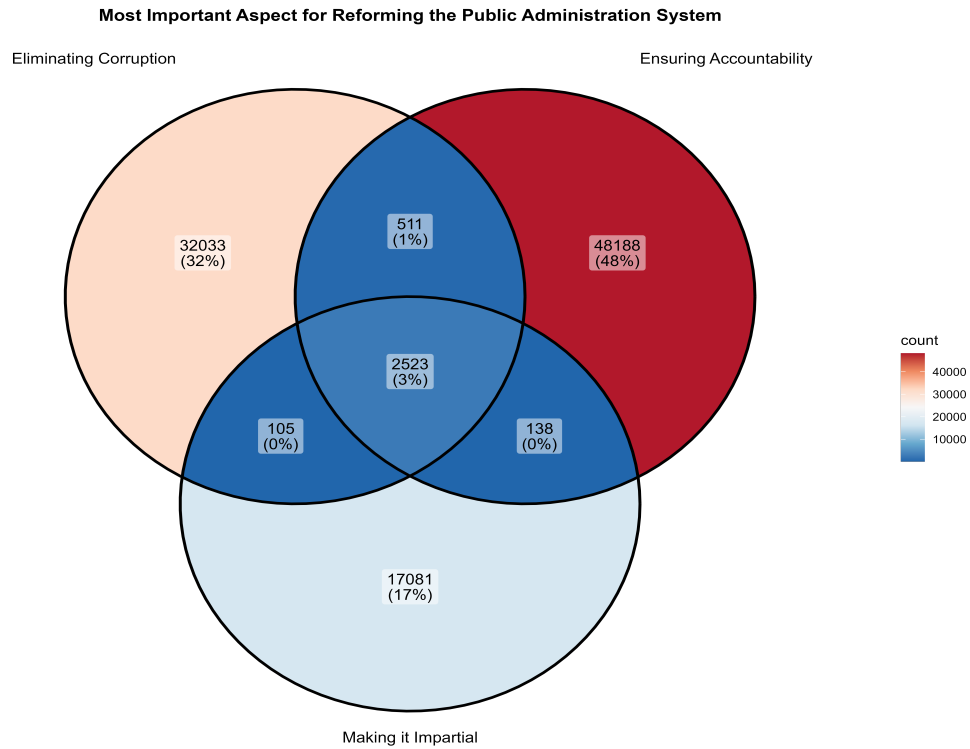


Figure 2: Most Important Aspects for Reforming the Public Administration System

Regarding **personal experiences with transparency and accountability in public administration**, approximately **96%** of individuals report a significant lack in these areas, while only **0.9%** believe the system is transparent and accountable. In terms of public perception of government officials' behavior, **over 65% believe that many officials treat citizens with a domineering attitude**. Additionally, more than **30%** think that most officials do not exhibit courteous behavior, while only **2.5%** perceive them as polite and people-friendly. In alignment with perceptions of officials' behavior, **35% of respondents report that services cannot be obtained without paying bribes**, while **28%** have experienced harassment when receiving services. Additionally, **14%** note frequent delays in service delivery, and **8%** have encountered all three issues simultaneously. Furthermore, around **5%** report a combination of harassment, bribery, and delays, highlighting the multifaceted challenges in accessing public services (fig 4).

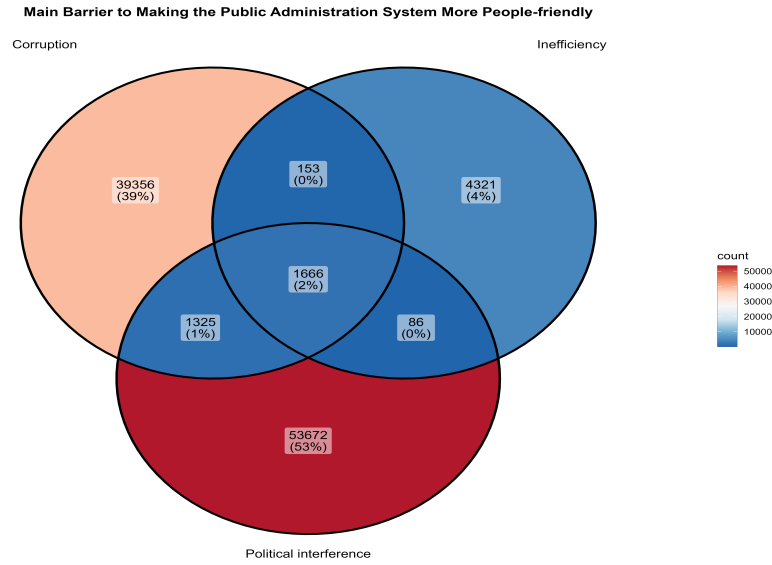


Figure 3: Main Barrier to Making the Public Administration System More People-friendly

Citizens of Bangladesh largely believe that the upazila should be strengthened as a local government entity, with approximately three-quarters of the population supporting this measure to improve public benefits from the current system. Building on the discussion of local governance, when evaluating the **effectiveness of district councils as local government entities**, approximately 70% of respondents consider them ineffective at all, 27% view them as moderately effective, and only 4.8% believe they are highly effective. These findings highlight the perceived need for strengthening local government structures. In terms of preferences for local government reform, **50.5% of people believe that the current local government system should be strengthened**. Meanwhile, 43.6% advocate for the establishment of provinces and provincial assemblies, while 5.9% support maintaining the existing single-centralized system (fig 1).

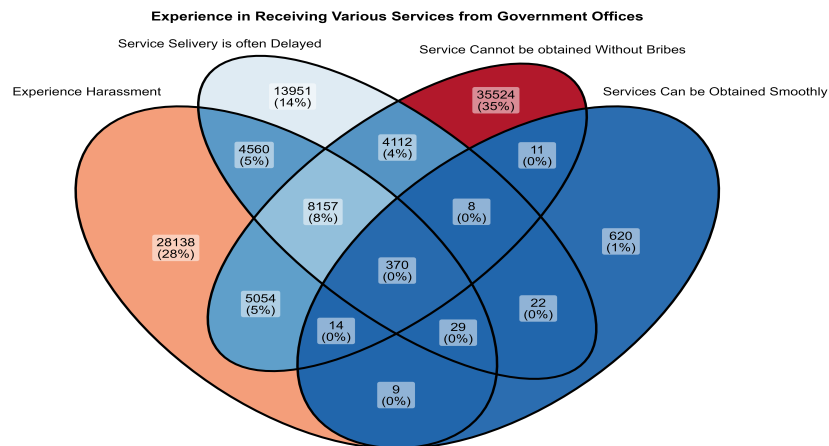


Figure 4: Experience in Receiving Various Services from Government Offices

To enhance public involvement in public administration, **44% of respondents believe in strengthening union councils and municipalities**, 20% support strengthening upazila councils, and 34% emphasize the need for increased interaction between

the administration and social and development partners. The remaining respondents advocate for a combination of these approaches (fig 5).

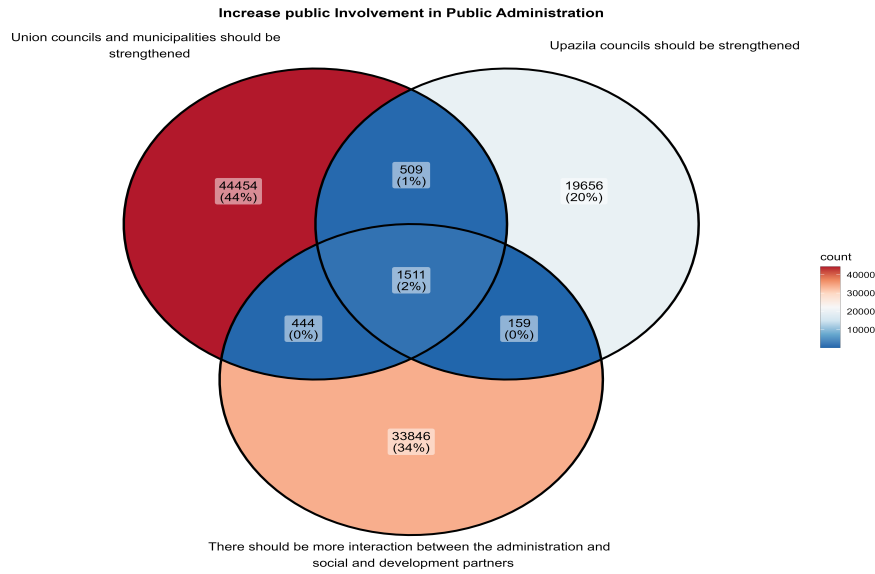


Figure 5: Increase public Involvement in Public Administration

To free public administration from political influence, **54% of respondents believe that strict laws are needed to ensure the impartiality of government employees.** Additionally, 25% emphasize the importance of political commitment from the government to maintain a non-partisan administration, while 17% support the introduction of an ombudsman system for public administration. Meanwhile, 2% think that all three measures are necessary to achieve this goal (fig 6).

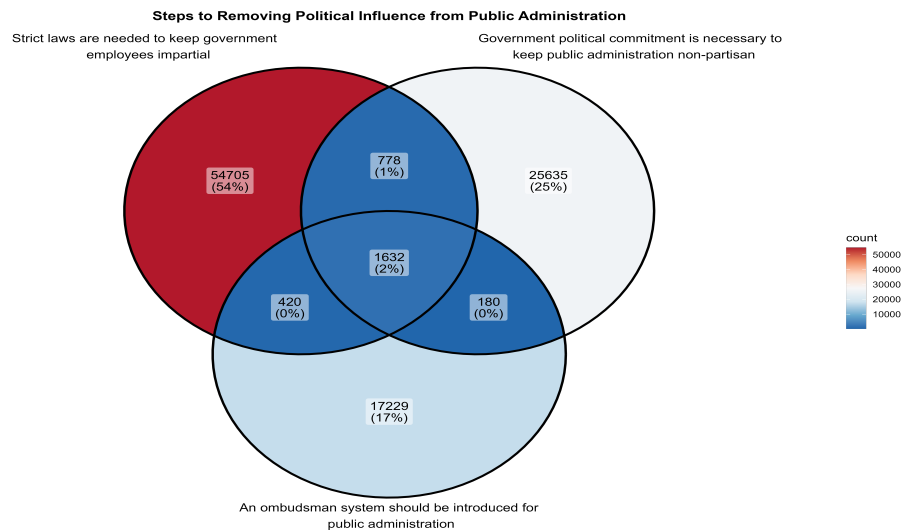


Figure 6: Steps to Removing Political Influence from Public Administration

4 Qualitative Data Analysis

4.1 Key Findings

The qualitative analysis of public opinions on public administration reform reveals several critical themes and insights:

1. **Political Influence and Corruption**

A significant concern revolves around the pervasive political interference in administrative systems, which hampers impartial decision-making. Eradicating corruption is seen as a top priority, with frequent mentions of the need for stricter oversight, enforcement of accountability, and punishment for dishonest practices.

2. **Demand for Transparency and Accountability**

Respondents highlighted the necessity of ensuring transparency in governance processes and maintaining accountability across all administrative levels. Establishing independent oversight mechanisms, such as an ombudsman, was frequently suggested to ensure fairness and reduce misuse of power.

3. **Decentralization of Power**

Many participants emphasized the need for decentralization, advocating for stronger local government systems to make public administration more inclusive and responsive to regional needs.

4. **Meritocracy and Fair Recruitment**

Calls for fair recruitment processes and the elimination of quota-based systems reflect public frustration with perceived inequities in hiring practices. There is a strong demand for recruitment based on qualifications, skills, and merit rather than favoritism or political affiliations.

5. **Professional Development**

Respondents stressed the importance of proper training and the development of a skilled workforce to enhance administrative efficiency. Addressing intercadre discrimination and fostering collaboration among administrative cadres were highlighted as critical for a cohesive system.

6. **Reduction of Administrative Privileges and Waste**

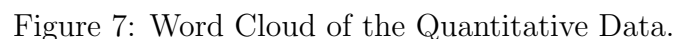
Public sentiment reflects dissatisfaction with perceived excesses, such as VVIP privileges, residential facilities for high-ranking officials, and unnecessary administrative positions. Reducing these privileges and redirecting resources to essential services were key suggestions.

7. **Public-Centric Administration**

There is a strong demand for a people-friendly administration that prioritizes the needs of citizens over bureaucratic interests. Ensuring service delivery, listening to public opinion, and fostering trust between citizens and administrators were frequently mentioned.

These findings reflect a collective call for structural, procedural, and cultural reforms in public administration, with a focus on integrity, inclusivity, and efficiency. They provide actionable insights for policymakers aiming to address the public's concerns and improve governance outcomes.

The word cloud provides a visual representation of the key themes and priorities voiced by respondents regarding public administration reforms in Bangladesh as depicted in figure 7. The prominence of terms like “political influence”, “eradicate corruption”, and “reform public administration system” underscores the public’s dissatisfaction with the current state of governance. These recurring themes indicate that the influence of politics and corruption are perceived as the most significant barriers to effective administration.



Terms like “ombudsman”, “honest administration”, and “nonpartisan public administration” indicate the need for independent oversight mechanisms and the separation of politics from administration. Similarly, calls for “eliminating intercadre discrimination”, “proper training”, and “skilled manpower” point to the necessity of structural and professional development reforms.

The word cloud analysis highlights a collective call for a transparent, accountable, and people-centric public administration system that eliminates political interference and corruption while fostering professionalism, inclusivity, and efficiency. These insights rein-

force the survey’s quantitative findings and provide actionable directions for policymakers aiming to implement meaningful reforms.

4.3 Thematic Analysis

The qualitative data were coded and can be represented under the thematic area as represented in Figure 8. The most frequently discussed topic appears to be political interference and influence, closely followed by issues of transparency and accountability. Among the remaining areas, administrative reform and other sectors are notably varied, requiring further exploration to effectively address their complexities. A detailed discussion of the people’s suggestion in public administration reform under these broad thematic areas are as follows:

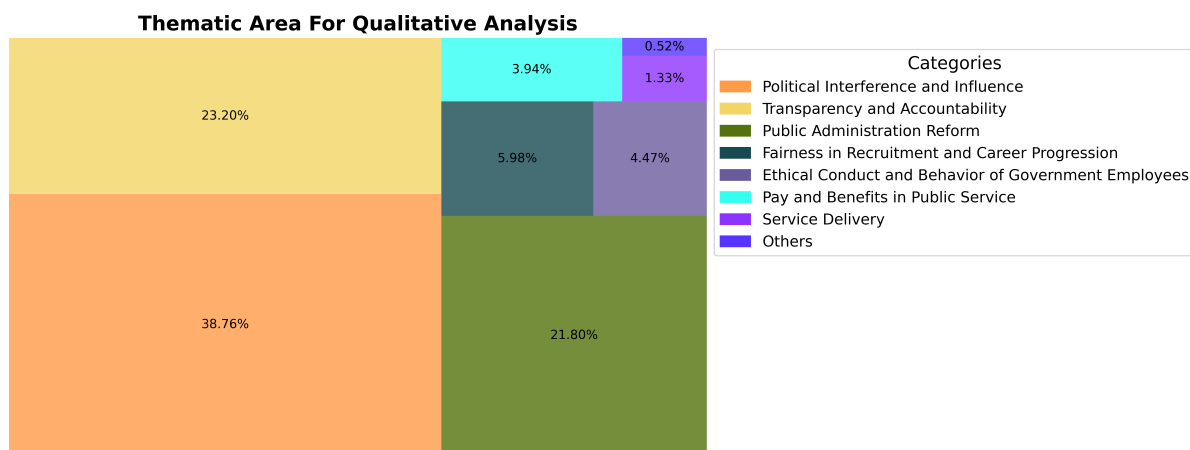


Figure 8: Tree Map of the Thematic Area for Qualitative Data

The figure depicts the tree map for thematic area of the people’s suggestions for public administration reform. It is evident that the most discussed topic is Political interference and influence followed by transparency and accountability. Off the remaining sectors, administration reform and others are diverse sectors and will need further investigation to address the diversity.

1. Political Interference and Influence

One of the most significant barriers to achieving a neutral and efficient public administration system in Bangladesh is the pervasive political influence across various levels of governance. Respondents emphasized that eliminating political interference is paramount to restoring transparency, impartiality, and accountability in administrative functions. A primary recommendation was to completely detach public administration from political activities, including recruitment, promotions, and transfers, which are frequently influenced by party allegiance rather than merit. The practice of appointing individuals based on political favoritism was identified as a critical issue, undermining the credibility and effectiveness of administrative institutions. One of the respondent stated:

“Party favouritism must be stopped. People of honest character must be appointed to public administration.”

To mitigate political influence, it was suggested that strict laws be introduced to prevent public servants from engaging in political activities during their tenure and

even after retirement. For example, proposals included barring retired officials from joining politics for at least ten years. This measure aims to maintain neutrality and discourage the politicization of administrative roles. Additionally, local government elections were highlighted as another area requiring depoliticization. Respondents advocated for removing party symbols from elections and reducing the role of Members of Parliament (MPs) as advisors to local councils to ensure fair and unbiased decision-making at the local level.

Institutional frameworks must also be restructured to minimize political interference. Recommendations included the introduction of ombudsman offices to oversee administrative accountability and ensure decisions are free from undue political pressure. Moreover, respondents called for the establishment of uniform policies for appointments, promotions, and transfers that prioritize merit and transparency over political considerations. These reforms would provide a stable foundation for a non-partisan administrative system.

Ultimately, achieving political neutrality in public administration requires a clear separation between politics and bureaucracy. Laws must be enforced to ensure that public officials operate independently of political agendas, fostering a governance structure that prioritizes the needs of citizens over partisan interests. By addressing these issues, Bangladesh can build a public administration system that is transparent, accountable, and truly representative of its citizens' interests.

2. Transparency and Accountability

The responses highlight several key reforms needed to address systemic issues. Central to the discussion is the need for stricter laws and regulations to ensure accountability, including mandatory asset disclosures for public officials and the publication of government income and expenditure accounts to enhance financial transparency. One of the respondent stated:

“Regular auditing of the financial condition of public administration officials and employees is necessary.”

Several participants also recommended the establishment of independent bodies, such as an ombudsman, to oversee government actions and ensure that officials are held accountable for any abuses of power. By creating mechanisms for independent oversight, citizens would have greater confidence that complaints and grievances are addressed impartially. Some respondents also highlighted the role of technology in enhancing transparency, suggesting that all public services should be centralized online, with clear guidelines and standardized application processes, allowing citizens to track their requests and ensuring that services are provided efficiently and without favoritism.

To further enhance accountability, several participants proposed creating a clear system of rewards and punishments for government employees based on their conduct and performance. This would incentivize public servants to adhere to ethical standards and would provide a framework for addressing misconduct. The implementation of strict punishments for corruption and negligence, rather than mere

transfers or reprimands, was viewed as a critical step in ensuring that public administration remains accountable to the people.

In essence, enhancing transparency and accountability in Bangladesh’s public administration requires legal reforms, independent oversight, depoliticization of recruitment, and clear accountability mechanisms. These measures would help foster greater public trust in government institutions.

3. Public Administration Reform

A strong emphasis emerged on the urgent need for a comprehensive overhaul to ensure a people-friendly, non-partisan, and honest administration. a diverse collection of topics was emphasized on the thematic area as illustrated in Figure 9. One of the primary concerns was the deep-rooted discrimination between administrative cadres and non-cadre employees. Respondents called for the elimination of preferential treatment towards administrative cadres, particularly in terms of promotions and career progression. Many pointed to the inequity within the civil service, where non-cadre employees, despite their experience and qualifications, face stagnation in their careers due to systemic bias in favor of administrative cadres. It was suggested that all cadre employees be provided equal opportunities for advancement based on merit, and the existing quota system that favors administrative cadres be abolished. This shift would foster a more inclusive and equitable environment, where employees are judged on their performance and capabilities, rather than their affiliation with a specific cadre.

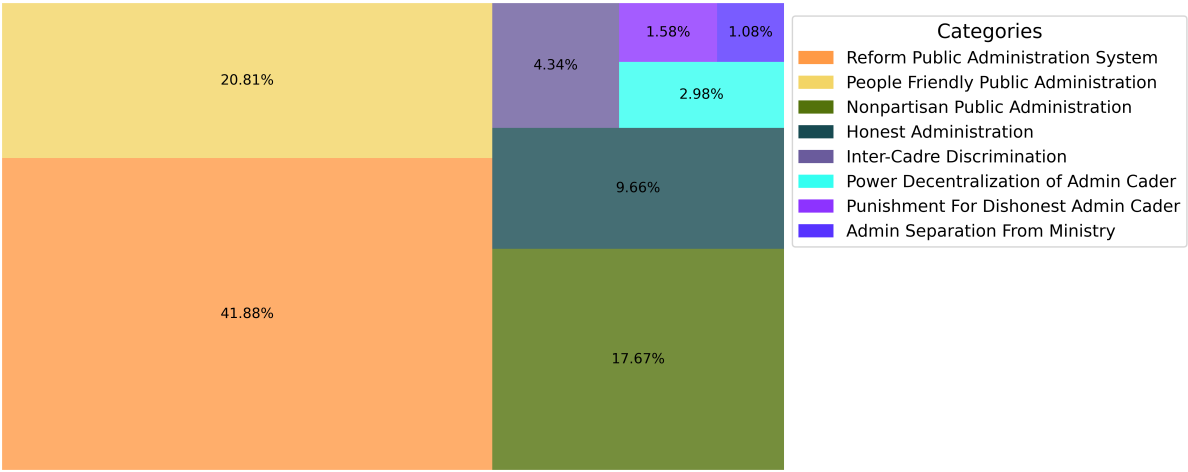


Figure 9: Tree map of the topics discussed under public administration reforms.

A key recommendation was the decentralization of power within public administration. Respondents argued that the excessive concentration of power in the hands of a few administrative cadre officers has resulted in inefficiencies, corruption, and lack of accountability at the local level. The idea of separating the administration from the ministry was highlighted as a vital step in ensuring better governance. By creating independent institutions for various administrative functions, it was proposed that the government could mitigate the undue influence exerted by political or administrative elites. For instance, the suggestion to establish separate, region-specific

electricity distribution companies was raised as an example of how decentralization could streamline services and enhance public accountability. Moreover, respondents advocated for ensuring that officials at the field level, such as district commissioners and upazila chiefs, move away from their traditional approach of holding undue authority, and instead, work under the guidance of local councils.

The call for a non-partisan public administration resonated strongly among respondents. Many voiced frustration over the political bias that often pervades the appointment and promotion of public servants, suggesting that political connections, rather than merit, frequently determine career advancement. To combat this, several suggestions were put forth, including the introduction of merit-based examinations for all public service appointments, especially for higher-level positions such as Deputy Secretary and Senior Secretary. This would eliminate the patronage system and foster an administration that is dedicated solely to serving the people, regardless of political affiliations.

Additionally, the issue of corruption and dishonesty within public administration was a recurring theme. There were numerous calls for stricter punishments for dishonest officials who engage in corrupt practices, as well as for the establishment of transparent mechanisms to hold officers accountable. The proposal to separate the administrative system from direct political influence was seen as crucial to prevent the misuse of power for personal or political gain. Furthermore, respondents urged for the implementation of an efficient system of monitoring and disciplinary action, ensuring that officials who engage in unethical behavior are swiftly punished. This would not only enhance public trust but also deter future misconduct within the system.

Finally, the importance of a people-centric approach to public administration was underscored throughout the responses. A significant portion of the feedback called for the simplification and digitalization of government services, making them more accessible and efficient. By reducing bureaucracy and the potential for corruption, these reforms would create a public administration that is not only transparent but also truly responsive to the needs of the people. It was clear from the responses that a reformed public administration—rooted in integrity, merit, and decentralization—would be key to fostering a more just, efficient, and accountable government system in Bangladesh.

4. Fairness in Recruitment and Career Progression

Around 5.98% of respondents expressed the importance of fairness and transparency in the recruitment process within public administration. They emphasized that corruption, bribery, nepotism, and political interference should be eradicated to ensure a merit-based system. Many believed that only competent and qualified candidates should be appointed, based on their expertise and educational qualifications, without favouritism or undue influence.

Transparency emerged as a central theme, with respondents advocating for recruitment exam results to be openly published to foster trust. There were also strong

calls for independent recruitment commissions free from political influence and a fair promotion system that rewards performance, skills, and accountability rather than personal connections or lobbying.

One respondent stated,

“Strictly audit the income and expenditure account of all officials and employees related to public administration.”

highlighting the need for financial accountability. Decentralizing recruitment and adopting global best practices were seen as vital steps toward ensuring a non-partisan, credible system.

5. Ethical Conduct and Behaviour of Government Employees

Respondents emphasized that the ethical conduct and behaviour of government employees are crucial for building effective public administration. Many stressed the importance of political neutrality, urging officials to serve impartially without letting party affiliations influence their actions. Respecting citizens and treating them with courtesy were seen as fundamental principles, along with holding government employees accountable for their actions.

Several respondents recommended setting up complaint mechanisms to address instances of misbehaviour or unethical conduct, particularly at lower levels. About 4.47% of respondents specifically highlighted the need for training programs to help government employees improve their behaviour and attitudes. One respondent noted,

“The official or employee needs to change their attitude towards the people, and they need a certain number of training days on how to behave and talk to service recipients respectfully.”

This reflects a broader desire for public servants to foster positive relationships with citizens and build trust.

Eliminating corruption, promoting accountability, and encouraging empathy and professionalism in public interactions were consistent themes. Respondents believe these steps are critical to improving service delivery and strengthening trust between the government and its citizens.

6. Pay and Benefits in Public Service

Respondents highlighted the pressing need to reform the pay and benefits structure for government employees, focusing on eliminating salary disparities. Many advocated for the immediate implementation of the 9th pay scale to promote fairness and equity. Salary inequality between different grades was seen as a significant driver of financial hardship and corruption.

Respondents called for the formation of a new pay commission to review the existing structure and establish a competitive, market-oriented pay scale. Approximately

3.94% of respondents emphasized addressing salary inequality and accountability in public administration. One respondent stated,

“A new pay scale should be implemented urgently. Until then, a 50% dearness allowance could be introduced, along with increases in medical and child education allowances.”

Beyond salary reform, respondents stressed the importance of timely payments and interim allowances until the new pay scale is adopted. They also advocated for a transfer policy free from political influence and regular salary adjustments to keep pace with inflation. Adequate training, transparent promotions, and performance-based appraisals were identified as vital measures to motivate employees and ensure fair compensation while delivering efficient public services.

7. Service Delivery

Respondents highlighted the urgent need for a modern, efficient, and citizen-centered public service system to rebuild trust in government. Recommendations focused on simplifying bureaucratic processes, combating bribery, and utilizing technology to improve efficiency. As one respondent suggested,

“Reducing direct contact between service providers and recipients through digitalization of service delivery”

was identified as a key step to enhance transparency and curb corruption.

Improving staffing levels, allocating resources effectively, and empowering local governments to deliver tailored services were also emphasized. Respondents advocated for a cultural shift in public administration—from rigid, colonial-era practices to citizen-focused, service-oriented approaches.

Additionally, implementing strong legal frameworks, independent oversight, and regular accountability checks were seen as vital for fair and efficient governance. Notably, 1.33% of respondents specifically identified these reforms as critical to creating a governance model that prioritizes public welfare, transparency, and efficiency.

8. Others

A diversified collection of topics has been discussed under the others thematic area. A pictorial representation has been presented in Figure 10. The top two categories are discussed as follows:

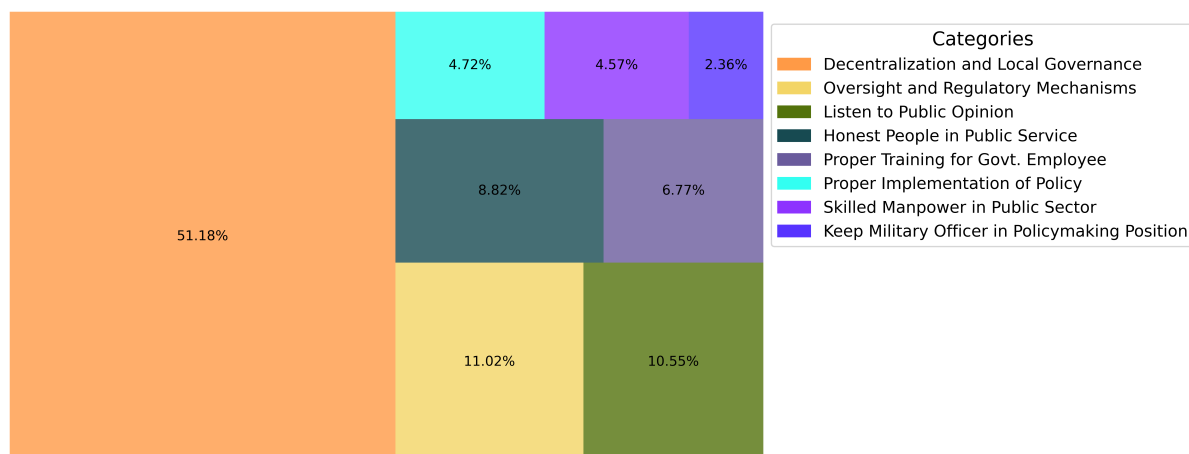


Figure 10: Tree map of the topics discussed under the other thematic area

- Decentralization and Local Governance**

The respondents identified decentralization as a cornerstone of public administration reform, defining it as transferring authority, resources, and decision-making power from the central government to local levels. This approach was seen as crucial for fostering a more responsive and efficient governance system. By empowering local governments, respondents believed decision-making would become faster, corruption would decrease, and services would be more accessible to citizens. Key recommendations included decentralizing administrative and fiscal powers in critical areas such as policing and governance to address local issues more effectively and equitably.

Strengthening local government institutions was seen as vital to ensuring non-discriminatory service delivery and addressing community-specific needs. Suggestions ranged from clustering ministries for a more professional administration to empowering directorates and local administrations to function with reduced reliance on central authorities. Respondents also emphasized fiscal decentralization to enable local governments to address community needs independently. Mechanisms like public hearings and feedback systems were recommended to increase citizen participation in decision-making and ensure reforms reflected local priorities.

- Oversight and Regulatory Mechanism**

Strengthening oversight and regulatory systems was widely seen as a cornerstone of good governance. Respondents emphasized appointing trusted individuals, such as experienced retired officers, to lead independent oversight bodies or citizens' councils. As one respondent noted,

“Strict accountability and oversight must be increased in all government institutions, and the rule of law must be implemented.”

Key proposals included regular audits, transparent accountability measures, and strengthening bodies like the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to function independently, free from political interference. Respondents also called for new laws to institutionalize accountability and suggested limiting officials' terms to prevent power consolidation. To enhance governance, they advocated for neutral election oversight, unbiased oversight committees, and mechanisms

to ensure that public servants perform their duties with integrity and efficiency. Empowering local governments with sufficient authority while maintaining proper oversight was also seen as vital to reducing corruption and improving governance outcomes.

4.4 Comparison with Quantitative Data

1. Alignment of Qualitative and Quantitative Findings:

- Qualitative insights complement quantitative data, offering a nuanced perspective on public perceptions of Bangladesh's public administration system.
- Both data types emphasize the critical need for reforms in accountability, transparency, and impartiality.

2. Quantitative Highlights:

- 80.4% of respondents perceive the system as not people-friendly.
- 85% advocate for extensive reforms in public administration.

3. Qualitative Insights on Underlying Issues:

- Political interference and favoritism in recruitment and promotions are identified as root causes of inefficiencies.
- Calls for independent oversight mechanisms, stricter laws, and digitalized service delivery to enhance transparency.

4. Focus on Accountability and Anti-Corruption:

- 48% of quantitative respondents prioritize accountability as a key reform area.
- Qualitative responses emphasize anti-corruption measures through stricter enforcement and oversight.

5. Decentralization and Local Governance:

- 75% of quantitative respondents support strengthening upazila councils.
- Qualitative data highlights the adverse effects of excessive centralization and cadre-based discrimination.

6. Comprehensive Understanding:

- Together, the findings underscore the necessity of holistic, citizen-centered reforms to address systemic inefficiencies and inequities.

5 Key Findings

5.1 Summary of Trends

The data reveal a strong consensus on the need for comprehensive changes to enhance transparency, fairness, and efficiency. A recurring theme was the call for a people-friendly, non-partisan administration that prioritizes merit over political affiliation. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that recruitment and promotion processes should be merit-based, with particular emphasis on eliminating the systemic discrimination between administrative cadres and other employees. Another prominent trend was the need to decentralize power within the public administration, enabling greater local governance and reducing the centralization of authority that currently hinders effective service delivery.

A significant portion of the responses also pointed to the issue of corruption within the system, with calls for stronger accountability measures, including punishment for dishonest cadres. There was a growing demand for the separation of administrative functions from political influence, ensuring that decisions are made based on merit and public need, rather than political allegiance. Public opinion also favored the simplification and digitalization of government services to reduce bureaucracy and improve transparency.

5.2 Challenges Identified

Several challenges emerged from the data, primarily revolving around resistance to change within the current administrative structure. The most pressing concern was the entrenched discrimination between administrative and non-cadre employees, which many respondents argued has been perpetuated by outdated practices and a lack of political will to enact reform. There was also significant concern over the pervasive corruption within various ministries, with respondents highlighting the difficulty of addressing this issue due to political ties and the protection of corrupt officials.

Another challenge identified was the lack of accountability for those in positions of power. Many respondents expressed frustration with the existing administrative practices, where corruption and favoritism often determine appointments and promotions, leaving merit and competence undervalued. Despite demands for decentralization, there were concerns about the capacity of local governments to manage such reforms effectively, particularly in areas with limited infrastructure and resources.

5.3 Opportunities for Reform

The data revealed several key opportunities for reform that could improve public administration in Bangladesh. One of the most prominent suggestions was the implementation of merit-based recruitment and promotion systems, which would address the widespread dissatisfaction with the current practices of favoritism and nepotism. This shift could foster a more competent and efficient workforce, while also restoring public trust in the administration.

There was also a strong endorsement of decentralization, with respondents suggesting the creation of independent bodies to manage local governance and reduce the overreach of central administrative cadres. This could lead to more responsive and accountable

governance, with greater focus on local needs. The reform of administrative cadres, including reducing their exclusive power and privileges, was identified as a key opportunity to create a more egalitarian system, where all employees are given equal chances for advancement based on merit.

In terms of administrative processes, many respondents highlighted the potential for digitalization and simplification to enhance service delivery. By reducing the bureaucratic red tape, the government could not only improve efficiency but also curb corruption and provide better services to the public. The data suggest that reforms centred around meritocracy, decentralization, and digital transformation have the potential to address many of the systemic issues currently plaguing public administration.

A Appendices

A.1 Survey Questionnaire

জনপ্রশাসন সংস্কার কমিশন

বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয়, ঢাকা

জনপ্রশাসন সংস্কার সম্পর্কিত বিভিন্ন বিষয়ে নাগরিকদের মতামত সংগ্রহের জন্য প্রশ্নমালা

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশের অন্তর্বর্তী সরকার একটি জনমুখী, দক্ষ জবাবদিহিমূলক ও নিরপেক্ষ জনপ্রশাসন গড়ে তোলার লক্ষ্যে সুপারিশ সম্বলিত একটি প্রতিবেদন দাখিলের জন্য বিগত ১ অক্টোবর ২০২৪ তারিখে জনাব আবদুল মুয়ীদ চৌধুরীর নেতৃত্বে একটি কমিশন গঠন করেছেন। কমিটিকে আগামী ৯০ দিনের মধ্যে প্রতিবেদন দাখিলের নির্দেশনা দেওয়া হয়েছে। কমিশন ইতোমধ্যে তার কার্যক্রম শুরু করেছে। কমিশন তার কর্মপরিধির আওতায় গ্রহণযোগ্য ও বাস্তবধর্মী সুপারিশ প্রণয়নের লক্ষ্যে দেশের নাগরিকদের নিকট থেকে পরামর্শ আহ্বান জানানো হচ্ছে। এ উদ্দেশ্যে কতগুলো অগ্রাধিকার বিষয়ে বিভিন্ন পেশার নাগরিকদের অভিপ্রায় ও অভিমত জানার জন্য নিম্নলিখিত প্রশ্নমালার উপর জনমত সংগ্রহের উদ্যোগ নিয়েছে। আপনি নিম্নের সহজ ও সংক্ষিপ্ত প্রশ্নমালার উপর শুধুমাত্র টিক-- - চিহ্ন দিয়ে আপনার মতামত প্রকাশ করতে পারেন। অনলাইন বা অফলাইনে আপনার মতামত আগামী ১৫ নভেম্বর ২০২৪ তারিখের মধ্যে জানাতে পারেন। **ওয়েবসাইট: -----**

- ☐ একক নিবাচনি,
- ☐ বহু নিবাচনি

জনমত সংগ্রহের জন্য প্রশ্নমালা

১। বাংলাদেশের জনপ্রশাসন ব্যবস্থাকে সাধারণভাবে আপনি কীভাবে মূল্যায়ন করেন?

- ☐ জনবান্ধব নয়
- ☐ চলতিমানের জনবান্ধব
- ☐ জনবান্ধব

২। নিরপেক্ষতার বিচারে বিগত ১৫ বছরে জনপ্রশাসনের যে বৈশিষ্ট ছিল তাকে আপনি কীভাবে মূল্যায়ন করেন?

- ☐ সম্পূর্ণ দলনিরপেক্ষ ছিল
- ☐ মোটামুটি দলনিরপেক্ষ ছিল
- ☐ দলনিরপেক্ষ ছিল না

৩। আপনি কী করেন যে, দেশের জনপ্রশাসন ব্যবস্থা সংস্কার করা প্রয়োজন?

- ☐ সংস্কারের প্রয়োজন নেই
- ☐ কিছু সংস্কার করা প্রয়োজন
- ☐ ব্যাপক সংস্কার প্রয়োজন

৪। আপনার মতে জনপ্রশাসন ব্যবস্থা সংস্কারে কোন বিষয়টি অধিকতর গুরুত্বপূর্ণ?

- ☐ দূর্নীতি দূর করা
- ☐ জবাবদিহি নিশ্চিত করা
- ☐ দলনিরপেক্ষ করা

৫। জনপ্রশাসন ব্যবস্থাকে জনবান্ধব করার ক্ষেত্রে প্রধান প্রতিবন্ধকতা কী বলে আপনি মনে করেন?

- ☐ দূর্নীতি
- ☐ অদক্ষতা
- ☐ রাজনৈতিক হস্তক্ষেপ

৬। জনপ্রশাসনে স্বচ্ছতা ও জবাবদিহি সম্পর্কে আপনার ব্যক্তিগত অভিজ্ঞতা কেমন?

- ☐ স্বচ্ছতা ও জবাবদিহির দারুন ঘাটতি রয়েছে
- ☐ স্বচ্ছতা ও জবাবদিহি মোটামুটি রয়েছে
- ☐ স্বচ্ছতা ও জবাবদিহির ব্যবস্থা রয়েছে

৭। সরকারি কর্মকর্তা/কর্মচারীদের আচরণ সম্পর্কে আপনার ধারণা কী?

- ☐ অধিকাংশই বিনয়ী ও জনবান্ধব
- ☐ অধিকাংশই মার্জিত আচরণ করেন না
- ☐ অনেকেই নাগরিকদের সাথে প্রজার মত আচরণ করেন

৮। সরকারি দপ্তরসমূহে বিভিন্ন সেবা পেতে আপনার অভিজ্ঞতা কেমন?

- ☐ হয়রানির শিকার হতে হয়
- ☐ সেবা পেতে বেশ বিলম্ব হয়
- ☐ ঘুষ ছাড়া সেবা পাওয়া যায় না
- ☐ নির্বিঘ্নে সেবা পাওয়া যায়

৯। বিদ্যমান উপজেলা পদ্ধতি থেকে জনগণ কীভাবে অধিকতর উপকৃত হতে পারে?

- ☐ বর্তমান ব্যবস্থা বহাল থাকতে পারে
- ☐ কিছুটা সংস্কার করা যেতে পারে
- ☐ স্থানীয় সরকার হিসেবে উপজেলাকে আরো শক্তিশালী করা প্রয়োজন

১০। আপনি কী মনে করেন যে, স্থানীয় সরকার হিসেবে বিদ্যমান জেলা পরিষদ একটি কার্যকর প্রতিষ্ঠান?

- ☐ মোটেই কার্যকর নয়
- ☐ মোটামুটি কার্যকর
- ☐ বেশ কার্যকর

১১। আপনি কী মনে করেন যে, দেশে একাধিক প্রদেশ গঠন করা হলে রাজধানী ঢাকার উপর চাপ কমতে পারে?

- ☐ বর্তমান এক-কেন্দ্রীক ব্যবস্থা বহাল থাকা সমীচীন
- ☐ প্রদেশ ও প্রাদেশিক আইন সভা গঠন করা উচিত
- ☐ বর্তমান স্থানীয় সরকার ব্যবস্থা শক্তিশালী করা উচিত

১২। আপনার মতে জনপ্রশাসনে জনগণের সম্পৃক্ততা বৃদ্ধির জন্য কী করা উচিত?

- ☐ ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ ও পৌরসভাকে শক্তিশালী করা দরকার
- ☐ উপজেলা পরিষদকে শক্তিশালী করা দরকার
- ☐ সামাজিক ও উন্নয়ন সংস্থাগুলোর সাথে প্রশাসনের বেশি মতবিনিময় প্রয়োজন

১৩। জনপ্রশাসনকে দলীয় প্রভাবমুক্ত করার জন্য কী কী করা উচিত বলে আপনি মনে করেন?

- ☐ সরকারি কর্মচারীদের নিরপেক্ষ রাখার জন্য কঠোর আইন প্রয়োজন
- ☐ জনপ্রশাসনকে নির্দলীয় রাখার জন্য সরকারের রাজনৈতিক অঙ্গীকার প্রয়োজন
- ☐ জনপ্রশাসনের জন্য ন্যায়পাল ব্যবস্থা (Ombudsman) চালু করা প্রয়োজন

১৪। জনপ্রশাসন ব্যবস্থা সংস্কারে আপনার অন্য কোনো পরামর্শ (যদি থাকে), তবে সর্বোচ্চ তিনটি পরামর্শ দিনঃ

- (ক)-----

- (খ) -----

- (গ) -----

