

Role of Ward Councilors in Decision-Making Process of Urban Local Government Bodies: A Study on Sylhet City Corporation

Muhammad Mustofa Kamal^{*}

Anwara Begum^{}**

Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Hossienie^{*}**

Abstract

Local government as the training ground for nurturing democratic culture plays an important role in the development of a country. Bangladesh has been experiencing rapid urbanization which leads to enhance the importance of urban local government day by day. City Corporation, which is one of the most important tiers of urban local government, has therefore assumed considerable importance for the development of the urban area of Bangladesh. And, in order to ensure the development of City Corporation, effective decision making is imperative. The study focuses the role of councilors in decision making process of City Corporation. Effective participation of councilors in decision making process is inevitable for strengthening urban local government bodies of Bangladesh. The study was conducted on the basis of empirical data gathered from Sylhet City Corporation (SCC), one of the largest cities in north-eastern Bangladesh. In this study, by using social survey method and applying structured interview schedule (open and close ended questions) data was collected from elected representatives (Mayor and Councilors), officials who participated in decision making process of SCC and from mass people using representative sampling method (n=120). The findings revealed that though the decisions are taken collectively at City Corporation's meeting, the actual scenario is completely different. Here, the supreme decision-maker is mayor who is able to handle the matter using his own convincing capacity and creates such environment in SCC meeting that no councilors can alienate his proposal. So, in practice, though mayor and councilors of SCC

^{*} Lecturer, Department of Public Administration, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Bangladesh

^{**} Professor, Department of Public Administration, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Bangladesh

^{***} Associate Professor, Department of Public Administration, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Bangladesh

participate in decision making process, the mayor plays the dominant role. The study found the existence of patron-client relationships between mayor and some councilors in decision making process of SCC. Due to this relationship, some close associates (councilors) of mayor got privileges in decision making process. In addition, women councilors from reserved seats also cannot play effective role due to the existence of patriarchic culture in Bangladesh. Moreover, the respondents viewed that if councilors could play effective role in decision making process, the decisions of SCC would have been more collective in pattern.

Key words: City Corporation, mayor-councilors, decision-making, City Corporation's meeting, patron-client relationships

Introduction

Local government is usually considered as the foundation of national government (Khan, 2009) and the importance of Urban Local Government (ULG) which deals with the development of urban areas is increasing day by day since the urbanization is going on throughout the globe as a continuous process (Egner et al, 2013). Bangladesh has experienced a rapid rate of urbanization during its post-independence period which leads to increase the numbers of ULG bodies gradually. City Corporation, a dominant organ of ULG, deals with a long list of functions that can be grouped in to six broad categories: public health, public welfare, regulations, public safety, public works, and development activities (GOB, 2009). In addition, the Local Government (City Corporation) Act, 2009 authorized city corporations to undertake development plan and its implementation with the approval of Local Government Division in Bangladesh (Panday, 2017). City corporation council has to take various decisions to materialize the above mentioned functions of the corporation where councillors of the city corporation are most vital actors along with mayor. Councillors play a significant role as a bridge between ordinary citizens and local decision-makers in local representative democracy (Egner et al, 2013). This study attempted to analyze the role of councillors in decision making processes of Sylhet City Corporation (SCC). Dominance of mayor causes hindrances to ensure effective participation of councilors in decision making process of SCC and this study revealed that if councilors could play effective role in decision making process, the decisions of SCC would have been more collective in pattern.

Relevant Literature Review

Local government occupies an important place in almost all the system of government (Singh, 1991) and socio-economic and political development of a country not only depends on central government's successful efforts

but also depends largely on the effectiveness and efficiency of local government (Chowdhury and Al-Hossienie, 2012). Currently, there are two distinct kinds of local government institutions in Bangladesh which include Rural Local Government (RLG) and Urban Local Government (ULG). After getting changed its institutional pattern several times under different regimes from British period to independent Bangladesh, now the RLG represents a hierarchical system consisting of three tiers: Union Parishad, Upazilla Parishad, and Zilla Parishad while the ULG consists of Pourashava and City Corporation (Panday, 2011; Chowdhury and Al-Hossienie, 2012; Ahmed and Panday, 2013).

At present, there are 320 paurashavas and 12 city corporations in Bangladesh (LGD, 2015a; LGD, 2015b). The mayor and the councilors of the city corporation are to be elected by direct election on the basis of universal adult franchise and one-third of the total number of councilor's seats is fixed for women as reserve seats (GOB, 2009). In spite of having reserve seats for women at local government bodies in Bangladesh to increase political participation of women as well as women empowerment, women representatives cannot strongly participate in decision making process of the council due to the domination of their male counterparts while such kind of discrimination is rare in the countries like Australia, New Zealand (Begum, 2007).

One of the key features of good governance includes the promotion of democracy by strengthening of transparent, accountable, efficient and effective national and local government (OECD, 1992). Khan (2013) stated that exercise of authority and the way and process by which this authority is exercised affect governance system significantly. He further added authority is closely associated with legitimacy and the legitimacy can be achieved through ensuring accountability, transparency, responsiveness and meaningful participation (Khan, 2013).

It was found from the study of Panday (2017) that the mayor of the city corporation is a dominant figure in administering the corporation where the importance of mayor is thousand times greater than the councilor which implies that governance system of RCC suffered from the absence of meaningful participation of councillors in decision making process (Panday, 2017). There exist discrepancy between forms and realities in the policy making process of the RCC. Though policies of RCC are formulated and implemented democratically in forms but it is always seen that the mayor of the RCC is all in all in every aspects of the city by maintaining patron-client relationship with councilors (Panday and Jamil, 2010).

Copus (2010) argues effectiveness of citizen participation largely depends on councillors. If citizen participation in decision making process can be ensured effectively, it will lead to ensure good governance

in the local government institutions (Hye, 2000). In England, it is found that mass people has not adequate access to information as like as councillors and for this reasons, mass people are not capable of making sensible decisions in local government as like as councillors (Copus 2010). Similarly, a study of United States local government found that as many public officials are reluctant to include citizens in decision making meaningful participation is rarely found in local government (Yang and Callahan 2007).

Khan (2013) stated that a large number of elected councillors in urban local government bodies are closely involved with criminal activities and most of the political parties of Bangladesh provide indirect support strongly to these types of people to be elected. It is imperative to bring about substantive reform in election laws of local government bodies to prevent individuals with criminal records and unaccounted wealth from participating in electoral process. He further added most of the elected representatives at urban local level in Bangladesh seek votes from the people to serve them with integrity but in reality public offices have become avenues for enrichment of incumbents which lead to create a serious gap between urban local level elected politicians and urban people-at-large. In order to make the coucillors of the ULG bodies more service oriented and people oriented and to update their knowledge and skills they must be provided systematic, regular and adequate training (Khan, 2013). In addition, there is no uniform authority for planning and implementing development activities in urban areas of Bangladesh (Ahmed, 2003) which leads to occur overlapping nature of the jurisdiction of authorities in ULG bodies (Khan, 2013).

Methodology of the Study

This study followed mixed research approach where both qualitative and quantitative methods have been employed. Sylhet City Corporation was selected as the area of the study. Located in north-eastern Bangladesh, it was promoted from a municipal corporation to a city corporation in 2001. The city has 27 yards and 210 *mohallas* (sub-wards) with a total area of 26.50 km².

In this study, by using social survey method and applying structured interview schedule (open and close ended questions) data was collected from elected representatives (Mayor and Councilors), officials who participated in decision making process of SCC and from mass people using representative sampling method (n=120): the mayor, 34 elected councillors, 14 SCC officials with decision-making authority, 7 representatives of other government offices who are sometimes invited to general meetings of the SCC, and 64 stakeholders. Interview schedules were piloted before the full data collection. Secondary data was collected from published books, journals, articles, periodicals, newspapers, the internet and relevant organizations.

Quantitatively, the data was analyzed in several ways: through SPSS, by applying the ‘chi-squared’ test and binary logistic regression. Likert scale was used in this study to describe views of respondents in a more specific way. Constraints included difficulties in meeting the elected representatives and the need to maintain confidentiality. The study ensured anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent, and maintained scrupulous honesty in analyzing and reporting the data.

The logistic regression model

As there is a binary response in the dependent variable, binary logistic regression was chosen, not linear regression, in order to avoid the non-normality of data – i.e. to keep the normality assumption. The study developed a tentative regression model which is:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta X + \epsilon$$

Where ‘Y’ is a dependent variable which denotes the pattern of decision-making in the SCC, and ‘X’ is an independent variable which denotes a ‘dominant role player’ as follows:

$Y = \{‘0’ \text{ represents ‘individuality by the mayor’ and ‘1’ represents ‘collectively’}\}$, and

$X = \{‘0’ \text{ represents ‘mayor’ and ‘1’ represents ‘councillors’}\}$

As there is a binary response, it is possible to interpret the estimate in terms of odds in logistic regression. Odds are defined as the ratio of the probability of successes of a given event to the probability of its failure.

Theoretical Framework

Herbert A. Simon (1957) supposes that decision makers have to be rational in decision making process and rationality can be explained in terms of means-end construct. If appropriate means are chosen to reach desired ends, the decision will be rational. But there are some constraints here because of means-end chain. He differentiates between different types of rationality. According to Simon, total rationality is not possible in administrative behavior because human behavior is neither totally rational nor totally non-rational rather it involves bounded rationality. The models of decision making range from complete rationality to complete irrationality of the economic man and social man respectively and the administrative man stands next to the economic man. The administrative man tries to be rational man but as he does not have the ability to maximize, he always ends up with satisficing¹. There are both

¹ Herbert A. Simon advanced the idea of satisficing. The word satisficing was derived from satisfaction and sufficing.

internal and external influences on organization man in decision making process. While authority and organizational loyalty are influencing the value premise of the individual, the criterion of efficiency influences his capacity to handle facts. Continuous flow of information and effective training are essential in rational decision making process. The administrator must be guided by the criterion of efficiency in all aspects of the decision making and the criterion of efficiency ‘dictates’ that choice of alternative which produces the largest results for the given application of resources. The criterion of efficiency is closely related to both organization and conservation resources but where resources, cost and objectives are variable, decision cannot be taken purely on the basis of efficiency criteria. Robbins (2005) urges that the optimizing decision maker is rational. That is he or she makes consistent, value-maximizing choices within specified constraints. He further adds that the rational decision maker needs creativity in decision making and it allows the decision maker to more fully appraise and understand the problem.

Hypothesis of the Study: *“The decision making process in SCC is independent of the dominant role player.”*

Findings and discussion

Analysis of the collected data

The purpose of the data collection was to analyze the role of councillors in decision-making process of the SCC. Of the 56 SCC representatives and officials interviewed, 82% were male and 18% female. Among the stakeholder respondents (mass people), 69% were male and 31% female.

Respondents

This study included 35 elected representatives of SCC and they were mayor, 25 councillors of general seats and 9 women councillors of reserved seats. Besides the study also contained 14 officials of SCC and 7 representative of other government offices who took part in decision-making process of SCC (Table 1). In addition, 64 stakeholders from different professions were also included to this study (Table 2).

Table 1: Respondents (representatives and officials)

	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Mayor	1	2
Councillor (general seat)	25	45
Woman councillor (reserved seat)	9	16
SCC official	14	25

Representative of other government office	7	13
Total	56	100

Table 2: Respondents (Stakeholders)

	Number of Respondents	Percent (%)
Business	16	25
Doctor	1	2
Teacher	7	11
Housewife	10	16
Service holder	10	16
Member of Civil Society	6	9
Lawyer	4	6
Journalist	3	5
Free Lancer	1	2
Student	6	9
Total	64	100.0

Decision Making Process at SCC

Simon divides the decision making process into three phases viz., intelligence activity, design activity and choice activity.

The first stage involves finding occasions calling for decision. The executive tries to understand the organizational environment and identifies conditions which need fresh action (Simon, 1960). As like the model, when a problem occurs in a ward of the SCC, local people along with councilor of the concerned ward identify the problem. Then the councilor informs it directly to Mayor or at the general meeting of the city corporation.

The second stage of decision-making process involves identifying, developing and analyzing all possible alternative courses of action. This involves spending more time and energy than the first stage (Simon, 1960). In this study it has been found that discussions are held on identified problem at the general meeting of the SCC and after the discussion at the general meeting Mayor assigns the matter to concerned standing committee of the city corporation in order to developing and analyzing all possible alternative courses of action.

The final stage of decision making involves selecting one of the best alternative courses of action (Simon, 1960). After a fruitful discussion, the city corporation parishad reaches to a final decision choosing best alternatives of the recommended solutions provided by concerned standing committee. In this study it is seen that decisions are taken on the basis of consensus. Mayor and councillors choose the best alternative at the meeting after long fruitful discussion. So, it can be said that, as like as the views of Simon, the authority of SCC takes decisions following bounded rationality.

According to the Local Government (City Corporation) Act 2009, all SCC decisions are made at general meetings of the council. Under Section 49 (3) of the Act, the city corporation must hold such a meeting at least once in the first week of each month. Mayor of the city corporation presides over in the meetings, and if any important issues arise, mayor of the city corporation is bound to call on special meeting of the council on the basis of the request in written by at least half of total councillors (GOB, 2009).

The Local Government (City Corporation) Act, 2009 entrust city corporations with executive power to run all functions specified in the Act. Mayor, councillors and other officials of the city corporation are entrusted with executive power through delegation by virtue of this Act and any decisions regarding delegation of authority required for conducting day to day services must be approved in the general meeting of the city corporation (Panday, 2017).

In this study, one of the councillors stated:

Most of the decisions of the SCC are taken by mayor alone and sometimes decisions are taken by officials through file processing. But any major decision must be taken in the general meeting of the SCC. Unfortunately, general meetings of the SCC are not regularly held and most of the times these meetings are called on less important issues (Interview 17).

Role Played by the Ward Councillors (general seat) in Decision Making Process of SCC

Elected councillors are ‘the instruments through which the residents of a particular geographical area have expressed their preferences for one set of candidates, policies, service standards, and tax levels’ (Wilson and Game, 2006, p. 253). This study revealed it is general tendency of local people of municipal corporations in Bangladesh to see their elected representatives (firstly councillor of their ward and finally mayor of the corporation) as designated authority to meet their all demands.

The prime function of the councillor is to represent the interest of his/her constituency (ward) at the council of respective ULG bodies.

Councillors act as a bridge between stakeholders of their wards and corporation council where decisions are made for the welfare of the stakeholders of ULG. As elected politicians granted a mandate by the voters, councillors are faced with the task of influencing the decisions and actions of independent players within a web of external relationships (Klijin and Skelcher, 2007). Councillors are the principal agents of strengthening democracy at local level and without these locally elected representatives it is unbelievable the existence of local level representative democracy (Egner et al, 2013). This study found councillors can perform this function through effectively participating in decision making process of SCC although having faced a lot of limitations.

The present study revealed among the respondents from representatives and officials category, most of the respondents (71%) agreed that councillors can play effective role in decision making process of SCC and 9% strongly agreed in this regard. On the other hand, 18% of the respondents of this category disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed with this statement (Table 3). In this regard, stake holders of the city corporation who were interviewed also expressed their views. Among the respondents from stake holders (mass people) category, most of the respondents (61 percent) agreed that councillors can play effective role in decision making process of SCC and 8 percent strongly agreed in this regard. On the other hand, 22 percent of the respondents of this category disagreed and 2 percent strongly disagreed with this statement. But 8 percent of the respondents were neither agree nor disagree in this regard (Table 4).

When interviewees who responded in affirmative were asked how councillors can play effective role, then different respondents stated councillors can play effective role in decision making process of SCC by strongly participating in general meeting, solving problems personally contacting with mayor and strongly participating in standing committees functions & proposing agenda for general meeting of the council. On the other hand, who disagreed with the statement stated councillors of SCC cannot play effective role in decision making process due to various reasons among which dominance of mayor and central government's directives are most substantial.

This study also found councillors of the SCC consulting with local people identify the problems of their respective wards and inform it directly to the mayor or the SCC general meeting. In addition, they propose various issues as agenda at citycorporation meeting regarding overall development activities of SCC. Then the council sends the issue to concerned standing committee to scrutinize the problem and to recommend solutions to council. City Corporation Act 2009 ensures the

provision of forming different standing committees which are comprised of chairman and members from and among councillors. The platform of standing committees provides councillors adequate opportunities to play effective role in decision making process of city corporation. After getting recommendations from standing committee, the city corporation council chooses the best alternatives in the general meeting of SCC on consensus. Panday and Jamil (2010) stated in their study that standing committees of RCC were ineffective. In this study, one of the councillors of SCC regretted about the performances of standing committees of SCC as following:

Members of the standing committees lost their interest to perform their duties effectively since their recommendations are not generally presented at general meeting of SCC as agenda which leads to make the committees mere a rubber stamp bodies. Most of the standing committees (exception i.e. standing committee regarding sports) are inactive. But the standing committees should be made the most crucial body for decision making where the councillors can play the most effective roles (Interview 15).

Section 49 (10) of the Local Government (City Corporation) Act 2009 states all decisions in the meeting shall be approved on the votes of the majority of the councillors and Section 49 (11) of the Act empowers mayor of the city corporation to apply casting vote in case of tie (GOB, 2009). But, this study revealed the matter differently. One of the councillors stated the process of the approval of decisions in general meeting of SCC as following:

In SCC, there is no record of voting in taking decisions. All decisions are taken on consensus. If a single councilor opposes to a decision, it is not passed in the meeting (Interview 14).

Another councillor urged:

Councillors of SCC strongly participate in decision making process. Without the assent of councillors, mayor of SCC cannot take any major decisions. For example, a few days ago mayor wanted to donate a piece of land to Lion's Club of Sylhet responding to the application of the club. But on the face of strong opposition from councilors mayor was bound to cancel the decision. Besides, three panel mayors are elected from councillors (Interview 11).

But one of the councillors stated differently as following

Every Councilor has equal right to participate in discussion and Mayor hears speeches of all Councilor. But views of the Councilors, in maximum case, are not included in final decision. Mayor himself is the absolute decision maker in the SCC. The democracy which is prevailing here is a decay democracy (Interview 13).

For better decision making and best service delivery systems, citizen participation is imperative and councillors of ULGs are the best medium for ensuring effective citizen participation in their respective institutions (Chowdhury and Aktaruzzaman, 2016). The Local Government (City Corporation) Act 2009 does not provide adequate provisions for citizen participation in decision making process of city corporation. Generally, mass people cannot take part at general meeting of city corporation. They are allowed to participate only such kinds of meeting which are not held exclusively as unanimously decided by the majority of the councillors (GOB, 2009 and Panday, 2017). This tendency prevails not only in Bangladesh, but also throughout the world like developed countries United Kingdom, United States etc (Chowdhury and Aktaruzzaman, 2016; Copus, 2010). However Collin Copus argued in this regard as following:

The extent to which councillors are willing to respond to citizen participation is influenced by their interpretation of the appropriate role of that participation within the representative processes. Moreover, it is influenced by how councillors balance the input of unelected citizens into political decision-making compared with their own input as elected representatives (Copus, 2003, p.39).

One of the stakeholders of this study stated about their participation as following:

We can easily reach to councillor of our ward to solve any problems existed in ward. There is an office of councillor in every ward and we meet with our councillor here. We discuss contemporary issues of the ward and our councillor tries his best to provide solution. If he fails, he raises the issue to the general meeting of SCC. But it is a common tendency of every councillors of city corporation to create an own group of follower and he is always surrounded by them. And this group of people play dominant role in decision making of the ward (Interview, 59).

Role Played by Female Ward Councillors from Reserved Seats

Panday and Jamil (2010) found that female councillors from reserved seats play a little role in decision-making processes of ULG and their level of participation is very poor. Several studies conducted in Bangladesh and India revealed that the existence of a dominant patriarchic society is the main hindrance to effective participation of female councillors from reserved seats in decision making process of ULG bodies (Chowdhury & Aktaruzzaman, 2016; Panday and Li, 2014; Basu and Bhaduri, 2015; Rupa and Karim 2011).

However, this study found among the respondents from representatives and officials category, 39 percent of the respondents strongly agreed and 32 percent agreed that female councillors from reserved seats can play effective role in decision making process of SCC. On the other hand, 21 percent of the respondents disagreed and 4 percent strongly disagreed with this statement. But 4 percent of the respondents in this category neither agreed nor disagreed in this regard (Table 3). In case of stakeholder category, 8 percent of the respondents strongly agreed and 23 percent agreed that female councillors from reserved seats can play effective role in decision making process of SCC. On the other hand, 50 percent of the respondents disagreed and 14 percent strongly disagreed with this statement. But 5 percent of the respondents in this category neither agreed nor disagreed in this regard (Table 4).

When interviewees who responded in affirmative were asked how female councillors from reserved seats can play effective role, several respondents replied that due to own family background, having personal relation with mayor, own leadership quality, educational qualification female councillors from reserved seats can strongly participate decision making process of SCC. In this regard, one of the female councillors from reserved seats strongly stated as following:

I am a posted leader of the district unit of ruling party and my family has a strong political background. For this reasons, council of SCC put importance on my views while taking any decisions. But who (female councillors from reserved seats) has neither political background nor educational qualification has little participation in decision making process (Interview 19).

Table 3: Role Played by Councillors in Decision Making Process of SCC (representatives and officials category)

	Strongly Agree (frequency)	Agree (frequency)	Neutral (frequency)	Disagree (frequency)	Strongly Disagree (frequency)
Councillors can play effective role in decision making process of SCC	9% (5)	71% (40)	0% (0)	18% (10)	2% (1)
Female councillors from reserved seats can play effective role in decision making process of SCC	39% (22)	32% (18)	4% (2)	21% (12)	4% (2)

Table 4: Role Played by Councillors in Decision Making Process of SCC (stakeholders/mass people)

	Strongly Agree (frequency)	Agree (frequency)	Neutral (frequency)	Disagree (frequency)	Strongly Disagree (frequency)
Councillors can play effective role in decision making process of SCC	8% (5)	61% (39)	8% (5)	50% (32)	14% (9)
Female councillors from reserved seats can play effective role in decision making process of SCC	8% (5)	23% (15)	5% (3)	50% (32)	14% (9)

Pattern of Decision Making Process and Who Play/s Dominant Role

Panday (2017) stated in his study “the mayor of city corporation exercises supreme power over the administration of the city corporations. Thus, the importance of mayor is a thousand times greater than the councilor (Panday, 2017, p. 74). This study explored among the respondents from the representatives and officials category more than half of the respondents (59 percent) urged it is mayor who plays dominant role in decision making process of SCC and rest of the respondents supposed councillors play the dominant role (Table 5). On the other hand, among the respondents from stakeholders (mass people) category, more than three-fourth of the respondents assumed mayor is dominant role player where rest of the respondents stated councillors play more dominant role in decision making process of SCC (Table 06).

Table 05: Views on who plays dominant role in decision-making (representatives and officials)

	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Mayor	33	59
Councillors	23	41
Total	56	100

Table 06: Views on who plays dominant role in decision-making (stakeholders)

	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Mayor	50	78
Councillors	14	22
Total	64	100

Thus, this study found that nearly three-fourth (73 percent) of respondents from the representatives and officials category stated decisions of the SCC are taken collectively, whereas the rest said that decisions are taken individually by the mayor (Table 7). On the other hand 42 percent stakeholders had no idea about pattern of decision making process of SCC (Table 8). Though the stakeholders had little opportunity to attend in decision making process taken in the general meeting of SCC, among the rests, about three-fourth of the stakeholders (73 percent) supposed decisions are taken collectively and other expressed their views differently (Table9).

Finally this study revealed among councilors from general and reserved seats, the dominant role player in decision making process is the councilors of general seats whereas among mayor and councilors, the dominant role player is mayor.

Table 07: Pattern of decision making process (representatives and officials)

	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Individually by mayor	15	27
Collectively	41	73
Total	56	100

Table8: Awareness of how SCC decisions are made (stakeholders)

	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	37	58
No	27	42
Total	64	100

Table 09: Pattern of decision making process (mass people)

	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Individually by mayor	3	8
Collectively	27	73
On voting	7	19
Total	37	100

The study of Panday and Jamil (2010) revealed that mayor of the Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) dominated in policy making process of the city corporation and his views always got privileged at general meeting. But this study found, mayor plays dominant role in this regard by convincing councillors.

One of the councillors stated as following:

Though decisions are taken collectively at the meeting of the city corporation, the actual scenario is completely different. Here the supreme decision-maker is [the] mayor who is able to handle the matter using his own leadership quality and creates such environment in the general meeting of the SCC that no councillor can alienate his proposal. (Interview 30)

Regression analysis

Binary logistic regression test was conducted on pertinent variables of this study to find out the factors which influence on decision making process in SCC. This test was conducted only on data of “representative and official” category skipping “stakeholder” category. Because, it has already been mentioned earlier in this study that 42 percent respondents of “stakeholders” category did not know about pattern of decision making process of SCC and later researchers found the test conducted on data of this category was statistically insignificant.

The null hypothesis of this study was **“the decision making process in SCC is independent of the dominant role player”**. In order to test this hypothesis, a test of association (the ‘chi-squared’ test) was performed on the variables “pattern of decision making” and “dominant role player” (Table 10). The **P-value** of this test was **0.011**(Table 11) which suggested that the null hypothesis of this study had been rejected. So it can be concluded that the **“the decision making process in SCC is dependent on who play the dominant role player”**.

Table 10: Pattern of decision-making * ‘dominant role player’ cross-tabulation

	‘Dominant role player’			P-value
	Mayor	Councillors	Total	
Individually by mayor	13	2	15	.011
Collectively	20	21	41	
Total	33	23	56	

Table 11: Chi-squared tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. sig. (2-sided)	Exact sig. (2-sided)	Exact sig. (1-sided)
Chi-squared	6.513	1	.011		
		1			
	7.243	1	.007		

				.014	.010
	6.397	1	.011		
	56				

While performing the binary logistic regression, the mayor is considered the reference category, on which the logistic regression is performed (Table 11).

Table 12: Variables used in logistic regression

	B	S.E.	Sig.	Exp(B)
Councillors	1.921	.821	.019	6.825
Constant	.431	.356	.227	1.538
Reference category: Mayor				

Therefore, it can be concluded from the above tests that

$$\hat{P} = 0.431 + 1.921\hat{X}$$

Where ‘ X ’ = ‘vital role player’

The results of the above tests suggest that if councillors of SCC could play dominant role rather than the mayor, the decision making process of SCC would have been nearly seven times more likely to be collective in pattern.

Concluding Remarks and Strategies Proposed

Though parliamentary form of government prevails in Bangladesh, local government system here is presidential in nature. Mayor of the all urban local government institutions in Bangladesh is a dominant figure and for this reason, councillors cannot make mayor accountable which consequently make city corporation council mere a rubber stamp body. This presidential system of electing mayor should be changed in line with parliamentary democracy system of Bangladesh’s national government which can lead to increase accountability of mayor to councillors and compel mayor to ensure effective participation of the councilors in decision making process.

Councillor of a ward is the principal agent of the mass people of concerned ward to council who speaks for and on behalf of the local community. Councillors can participate in decision making process through their active participation in standing committees. Unfortunately, most of these standing committees of SCC are ineffective. It is imperative to make effective all standing committees of SCC. Besides, general meeting of City Corporation must be made the focal center of taking all important decisions. This study suggests if we want to see collective decision making process of SCC, it is essential to make councillors

dominant role player instead of the mayor. The policy makers of Bangladesh should take necessary steps to implement the recommendations and it can be expected that if these recommendations can be implemented, one day a democratic and people oriented city corporation in Bangladesh will be established which will lead to strengthen the foundation of democracy of the country.

References

- Ahmed, M.U. (2003). *Urban Local Government Services in Bangladesh: Study on the Regulatory Problems*. Available at: <http://mapbangla.com/mapadmin/publications/15Local%20Government%20Services%20Published%20in%20the%20Journal%20of%20NILG.pdf> [Accessed 10 December 20015].
- Ahmed, T and Panday, P. K. (2013). *Local Government in Bangladesh: Issues and Challenges*, Presented in a Seminar at the Department of Public Administration, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet-3114, Bangladesh.
- Basu, A. and Bhaduri, S. (2015). *Role of Women Elected Representatives in Local Area Development: A Case Study of Kolkata Municipal Corporation*. *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies* Volume 2, Issue 6, PP 53-62 ISSN 2394-6288 (Print) & ISSN 2394-6296 (Online).
- Begum, A. (2007). *Local Governance in Bangladesh: Towards a “Critical Mass” to Combat Discrimination against Women with Special Reference to India*. Available at: <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/apcity/unpan038194.pdf> [Accessed 10th December 2015].
- Chowdhury, M.S and Al-Hossienie, C.A (2012). *Quest for an Effective and Efficient Local Government: Local Government in Japan and Policy Implication for Local Government in Bangladesh*. *Lex Localis - Journal Of Local Self-Government*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 247 -264
- Chowdhury, M.S. and Aktaruzzaman, M. (2016) *Citizen participation in urban local government: a case study of Kanaighat Paurashava in Bangladesh*. *Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance*, 19, 119–134. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5130/cjlg.v0i19.5451>
- Copus, C. (2003) ‘Re-Engaging Citizens and Councils: The Importance of the Councillor to Enhanced Citizen Involvement’, *Local Government Studies* 29 (2), 32-51.

A Study on Sylhet City Corporation

- Copus, C. (2010) *The councillors: Governor, governing, governance and the complexity of citizen engagement. The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 12, 569–589. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-856X.2010.00423.x>
- Egner, B. et al (2013). *Local councillors in comparative perspective in Egner, B et al. (eds.), Local Councillors in Europe: Urban and Regional Research International*, DOI 10.1007/978-3-658-01857-3_1, Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.
- Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (GOB) (2009). *The Local Government (City Corporation) Act-2009 (Additional Gazette of October 15, 2009)*. Dhaka: Bangladesh Government Press.
- Hye, H.A. (2000) *Good governance: A social contract for the new millennium. In: Hye, H.A. (ed.) Governance, South Asian perspective*, pp. 1–32. Dhaka: The University Press Limited.
- Khan, M.M. (2009). *Decentralization in Bangladesh: Myth or Reality?* Dhaka: A. H Development Publishing House., 143, New Market, Dhaka-1205.
- Khan, M.M. (2013). *From Government to Governance*. Dhaka: The University Press Limited. ISBN: 978 984 506 126 1
- LGD (2015a). *City Corporation Information .The Local Government Division of Bangladesh. Available at: <http://www.paurainfo.gov.bd/portalui/NavigatePage.aspx> [Accessed 18 November 2015]*
- LGD (2015b). *Poura Information .The Local Government Division of Bangladesh. Available at: <http://www.paurainfo.gov.bd/portalui/NavigatePage.aspx> [Accessed 18 November 2015]*
- OECD (1992). *DAC Work on Participatory Development and Good Governance*. Paris: OECD.
- Panday, P. and Li, L.C. (2014). *Women's Political Participation in Bangladesh: Role of Women's Organizations. Journal: International Journal of Public Administration*, 37: 724–736, ISSN: 0190-0692 print / 1532-4265 online, DOI: 10.1080/01900692.2014.903272
- Panday, P. K. (2007). *Policy Implementation in Urban Bangladesh: Role of Intra-organizational Coordination*, pp. 237-259. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11115-007-0034-3>. [Accessed 15 January 2014].
- Panday, P. K. (2011). *Decentralized local government in Bangladesh: How far it is decentralized. Lex Localis–Journal of Local-Self Government*, 9(3), 205–230.
- Panday, P. K. (2017). *Reforming Urban Governance in Bangladesh*. Palgrave Macmillan, Springer International Publishing AG, ISBN 978-3-319-

49597-2 ISBN 978-3-319-49598-9 (eBook), DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-49598-9

Panday, P. K. and Jamil, Ishtiaq (2010). Challenges of Coordination in Implementing Urban Policy: The Bangladesh Experience. Public Organization Review, Vol: 11, No-2, pp. 155-176.

Rupa, N.B and Karim, M.R. (2011). Female Representatives in Local Government System of Bangladesh: Role and Reality. Lok Proshason Samoeeky, 50: 55-74. ISSN 1605-2021.

Singh, S.N (1991). Local Government-A Comparative Perspective. New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House.

Wilson, D. and Game, C. (2006) Local government in the United Kingdom. 4th ed. Pal-grave Macmillan: Basingstoke.

Yang, K. and Callahan, K. (2007). Citizen involvement effort and bureaucratic responsiveness: Participatory values, stakeholder pressures and administrative practicality. Public Administration Review, 67 (2), 249–264.

