



**Participation of Female Vice-Chair in decision-making process
at Upazila Parishad, Bangladesh.**

**By
Juthika Sarker
MPPG 7th Batch**

**Supervisor
Professor Dr. Salahuddin M. Aminuzzaman**

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents, husband and kids for inspiring and supporting me all the way.

Declaration

I declare that the dissertation, entitled “Participation of Female Vice-Chair in decision-making process at Upazila Parishad, Bangladesh”, submitted to the PPG Program of North South University, Bangladesh, for the Degree of Master in Public Policy and Governance (MPPG), is an original work. No part of it, in any form, has been copied from other sources without acknowledgement or submitted to any other university or institute for any degree or diploma. Views and expressions of the thesis are my responsibility, and not that of PPG, as well as any error or omission in it.

Signature with Date

Juthika Sarker

ID No. 1725001085

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Abstract

Women's participation at any level of governance and decision-making is indispensable for meaningful development of a country like Bangladesh. Their equal participation in local decision-making process is critical for prioritizing women's issues and needs in local government's agendas and for localizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The 2009 local government reform initiates reserved quotas and direct election through adult franchise for women in the LGIs. The 7th Five Year Plan (2016-2020) of GoB, considers women's engagement in political and economic activities as a cross-cutting issue and one of the main drivers of transformation. Moreover, Vision 2021 aims to ensure 33% representation of women in all the committees within the political parties by 2021.

Despite the legal framework, several socio-cultural impediments, structural deficiencies, and capacity deficits significantly hinder the participation of women in decision-making processes. Bangladesh is a patriarchal society and even most women share those norms. Women's political participation does not fit well. It fits uneasily and needs great effort to work.

Thus, the main objective of this study is to assess the role and functions of women representatives in the decision-making process at sub-districts (UZP) level. The institutional theory of William Richard Scott and the empowerment framework model of Naila Kabeer have been used to build the theoretical framework, as well as to conceptualize and operationalize both the dependent and independent variables. The study has adopted both quantitative and qualitative methods.

The empirical data was collected from 64 districts of Bangladesh. Questionnaire survey, in-depth interviews, case studies and observation method have been employed to collect data. Both primary and secondary data have been used for further analysis, validation and inferences. Qualitative data has been used to

triangulate quantitative data. The study has examined women's participation in decision-making process regarding project selection, implementation and engagement in UZP meetings including (s) committee meetings to assess the level of women's involvement. The present state of women's decision-making has been analysed with their sharing views, opinions and propositions in UZP decision-making and with the adoption of such propositions.

The study findings reveal that, in UZPs, elected women representatives have started to influence the decision-making process. It indicates that space for women has been created to some extent despite some structural deficiencies and socio-cultural impediments. The study reveals that the impact of rules, laws and training has profound influence on women's participation. The result also indicates the importance of individual attributes such as knowledge, skill and motivation in determining the effectiveness of women's participation in the decision-making process. Rich, highly-educated women do not try that hard and have less effect. Hungry, less-educated women work hard and make a difference. The system impedes them but lets them succeed if they are tough, persuasive and motivated enough to jump all the burning rubbish strewn across their paths at every turning. Indeed, the study finds that it is the personal qualities of the FVCs, not their affective qualities like demographics, education or wealth, or even laws and procedures, which just give them tools that some use and others do not, that make the difference in their effectiveness.

Key words: Decision-making, Upazila Parishad (UZP), Gender, Local Government Institution (LGI), women's participation.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

A2I	Access to Information
AC (Land)	Assistant Commissioner (Land)
ADP	Annual Development Program
BDT	Bangladesh Taka
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSW	Commission on Status of Women
DC	Deputy Commissioner
DDLG	Director of Local Government
FVC	Female Vice-Chair
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
HSC	Higher Secondary School Certificate
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KII	Key Informant Interview
LG	Local Government
LGD	Local Government Division
LGED	Local Government Engineering Department
LGIs	Local Government Institutions
MP	Member of Parliament
MPPG	Master in Public Policy and Governance
NILG	National Institute of Local Government
NSU	North South University
PFA	Platform for Action
PIO	Project Implementation Officer
PIC	Project Implementation Committee
SCs	Standing Committees
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSC	Secondary School Certificate
TOR	Term of Reference
TR	Test Relief

UB	Union Board
UNO	Upazila Nirbahi Officer
UP	Union Parishad
UZC	Upazila Chair
UZGP	Upazila Governance Project
UZP	Upazila Parishad
VC	Vice-Chair
VGD	Vulnerable Group Development
WDF	Women Development Forum
WO	Women Organization

Chapter 1

Introduction

This Chapter starts with the general background of the study, together with certain research problems. It elaborates the significance and objectives of the study. After that, it highlights the questions raised in this research. Moreover, this Chapter reviews the literature on women's political participation in local government institutions. This Chapter also identifies the scope and the limitations of the study. Finally, the Chapter comes to an end with the explanation of the structure of the study.

1.1 Background

In recent decades, the world has seen a remarkable change in the participation of women in the political arena. Women's equal participation in the political decision-making structure has been explained by following arguments: (1) women's participation in political structures is a fundamental human right and a key principle for fair democratic representation; (2) women constitute half of the total population. (3) women's involvement in political decision-making is the necessary condition to ensure women's interest (UN, 1995: par 183). (4) society cannot afford not to utilize half of its available talent (Sadie, 2005). Therefore, it is reasonable to ask whether lack of women's participation makes any difference to the outcome of decision-making. It has been stated that a balanced representation of men and women at all levels of decision-making ensures better governance (European Network of Experts, 1997). This is because women have different ideas and values from men and act differently. Therefore, their participation in decision-making will shed new light on how power will be exercised. Hussain and Siddiqi (2002) claimed that the sustainability of economic and social development depends on the extent of women's level of integration into political decision-making. The level of female representation and participation in local government determines the level of development of a country (Jayal, 2005). It is therefore important for women to take part in decision-making processes in the local government bodies where they reside

(Opore, 2005). Now the role of women has become discernible in every sphere of life (Carli and Eagly 2001; Jabeen and Iqbal, 2010, cited in Kurebwa, 2016).

Due to the importance of women's participation in the political process, gender quotas for women have been introduced in many countries around the world (Krook, 2009). As a consequence, over the last two decades, women's access to political office has increased. It now exists in more than in 100 countries in different forms (Krook, 2006 and Tripp and Kang, 2008, cited in Panday, 2016).

South Asian countries have also adopted this quota system, which has ensured the presence of a critical mass of women in policymaking. It is true that, due to increased quotas, there has been an increase in the number of participation of women in the political arena: but their representation in decision-making processes has not yet been ensured (Panday, 2008). Participation in decision-making is an indicator through which the extent of women's empowerment is measured worldwide. Women's right to participate in power and decision-making was one of the feminist movement's demands for women at individual level (Samiuddin and Khanam, 2013). Women's rights to participate in social, economical and political decision-making has been firmly established by different international instruments, including the: Universal Declaration of the Human Rights (1948); Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1952); the Civil and Political Rights International Pact (1966); and the Convention for the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979). Then women's full participation in all levels of decision-making was further emphasized by the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995. Different campaigns, regulations, and declarations came from the Beijing Platform, because it placed women's participation in power in decision-making as a high priority in the agenda of development of women. In 2000, the Millennium Declaration further asserted that women's participation in development activities is necessary in promoting 'gender equality' and women's empowerment.

Around the world, there has been a steady increase in the number of women in office. While Asia started out as the best achiever with 14 percent women in elected

offices in 1997, other parts of the world started at a slower rate. At present, there are higher rates of elected representatives in Europe, America and Sub-Saharan Africa. Arab states are far behind Asia (Muriaas, 2017). Among Asian countries, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Nepal have already introduced quotas. But these quotas have failed to affect the over-representation of men. Despite quotas, even those women who are elected representatives suffer severe limitations in their political participation in south Asian countries (Beaman et al., 2010, 2012).

The initiatives taken to ensure minimum representation of women seem insufficient due to the lack of their significant and sustainable impact (Panday, 2013). Here, in this study, women's participation is not merely about representation in local government bodies, but is concerned with their empowerment in LGIs through their participation in decision-making processes. This study seeks to identify the factors that affect their substantive participation in decision-making bodies, not just their numbers.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The rate of women's participation in the political arena is very low in most of the South Asian countries. In Bangladesh, since 1972, the Constitution and the Legal system have guaranteed equal rights for women to participate in all aspects of public life but women's' participation in political affairs is still not up to the mark. Women face sheer disparity in allocation of resources, in enjoying their rights and opportunities, and in exercising control over decision-making despite the fact that they constitute half of the total population of the country.

This is because, in practice, women are not treated as equals as required by the Constitution. There is a gross disparity between men and women in every sphere of life. Women remain under-represented in many political organs (Killian 1997, cited in Massoi, 2003). Their participation in all sectors has been restricted by the theory of the public-private divide. Here, the public domain is related to authority and contestation and the private domain is associated with family and home (Nussbaum, 2003). Women's role is typically that of homemaker while men are the decision-

makers of the family and in public life. Traditional roles and division of labour are still clearly gendered (Sadie, 2005). In family matters, women's bargaining power is restricted by lack of access to and control over resources, low self-esteem, lack of skills and education, inadequate physical mobility, and their limited power compared with that of men. Such stereotyped and imbalanced gender relations at home reflect the reality outside the home (Panday, 2013). All of these factors prevent women from entering into the public domain effectively, so it remains strongly dominated by males.

Thus, entering into political offices is very difficult for women. The number of female representatives elected to general seats in Bangladesh remains persistently low due to many obstacles they face in securing nominations and getting elected to general seats (Paasilinna, 2016). Those who entered into politics generally have faced more barriers in becoming leaders than men do, especially for 'leadership roles' that are absolutely masculine in nature (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Women, in their working areas, are surrounded by non-cooperative male counterparts.

Moreover, socio-cultural impediments also promote stereotyped roles of man and woman. Due to socially-accepted roles, women are often perceived as lower in status than male counterparts (Eagly, 1987). Women also consider themselves subordinate to men. They lack confidence to fight for political positions, especially in general seats. Eagly and Karan (2002) found that women leaders were perceived in a less positive manner compared to male leaders. Several studies found that women's representation and political participation were subject to certain limitations: cultural and political constraints; high levels of illiteracy; poverty; and institutional impediments (Massoi, 2003). Such a socio-cultural atmosphere hampers their meaningful participation and reinforces women's marginalized situation.

Matland (1998) identified 'access to resources' as the most important variable for explaining variation in women's descriptive representation in developing countries. According to Verba et al., (1999), of all the resources that facilitate political involvement, money is the most stratified. Women in Bangladesh in general do not have their own incomes. On the other hand, politics is increasingly becoming

commercial. More and more money is needed to participate in politics. Women lack access to and ownership of productive resources, thus limiting their scope of political work. Thus, the economic status of women has a direct influence on their participation in political institutions and elected bodies.

Level of education is one of the important factors for political participation. A lot of literature suggests that education increases political participation. According to Berinsky & Lenz (2011), education provides skills and knowledge to minimize inferiority complexes and low self-esteem. Like other Asian countries, in Bangladesh, lower educational background also handicaps women representatives. They lack information about the political process and do not know how to mobilize for policies that help to respond to women's interest, even where, how and whom to vote for (Kabir, 2003 cited in Panday, 2008). Low levels of education restrict them in comprehending political issues and confidently contributing to political discussion. At the same time, due to lack of effective training about how to work and lack of awareness of their political roles and responsibilities, they lag behind their male colleagues. So they always bear a fear of not being able to perform as expected.

Time, distance and location are considered impediments for women too. Politics is an occupation which does not have any fixed working hours. Women representatives need to go outside at any time on an urgent basis. Sometimes, emergency meetings are called at inconvenient times which cause them difficulty to attend. As they are primarily assigned to domestic activities, they might not make themselves available in a place where they are required on an urgent basis. Women also find it hard to participate in politics due to limited time available to them because of their dual role in the productive and reproductive sphere (Samiuddin & Khanam, 2013). Sometimes, they require permission from their husbands to go outside the home. The mechanism of sex-segregation and 'Purdah' are used also to restrict their mobility in the society, but in politics it is necessary to interact with people without regard to gender. When a woman is absent, no one cares about the many things she might be doing: she just has zero impact.

Attendance at meetings is an important indicator for active participation. Community members expect leaders, and those who want to be leaders, to be there, trying to have an effect. Yet female representatives usually do not get the chance to participate or disseminate their views or ideas on development activities or decision-making. In some cases, they are only signatories for the decisions made or taken by the Chair or male members (Moin, 2011). Moin also observed that sometimes female representatives were not properly notified by the LGIs about the times for decision-making. Sometimes they are informed about the meetings after they have happened. They are also discriminated against in terms of unequal distribution of project responsibilities and development activities. Finally, decision-making at the local level has not traditionally been inclusive: the Chair and his close (male) friends decide everything. Women, like men outside the inner circle, never see or hear what happens or why but are expected to sign and support the community leaders' actions (Moin, 2011). Yet, while men on the outside can eventually become men on the inside (if another Chair is elected or they become friends of the current Chair), women become a perennial opposition.

Women representatives are also disadvantaged by political and structural deficiencies which arise from the way in which reserved seats for women are incorporated (Panday, 2013). Kabeer (2005) also states the same view that "the way quotas are applied makes a difference to whether the presence of women is "token" or a legitimate form of representation". Moreover, the reserved seats are designed in such a way that there is "a separate women tier" that result in overlapping mandates for reserved and general seats holders. The problem is that the general system can easily function without the reserved seat system. Actually it happens like that in reality (Paasilinna and Majumdar, 2016). The roles and functions of reserved seats are not clear in the existing rules and laws which create obstacles to their participation. Both the general and reserved seats have direct elections which give the idea that both would exercise the same functions but in practice this is rarely the case.

Moreover, women had to engage in different societal activities and have to address different commitments which were they give at the time of their election. Public representatives usually make some promises to the voters at the time of campaign and sometimes, after their interaction with the people of their respected areas. The voters expect that they (women representatives) will solve some problems of the localities through participating in Local Government Institutions. But it is observed that the women representatives' promises (relating to construction of roads, culverts, schools, mosques, temples, setting tube-wells, maintenance of sanitary system, creating increasing earning opportunities, resisting violence against women, providing help to the poor etc.) during election campaigns, remain unfulfilled, as they do not get a fair share of development projects in the LGIs (Moin, 2011) to finance such action. As both male and female representatives of Upazila Parishad are directly elected through election, they have equal rights in the institutions, where they are considered as colleagues to each other. Male representatives have the majority in the local Government Institutions but, when they compete for projects, their attitude towards female representatives is not friendly. There is an overwhelming dominance of males in decision-making process and they literally carve up resources amongst themselves. So, the women do not get much, or get to do much, in the Upazila Parishads in Bangladesh.

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (article 27, 28(1), 28(2), 28(3), 65(3) gives equal rights to women and recognises the need for reduction of gender-based disparities. The National Women's Development Plan, 2011 also pledges to ensure socio-economic and political empowerment of women. The Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 declared that without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved. This was further elaborated in 2004 by the General Assembly 58th Session reaffirming that:

Women's full and equal participation in the political process and decision making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society, is needed to strengthen democracy and promote

its proper functioning that plays a pivotal role in furthering women's equal status, including improving women's socio-economic status and contributing to redefining political priorities and providing new perspectives as political issues.

1.3 Literature Review

There is a vast literature on women's representation in local government in Bangladesh. But very few research works have been conducted so far regarding the participation of women in the decision-making process of the Upazila Parishads. As discussed earlier, the post of the female Vice-Chair evolved from the enactment of the Local Government (Upazila Parishad) Act, 2009. Most of the literature has centred on the Union Parishad, as it is the lowest administrative unit of local government. Moreover, it is an older and more-vibrant institution among the three tiers of the local government. Although most of the literature has focused on the political participation of women in the Union Parishad no publication has put special emphasis on the decision-making processes of those elected representatives.

Thus, this thesis fills two gaps in the literature:

- (1) the study of the Upazila Parishad
- (2) the study of women's participation in the decision-making processes of local government.

However, considering the context and reviewing those publications that do exist has helped the researcher to address these research gaps in this present study. A brief discussion of the published literature is therefore presented in the following sections.

1.3.1 Women's Participation in Local Government Decision-Making

Muhammed Hamid Muhammed (2017), in "Women's Political Participation in Local Government in Ethiopia: The Case of Two Districts in Amhara Regional State", found that few women in councils head standing committees because men had the majority in all the standing committees. Women were lagging behind in appointment

to the prominent positions. The study also detected that, often, local officials did not trust the capacity of women. According to Muhammed (2017), the prevailing patriarchal views and gender bias in society were the main factors preventing better women's participation.

Hassan et al., (2016) found, in their study "State of Accountability of the Transferred Departments at the Upazila Parishad and its Consequences for Allocation and Utilisation of Resources: A Study of three Departments", that Vice-Chairpersons were nominal heads of committees but they lacked 'de facto' authority over the development activities of those committees. They found that the Vice-Chairpersons had very limited formal power. Due to the nature of political governance, patriarchy and partisan administration, Vice-Chairpersons who do not belong to the ruling Party are generally sidelined in the Upazila governance process. If Upazila-Vice chairpersons are from the ruling Party, they usually have a close relationship with the MP of the ruling Party, which enables them to be pro-active and influential in making decisions in the committees.

Pranab Kumar Panday (2016), in his study Women's Empowerment in South Asia: NGO Intervention and Agency Building In Bangladesh, found that networks among women, access to information, capacity-building training, increased knowledge and skill and feelings of ownership played an influential role to make women confident and aware of participating in development activities, as well as helped them to raise their voices in the decision-making of Union Parishads (UP). According to Panday (2016), the UPs were now becoming more gender- responsive in their activities.

Nazneen Islam Khan (2014), in her study Gender and Local Governance: Experiences of Women Representatives in Bangladesh, on women representatives in Union Parishads, discovered that, due to the patriarchal nature of society, both decision-making powers and economic control were vested in the hands of men in Bangladesh. Khan (2014) found that women members feel that they lack co-operation from male members in the Union Parishad. Even their best ideas are often opposed by their male counterparts.

Abida Samiuddin and Rehana Khanam (2013), in their study *Women's Political Empowerment: Obstacles and Opportunities*, concerning Asia, the Middle East and Africa, found that women's participation and access to political power varied across the countries. They stated that in the developed countries, there was an upward trend of their participation, more so than in the developing countries. They also stated that the common trend of their political exclusion stemmed from social and political discourses, political structures and institutions, socio-cultural and functional constraints. All these worked together to limit women's collective and individual agency.

Pranab Kumar Panday (2013), in his study *Women's Political Participation in Bangladesh: Institutional Reforms, Actors and Outcomes*, found that socio-cultural obstacle, structural deficiencies and attitudinal problems hindered women's political participation. This study also observed that the political parties were not proactive in regard to women's participation in politics. The enactment of the Union Parishad Act, 1997 had provided an enhanced avenue for women to participate in politics, especially in UP elections and UP decision-making. Their numerical presentation has been ensured but their effective participation has not yet been ensured.

Elyas Khan (2012), in his study *Women's Participation in Local Government (UP): A Study of Rural Bangladesh* explained that women's participation in local government councils did not necessarily mean that the interests of women in the community were represented. According to Khan (2012), women's marginalisation comes from multilayer discrimination and deprivation, in the community, state, as well as in their households. There are gender discourses, social norms and beliefs, and behavioral practices in the above-mentioned institutions that hinder women's participation.

Hossain and Akhter (2011) conducted a survey entitled *Gender, Power and Politics in Bangladesh: A Study for the Upazila Support Project*, under UNDP, on four Upazila Female-Vice Chairs. Hossain and Akhter (2011) found that, due to the patriarchal nature of society in Bangladesh, the female Vice-Chairs faced hurdles in participating in LGIs (UZP). But those who had family histories of political networks faced less

opposition than others who lacked such political affiliation. They also found that the women representatives acquired knowledge about politics very often from their husbands, who had connections with powerful sections of the society. Relationships with MPs are also perceived by the UZP Chairs and UZP Female Vice-Chairs as crucial in terms of accessing funds for the UZP's development programs and social safety net provision.

Julia Moin (2011), in *Empowerment Of Women and Their Participation in local Government Politics* found that, in a male-dominated political arena, the patriarchal social system, logical support from family, financial ability, 'purdah' were considered as important impediments for women's political participation in Bangladesh. She found that women did not get an equal share of projects and that their capacities were not valued by their male counterparts. She stated that, being minority in the LGIs, were not able to influence decision-making or to get control over any resources. To Moin (2011), elected women usually fail to fulfill their election promises, which create a negative impression among the voters.

Sumon Lata (2010), in her study *Exploring Women across the World*, discussed the real problems of women in participating in politics. According to her, as women are non-visible and unorganized, their problems are not articulated. Hence, they failed to draw the attention of researchers. So, their problems were not being studied or reported. Finally, women in politics play a very marginalized role, due to their lack of unity.

Latha A. Pandit (2010), in her article *Political Leadership of Women: Constraints and Challenges*, observed that politics was very inhospitable terrain for women. To Pandit (2010), women remained invisible and marginalised in decision-making bodies. She stated that, in spite of a growing literacy rate and political awareness, women's political participation rate remained quite low. But, a mere increase of number is of little value, unless it is accompanied by enhancement of the quality of their participation and impact.

Abdul-Razzak Mahamadu (2010) found, in his study *The Challenges of Female Participation in Local Governance: The Case of Accra and Tamale Metropolitan Assemblies* that inadequacy of financial resources; negative cultural and religious beliefs; power relationships between men and women; illiteracy; poverty; quota; and membership in any organisation; mattered most in political participation of women in local government in Ghana. The situation there is similar to that of Bangladesh.

Pranab Panday (2008) conducted a study, *Representation without Participation: Quotas for Women in Bangladesh*, on women's participation in decision-making at the national, as well as at the Union Parishad, levels. He found several factors that hindered women's political participation in the political process: educational backwardness; lack of economic resources; insufficient mobility; structural deficiencies; culture; religion; and patriarchy. He found that there was a recent decline of the number of women contesting quota seats. He assumed that this might be due to previous women candidates' bitter experiences. From his study, it is obvious that the reservation of quota for the political participation of women in the local government does not ensure their active participation in the decision-making.

Sadik Hasan (2007), in his study, *Women in Bangladesh Local Government: A Study of Gram Sarker* found that, in spite of Constitutional guarantees, women in Bangladesh were not treated equally. A patriarchal social system, purdah (veil), marriage and religious constraints placed them in an unequal and disadvantaged position. Women remained excluded from decision-making and effective political participation. Their potentialities and contributions were often unrecognised and overlooked due to male dominance and other socio-cultural impediments that worked against women's active involvement in political process.

Yolanda Sadie's (2005) study found that, in the SADC (South-African Development Community) women and their policy interests had been marginalised due to men's monopolisation of the political decision-making structure and men's voices predominating in this structure. Moreover, to Sadie (2005), lack of confidence, lack

of finance, lack of skill, women's traditional roles or gender identity and the division of labour, as well as the patriarchal nature of the society as a whole, were the major challenges for women in their participation in decision-making. Although Sadie (2005)'s study was of the SADC region, in Africa, the findings help the researcher of this study in understanding the process of women's participation in the political context of Bangladesh.

Dr. Nazma Chowdhury (2002) stated, in her article, Implementation of Quotas: Bangladesh Experience-Dependence and Marginality in Politics that a female representative entered into political institutions in Bangladesh due only to the quota system patronage and/or dependency on patriarchy.

Mirjam Van Donk (2000) in Local Government: A Strategic Site of Struggle for Gender Equity found some specific gender barriers that worked against the equal involvement of women in local decision-making processes. Some flow from the gender roles of women, like insufficient time to attend meetings. Sometimes, the absence of reliable child-care facilities, and lack of private transport or inadequate public transport work together against women's political participation. Women's social position of powerlessness, particularly in rural areas, means that they are least able to influence the local decision-making processes.

Sultana (2000), in a study entitled "The Role of Training in the Empowerment of Women in Union Parishads" found that the elected women members were discriminated against in getting development projects, including VGD (Vulnerable Group Development) and VGF (Vulnerable Group Feeding). Due to improper distribution of duties and responsibilities like projects, there is little scope for women in UPs to participate in development activities.

Quddus *et al.*, (1997), in their study Women In Politics at the Local Level in Bangladesh found that women members in the Union Parishad were discriminated against in decision-making, getting responsibility, getting *honorium* and in receiving notices for meetings. All decisions were taken by the male UP Chairs as well as male

members. Quddus *et al.*, (1997) also explained how female members were being excluded from participating in all kinds of development, as well as from societal activities.

Srilatha Baltiwala (1993), in her study *Empowerment of Women in South Asia*, gave her views regarding women’s empowerment that are often quoted in the relevant studies today. She critically analyzed different approaches relevant for women empowerment: integrated rural development programs; awareness building; organization of women; economic intervention; training; research, etc. She emphasized education for empowerment of women in organisational structures. Her paper is considered helpful for understanding different approaches of ‘women empowerment’ in different contexts.

Table 1.1: Summary of Literature Review on Women’s Political Participation

Name of Authors	Major Findings
Baltiwala (1993)	Emphasises education for empowerment of women
Quddus et al., (1997)	Decisions are taken by male members
Sultana (2000)	Discrimination in project distribution, decision-making
Mirjam Van Donk (2000)	Women have least influence in local decision-making, due to family responsibilities, gender barriers.
Chowdhury (2002)	Women enter into politics due to quotas, patronage
Sadie’s (2005)	Women are marginalised due to men’s monopolisation of political decision-making structure
Hasan, (2007)	Male dominance and patriarchal social norms hinder women’s leadership.
Panday (2008)	Quota does not ensure active participation in decision-making.
Mahamadu (2010)	Inadequacy of financial resources, negative cultural, religious beliefs, power relationship between men and women, illiteracy, poverty are the challenges for women
Pandit (2010)	Gender discourse, social norms and beliefs, and behavioral practices of institutions hinder women’s participation.
Sumon Lata (2010)	Women are disorganised, non-visible and play a marginalised role.
Julia Moin (2011)	Women representatives are not aware of their roles and responsibilities

Hossain and Akhter (2011)	Women enter into political offices following family members
Khan (2012)	Gender norms, social values work against women
Samiuddin & Khanam (2013)	Social and political discourses, political structures and institutions, constraints limit women's collective and individual agency.
Panday (2013)	Act of 1997 brings opportunities for women to enter politics but little impact for them
Panday (2016)	In spite of male dominance, women are raising their voices
Khan (2014)	Decision-making powers and economic control are in hands of men
Hassan et al., (2016)	Women lack de facto authority in development activities, decision-making, despite their positions.
Muhammed (2017)	Less trust in the capacity of women

The foregoing discussions on relevant literature give a comprehensive picture about women's present status, their empowerment and participation in the political arena in the context of national (LGIs) and international levels. This review will be helpful for understanding women's political participation around the world, particularly in third-world countries.

1.3.2 Literature review on Upazila Parishad (UZP)

Very limited work has been done on the UZPs as they are a new form of local government. This section will address publications about the present features of local government in Bangladesh. It attempts to identify the literature gap to address in this study.

Saber & Rabbi (2009), in their study on Democratisation of the Upazila Parishad and Its Impact on Responsiveness and Accountability: Myths versus Realities, found that, due to the following factors: (1) strict rules and regulations, imposed by the central government; (2) insufficient local resources; (3) hidden agendas of the Government; (4) lack of skill, knowledge and capacity of elected representatives; (5) domination of decision-making by local elites; (6) lack of consultation with the local communities; (7) lack of involvement of local people at all levels of the decision-making process; and (8) petty but widespread corruption, the Upazila Parishads

were neither democratic, responsive nor accountable. Weak bureaucratic accountability contributed to poor accountability of the Parishad to its constituents. The overwhelming power of the Ministry of Local Government and the mandatory “advisory” role of the Members of Parliament have made the situation even worse.

Nizam Ahmed, Tofail Ahmed and Mohammad Faizullah (2011) conducted a study under UNDP entitled Working of Upazila Parishad’s of Bangladesh: A Study of Twelve Upazilas on the actual daily work of the UZP. They specifically looked into a number of issues. These included the organization of the UZP, meetings, issues discussed, how decisions are made and the ways in which different actors try to influence the decision-making process in the UZP. This study also gives an idea about the nature of relations among different individuals and organizations within the UZP structure. The authors seek to assess the impact of such relations in the process of governance at the Upazila level. The research reveals several deficiencies that hinder the work of the UZP. Some important examples include: UZP meetings are not conducted according to the rules; members are not given required notice of meetings; and necessary documents, such as working papers and proceedings of previous meetings, are not supplied to members. UZCs and FVCs were not fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. There is no uniform pattern of relations among the three core actors – MP, UZC and UNO. FVCs are often less active in raising issues than the male Chairmen. Most Female Vice-Chairs (as well as their male counterparts) are also apparently aware of the rules, but really not. The study found that FVCs have better records than male colleagues in attending UZP meetings but they are less assertive.

Muhammad Sayadur Rahman (2012) conducted a study entitled Upazila Parishad in Bangladesh: Roles and Functions of Elected Representatives and Bureaucrats, on the roles and functions of the Upazila Parishad. His study revealed that the UZP needs to enhance their relations and rapport with the people of the locality. Findings of this study also revealed that people were less concerned about the roles and functions of UZP. Only 30% of the people have a basic idea about the activities of the UZP. Due to the mandatory role of the “advisor”, the local MP, the role and function of UZP has

become complicated. The advisors are influencing the decision-making, resource allocation and project distribution, as well as implementation, in their constituencies.

Ahmed Jamil (2012) stated, in his research paper, Annual Development Programme Grants for Upazila Parishad: Role of Upazila Nirbahi Officer in the Planning and Implementing Process that UZC, VC and FVC might have different political orientations, making a consensus difficult to achieve. In decision-making of UZP, the “advice” of the local MP is treated as binding. Thus, decision-making of a UZP, in practice, requires the consent of local MPs. He found that UZCs and VCs are dominated by the political elites, especially by local MPs, due to lack of clarity of their roles.

Monzur Hossain & Badiul Alam Majumder (2013) conducted a survey, entitled Baseline Study on Upazila Parishad Governance, which revealed that most of the decisions of UZPs were taken on the priorities of the locality. Although meetings were held regularly, decisions were not taken by vote of the members. Decisions of the UZP were almost dictated by the local MPs. Therefore, the UZP could not become more democratic or more functional. The only woman representative in the UZP was the female Vice Chairperson (FVC), who had little scope to place her opinion freely in the meeting. They also noticed that, in most cases, women’s opinions, views and ideas did not get priority in the meeting. The women remained unheard and most of their proposals were rejected in the meetings. The women members were unable to have impact because of their lack of knowledge and poor articulation of their positions. This study found that 33.33% FVCs were influencing the decision-making of UZPs w 66.67% of male Chairmen influenced decisions.

Md. Samiul Islam, Md. Habibur Rahman, Adnan Hossain & Al Amin Rabbi (2014) conducted a study on The Functioning of Local Government Leadership in the Financial Development of Upazila Parishads: A Case Study on Sylhet Sadar Upazila. The study found that, due to lack of knowledge about the development schemes, lack of political knowledge and lack of political morale, local leaders could not take any financial decisions without interference from central Government. Leaders also

could not utilize the local resources fully for lack of proper management systems in the UZP.

Md. Anwar Hossain (2015) observed that, although the local governments were trying to integrate people's participation into their decision-making, the result was very different. Ensuring accountability and transparency is a core problem at the local level. Various factors are found responsible for the inactivity of local councilism such as the mode of government, lack of resources, centralised authority, the apathy of the people, etc.

Mirza Hassan, Farhana Razzaque, Md. Bayazid Hasan and Muhammad Ashikur Rahman (2016) conducted a survey on "Accountability of the transferred departments at UZP and its Consequences for allocation and Utilization of resources". Based on the three Departments of Upazila Parishads, the study found that personal relationships between the head of the transferred departments and the UZC or UNO are a factor in terms of receiving grants from the UZP. Generally, the funds flow from central Government to the transferred departments in top-down manner. Vice-Chairs are the heads of committees related to line departments but they lack 'de facto' authority over the development activities. One major reason is that the Vice-chairperson tends to have very limited formal power. Given the nature of political governance of the country (patriarchy, partisan administration etc), Vice Chairpersons who do not belong to the ruling Party, are generally sidelined in the Upazila governance process. Vice-Chairpersons from the ruling Party usually have close relationships with the MP of the ruling Party. Working with the MP enables the Vice-Chairpersons to be pro-active and influential in making decisions in the committees. The beneficiary selection process is generally influenced by the MPs and, in some cases, the MP recommends the beneficiary lists to the transferred departments. When the departments allocate tube wells, seeds, fertilizer, agricultural equipment dealerships, etc. they go to listed beneficiaries. When the Member of Parliament as statutory UZP "advisor" gives the department a list of beneficiaries, the officials of the departments concerned feel compelled to provide

departmental resources to the individuals included in such lists. This is how elected members of UZPs are sidelined by MPs.

Mirza, M. Hasan and Sadiat Mannan (2016) in their study “Upazila and Union Parishad Governance: A Study on Institutional Relationships and Linkage” analysed the institutional relationship, meaning the formal and informal linkage, between Upazila Parishad and Union Parishad. They found that the linkage was embedded in, and shaped by national and local politics, as well as bureaucratic culture.

Mobasser Monem (2016) in his research entitled, “An action research on the process and quality of budgeting and planning of Upazila Parishads” identified several limitations of Upazila budgets. Among them, the traditional mindset of resource management, lack of inclusiveness, non-compliance with government guidelines, and no linkage between the FYPs and annual plans, etc. were identified as major limitations.

Table 1.2: Summary of Literature Review on Upazila Parishad

Name of Authors	Major Findings
Saber & Rabbi (2009)	Inadequate resources, lack of skill and knowledge, strict rules and regulations of central govt, cause failure of UZPs.
Ahmed et al., (2011)	Representatives are unaware of their roles and responsibilities. FVCs are less assertive in DM process.
Jamil (2012)	UZP requires not only the approval of UZP but also the consent of local MPs
Rahman (2012)	Advisors influence the decision-making, resource allocation and project distribution, as well as implementation, of UZPs.
Hossain & Majumder (2013)	Voting is not used in decision-making, only 33.33% of FVCs are influencing the decision-making of UZPs.
Islam et al., (2014)	Lack of knowledge about the development schemes, lack of political knowledge and political morale mean that local leaders cannot take any financial decisions.
Hossain (2015)	In decision-making, people’s participation is not the reality.
Hassan et al., (2016)	VCs lack de facto authority over the development activities and decision-making
Hassan and Mannan (2016)	Low level of accountability and transparency and lack of financial resources are the features of UZP decision-making

	in practice.
Monem (2016)	Traditional mindset of resource management, lack of inclusiveness, non-compliance with government guidelines are the major impediments to UZPs impacting their own budgets.

1.4 Significance

Women’s political participation has become a focus of all international organizations advocacy work. Significant contributions have been made by these organizations to enhance women’s political participation globally. Thus, women’s voices have gathered strength. In the academic field, there is plenty of research on this matter. Especially, women’s political participation at the local level is currently a widely-studied topic worldwide.

In Bangladesh, most of the literature covers the broad area of local government, particularly of the Union Parishad, which is an age-old institution. But as the Upazila Parishad is a comparatively new tier of local government, the previous works have hardly touched the issue of female representation related to the UZP. In fact, women’s political participation in the UZPs is still one of the least- researched areas.

This study has tried to assess whether the women representatives of UZP are really and effectively involving themselves in the decision-making processes of the Upazila Parishad. More specifically, it is an attempt to explore the challenges that affect their decision-making. So, it is a modest attempt to address the research gap of women’s political participation in the UZPs.

The legitimacy of democratic governance depends on the equal participation of both men and women in decision-making process and public bureaucracy (Sun, 2004). It is argued that women can play their role in the development process effectively. Women’s contribution to the development of the society and nation-building depends largely on their participation in both family affairs and national level decision-making processes (Nelson and Chowdhury, 1994). Hence, their active participation in LGIs is needed. So, assessing the empowerment level of these

women representatives at local level is important. If there is less representation from their part, true democracy will not be ensured. Moreover, this study may allow the academicians and researchers to comprehend the real empowerment level of women in Bangladesh from the study of women's participation in LGIs.

Since Vision 2021, the 7th Five-year plan and the National Gender Policy envision gender mainstreaming in all institutions of Bangladesh, women's vibrant and active participation must be ensured in this second tier of local government (UZP). This study has significantly observed the level of women's participation in Upazila Parishad, along with the factors that influence women's participation in decision-making. The finding of the study is likely to add value in policy making to enhance women's empowerment in LGIs.

1.5 Objective

The objective of this study is to assess the role and function of female Vice-Chair in the decision-making process at Upazila Parishad, Bangladesh.

1.6 Research Questions

Keeping this objective in mind, this research raises the following questions:

1. Do the existing rules and laws have any influence on FVCs decision-making?
2. How do socio-cultural and demographic factors affect FVCs decision-making?
3. Does the capacity of FVCs matter in the decision-making process?

1.7 Methodological Overview

The researcher has used a mixed approach (combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods) to minimize the weakness of a single research method. This study has been conducted using both survey methods and case studies.

Kraemer (1991) identified three distinguishing characteristics of survey research (p. xiii). First, survey research has been used to describe specific aspects of a given population quantitatively. These aspects often involve examining the relationships among variables. Second, the data required for survey research has been collected from people and are, therefore, subjective. Finally, survey research has used a

selected portion of the population, from which the findings have later been generalized back to the population (cited in Glasow, A. P, 2005).

In this study, agency and impact are subjective in nature, so the survey method is considered as appropriate. On the other hand, according to Yin (2009), “case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are clearly evident (p. 13). By using the case study method, the researcher has gone beyond the limitations of statistical results. Thus, by using both quantitative and qualitative data, case studies have helped to explain the phenomenon within a specific context.

The population is all 64 districts of Bangladesh, with a total of 493 Upazilas. There is one Upazila Parishad in each Upazila, so the population can be reframed as 493 Upazila Parishads. From these districts 64 Upazila Parishads have been randomly selected, an average of one per district, as the sample for collection of the primary data.

Questionnaires were sent to and collected through mail and by post. For qualitative survey Upazilas of Dhaka and Rajshahi districts have been chosen.

Dhaka and Rajshahi districts are different from each other in many aspects. The literacy rate of Dhaka is 70.50% (district web portal) but the literacy rate of Rajshahi district is 47.4% (district web portal). Dhaka, being the capital of Bangladesh, is considered to be more advanced, in terms of social, economic and cultural development, than is Rajshahi district. On the other hand, Rajshahi is considered as conservative in terms of religious and political beliefs, related to its low literacy rate. So, this study will take intensive data from two opposite points on the urbanisation scale: highly-urbanised Dhaka District and mostly-rural Rajshahi District.

The researcher has conducted interviews with Upazila Nirbahi Officers, Upazila Chairs, Vice-Chairs, Deputy Directors of Local Government of the respective Districts,

some Upazila line-Departmental officials, some Ministry-level officials of Local Government Division, civil society members, researchers, and gender experts to validate the empirical research findings. Moreover, secondary sources like books, journals, articles, newspapers, seminar papers, major examples having been shown in the literature review above, have been used to review the existing literature on women empowerment in the context of different countries.

Table 1: 3 Summary of Methodological Overview

Method	Data collection process
Survey method	Survey questionnaire
Case studies	Seven Upazila Vice-Chairs from Dhaka & Rajshahi Districts
In-depth Interviews	Upazila Nirbahi Officers, Upazila Chairs, Vice-Chairs, Deputy Directors of Local Government of the respective Districts, some Upazila line-Department officials, some Ministry-level officials of Local Government division, and gender experts.

Table 1.4: Sample Size

Respondents Group	Type of Respondents	Sample	Data Method
1	Upazila Female Vice-Chairs	08	In-depth interviews
2	Upazila Nirbahi Officers	08	In-depth interviews
3	Upazila Chairs	05	In-depth interviews
4	DDLG	02	In-depth interviews
5	Line Departmental officials	06	In-depth interviews
6	Ministry-level officials	03	In-depth interviews
7	Renowned Gender Experts	02	In-depth interviews
10	Upazila-Female Vice-chairs	64	Questionnaire Survey
11	Female Vice-Chairs	07	Case studies

1.8 Scope of the Study

This study provides the scope for a close observation of the role of female Vice-Chairs in decision-making processes at Upazila Parishad level. It has made an attempt to understand the factors that influence the participation of Female Vice-Chairs in engaging in decision-making affairs. This study has not only assessed the factors that affect women's participation but it has also verified the level of

participation of women representatives in local government institutions in Bangladesh.

This study is conceptually limited within the issue of women's participation in the local governments. Geographically, it is limited to Upazila Parishads, but the results can analytically be referred to other LGIs in the country as the factors, circumstances and influences shaping the views and experiences of the samples used may have a similar effect to other people and areas.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

Due to time and resource constraints, it was difficult to conduct a study on elected women representatives at UZP of Bangladesh in general. Thus, a small group of individuals was selected from the total population through random sampling. To overcome the limitations case studies and in-depth interviews, observations have been administered. So, it has been really challenging to address the total methodology within very short period for data collection.

1.10 Organization of the Study

This thesis is comprised of six chapters. The **1st** Chapter includes a brief discussion of the general background of the study, the research problem, a literature review, the scope of the study with specific research objectives and research questions. It also contains a brief overview of the methodological issues. Moreover, it focuses on the significance and limitation of the study and ends with the description on how the rest of the study is organized.

The 2nd Chapter discusses various conceptual issues, along with operationalization of the key concepts. It is expected that this will steer the whole study toward a meaningful as well as logical end. The empowerment approach has been used to understand women's ability to take part in decision-making of the LGIs. The institutional approach has been adopted as an analytical lens to explain the core issues of the research. Finally, a fair attempt has been made to operationalize all

core issues of the research. Based on these discussions, indicators to measure the state of women's participation in decision-making have been identified.

The 3rd Chapter outlines the historical overview of Local Government (UZP) in Bangladesh. It proceeds with describing the evolution, history and the present structural arrangement of LGIs. Then, it discusses the roles and functions of UZP along with institutional processes and practices of LGIs.

The 4th Chapter sheds light on women's political participation from historical perspectives. It also gives a brief account of the present states of women in local government institutions in Bangladesh.

The 5th Chapter deals with data presentation, analysis and interpretation. This Chapter starts with an introduction of the data analysis plan/method. Then it presents an empirical analysis of women's participation in the local government institutions and as well as its analysis in the light of analytical framework.

The 6th Chapter concludes the study with its main objectives in the light of theoretical framework, key findings, observation as well as with revisiting the research questions. It draws conclusions based on Chapter Five, along with raising some issues for future research.

Chapter 2

Conceptual Discourses

This Chapter intends to develop a conceptual and theoretical framework for describing and analysing the leading issues of the research. There are two parts in this Chapter. The first part includes different concepts and theories. The institutional approach has been used here to understand the essence of an institution (LGI) (especially rules and norms) that shapes the state of women's political participation in decision-making at LGIs.

Yet participation in decision-making is not only an issue for the institutions; it depends largely on the individuals themselves. Thus, it is imperative to have a theoretical discussion on that particular issue of the individuals' involvement in the institutions. In doing so, the empowerment approach has been chosen here to create a deep insight, as 'decision-making' and 'empowerment' are very closely interrelated.

The second part highlights the analytical framework of the study, with the indicators of the explanatory variables. In this part, an effort has been made to explore the factors that affect participation of women in decision-making processes of UZPs.

2.1 Conceptualization of Key Concepts

2.1.1 Decision-making

Decision-making encompasses making and influencing decisions and being able to act upon them. It is the expression of agency. Decision-making can take place both in public and private arenas, in individual and collective forms.

Decision-making entails choice, interest and voice of women. Empowered decision-making can be approached from two angles; one, exercising autonomy over different parts of one's life (UNFPA, 2007); second, bargaining, negotiating and influencing decision-making processes (Gammage et al., 2016). Here, autonomy means 'self-determination' of an individual. Autonomous decisions are motivated by women's

own interest and values rather than influenced by social approval, external pressure, punishment or guilt (Alkire, 2005).

In the case of joint decision-making, decisions are taken and carried out between two or more people. Agency is demonstrated not only in real decisions, but also in protest, bargaining and negotiation. In decision-making, participating, influencing and making final decisions are linked with one another. Simply participating in decision-making does not mean to control over decisions. Thus, decision-making is concerned with bargaining that incorporates “power-to” and “power-within”:

- Power-to: ability to make decisions
- Power-within: one’s own ability to make decisions

2.1.2. Political Participation

In general, political participation means the direct involvement of people in decision-making: policy formulation, as well as policy implementation. One measure of the level of development of countries is now the level of women’s representation and participation in local governance (Jayal, 2005). Huntington and Nelson (1976) argued that political participation was an activity by private citizens designed to influence government decision-making. Uphoff (1979) defined participation as an individual’s involvement in decision-making process in implementing development programmes, to share their benefits of those programmes and the individual’s engagement in efforts to evaluate those programmes. Mishra (1984) viewed participation as ‘collective and continuous efforts’ of the people in setting their own goals, pooling resources together and taking action in improving their living conditions. Holcombe (1995) saw participation as action or being part of the action, such as a decision-making process. Quddus et al., (1997) viewed participation as ‘voluntary and democratic involvement’ of people in decision-making process including formulation of policies, planning, and contributing to development programmes. Pandit (2010) argued that political participation enabled a person to participate in the decision-making process.

With all the above definitions, it can be stated that all these forms of participation are interrelated. However, the different definitions of “participation” are taken together to get a comprehensive idea about women’s political participation in decision-making. The definitions are used here in a limited sense as the present study’s specific interest is the female Vice-Chair’s role in decision-making in the Upazila Parishad. For this study, participation refers to women’s involvement in development activities and in the meetings of the Upazila Parishad.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 The Institutional Approach

Today, the term “institution” is being frequently used in studying women in political arenas. Over the decades, this term has increased the importance of studying the ‘role of institutions’ in politics (Thelen, 1999).

The institutional approach has been used, in this study, to explain the core issues of the research. To apprehend the issue of women’s political participation in the decision-making process, it is imperative to delineate the role of institutions in this process. In the succeeding paragraphs, the institutionalism concept is discussed to define the role of institutions in advancing or constraining women’s participation in decision-making bodies of LGIs. Here, “institutions” have been viewed as including “both formal and informal rules and procedures that structure conduct” (Thelen and Stenimo, 1992).

Institutional structures can constrain or enable women’s agency in decision-making, collective action and leadership. Women pursue their goals within institutional structures i.e the social arrangements of formal rules and informal norms and practices that guide their behaviour. The institutional structures determine how women will express their agency. The institutional structures will also govern the extent to which women can distribute control over resources (Alkire, 2005; Alsop et al., 2006; Samman & Santos, 2009).

Institutions operate in four arenas (family, society, State and market) through three sub-elements (formal laws and policies, informal norms and relations) (Kabeer & Subrahmanian, 1996; Klugman et al., 2014; Markel & Jones, 2014; Scott, 2008). Each of these arenas is governed by its own rules as well as practices. These arenas are not only confined to local contexts but also exist at national, regional and international levels.

Thus, institutional rules, norms, and routines are considered as determinants of politics and governance. An individual functions within institutions according to social values and normative expectations (March and Olsen, 1984, 1993, 1995, 1996).

Hall and Taylor (1996) introduced three approaches to demonstrate the idea of institutions; historical, rational choice, and sociological institutionalism. William Richard Scott (2008) identified three pillars of Institutionalism: Regulative, Normative and culture Cognitive Pillars. Institutions constrain and regularize behaviour through these three pillars. The Regulative Pillar includes rules, laws, structures that seek to constrain and regulate behaviour. The Normative Pillar has a prescriptive element to it as it defines what is right and appropriate. It includes systems, social norms and values, expectations. The cultural Cognitive Pillar involves peoples’ shared beliefs.

Table No. 2.1 Definition of institutions from different point of view

Author	Core ideas
Thelen and Stenimo (1992)	Both formal and informal rules and procedures
March and Olsen (1984, 1993, 1995, 1996).	Individual functions within social values and normative expectations.
Hall and Taylor (1996)	Three approaches-historical, rational choice, and sociological institutionalism
North (1990)	Humanly-devised constraints’ that shape political economic and social interaction.
Alkire (2005); Alsop et al., (2006); Samman & Santos (2009)	Social arrangements of formal rules and informal norms and practices that guide behaviour and the expressions of agency and govern distribution and

	control over resources
Kabeer & Subrahmanian (1996); Klugman et al., (2014); Markel & Jones, (2014; Scott, 2008)	considered in four arenas (family, society, state and market) and three sub-elements (formal laws and policies, informal norms and relations)

2.2.1.1 Institution-building by William Richard Scott (2008)

From the above discussion, it is conceived that there are various theories, approaches and different opinions on institutionalism. Usage of Scott’s framework is the latest choice of theory. This theory will analyse how regulative, normative and culture-cognitive forces motivate different decisions. Thus, in considering the context, for this study, the institutional theory of William Richard Scott (2008) has been helpful for explaining the phenomena.

According to Scott, an institution has three pillars: regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive. These pillars are considered the vital components of institutions. These elements are considered as “building blocks of institutional structures” that provide ‘the elastic fibers’ that resist change (Scott, 2001).

Regulative pillar

The Regulative pillar refers to rule-setting, sanctioning and monitoring activities. Regulative organizational behaviour constrains and regularises individual behaviour (Scott, 2008). Formal rules and policies are articulated by the State itself and also from the ratification of international treaties and conventions. Laws and policies are important because they shape decisions through rules regarding female representatives’ involvement in the local government level activities. The Government of Bangladesh has taken significant policies and rules and quotas for women to encourage them to participate in different decision-making activities at local government level. These are examples of the regulative pillar of local government institutions in Bangladesh.

Normative pillar:

Norms specify how things should be done, they define legitimate means to pursue valued ends. According to Scott (2008), the normative system emphasises normative

rules that produce a prescriptive, evaluative and obligatory dimension in social life. Norms are collectively, rather than individually-approved behaviour.

In general, norms are social values, shared beliefs, assumptions, attitudes, conventions, ideologies, traditions, customs, culture, rules and laws, rights (Gammage et al., 2016). Compared to formal rules, norms are implicit, informal, and decentralized. The Regulative pillar produces formal, explicit, centralised rules. To an individual involved in an institution, both Regulative and Normative rules may apply.

Normative systems can impose constraints on social behaviour, but at the same time, they can also empower and enable social action. Formal rules are reinforced or contradicted by gender norms (Brikci, 2013; Clinton Foundation, 2015).

For example, in many societies, it is a normative expectation that women will engage only in household activities and only men should be involved in external activities. Yet those societies may also have regulative rules declaring that men and women are equal and have equal rights to engage in home-external activities. Bangladesh is a clear example of such a society.

Through regulative rules, Bangladeshi women get elected to local government institutions but the gender norms mean that men do not cooperate to let them do anything there. This is an example of regulative rules being contradicted by gender norms. In such a case, the rules may have no practical effect. We see this everywhere in Bangladesh.

Yet the norms for a member of a local government institution include that the member may speak out on any issue affecting constituents. So the elected women members are empowered and enabled by norms to present plans of action to the local government institutions: no one will challenge that. Yet the gender norms may induce male members not to listen to or not to take action on the plans that they hear from women members. We see both sides of the norms in rural Bangladesh: the women are empowered and the women have no impact.

Thus, because the pillars are separate and equal, they often operate at cross-purposes. This makes real societies more complicated than one would think just by reading their laws. This also explains why problems that are “solved” on a regulatory level may not be solved at all, due to contradiction by norms and cultural-cognitive factors. This is Bangladesh in a nutshell and why many have studied women’s empowerment in Bangladesh and got confused.

Thus, norms refer to those expectations about how women should behave and how much they should involve themselves in actions in specific social contexts, at different stages of their lives (Edstrom, Hassink, Shahrokh & Stern, 2015). In institutional structure, gender norms are key ingredients that shape women’s empowerment but they are never written for anyone to see, except by research to discover them. Patriarchal society systems produce male domination, gender discrimination and disempowerment of women.

What Scott does not specifically mention, as he is writing in America, is that, in south Asia, people (even women, if not well-indoctrinated) tend to give priority to the norms in their instinctive conduct, not the regulative rules. As a result, the patriarchal society system in Bangladesh has far more impact than the Constitution and all the laws. Although Scott noted this sort of situation too, as he also wrote that institutions will not survive if they do not conform to the norms of their environments (DiMaggio, and Powell, 1983; Meyer and Rowan, 1977).

Thus, we can use Scott’s pillars to understand why women are both empowered and disempowered in Bangladesh local government institutions. One pillar empowers, the other disempowers.

The Cultural-Cognitive Pillar:

The cultural-cognitive elements of institutions constitute the nature of social reality. Social reality controls the behaviour of an individual. In the cognitive paradigm, what

a creature does is, in larger part, a function of the creature’s internal representation of its environment (Scott, 2001). Culture can be defined as “acquired knowledge” which an individual applies to interpret experience and generate social behavior. It is important to recognize that culture is learned and helps people in their efforts to interact and communicate with others in the society. Cognitive factors are associated with internal issues of women’s life and their environmental interaction. Three pillars are shown in the following table:

Table 2.2: Summary of Scott’s three Pillars

Theory element	Regulative	Normative	Cultural-cognitive
Basis of compliance	Expedience	Social obligations	Taken-for-grantedness Shared understanding
Basis of order	Regulative rules	Binding Expectations	Consulting schemes
Mechanisms	Coercive Regulative	Normative	Mimetic
Logic	Instrumentality	appropriateness	Orthodoxy
Indicators	Rules, laws, sanctions	certification	Common belief, Shared logic of actions
Basis of legitimacy	Legally sanctioned	Morally governed	Comprehensible Recognizable Cultural supports

Although rules, norms and cultural beliefs are central elements of institutions, the concept also incorporates individual behavior and material resources. Rules, norms and meanings arise in correlations and they are retained and reorganized by human behavior.

2.2.2The Empowerment approach

The empowerment approach is a complex concept. This approach aims at increasing self-sufficiency in women and influencing change in policy, legislative and in economy and society. It varies between persons, sexes, cultures, positions and occupations in life. It may vary due to differences of geography, country, and regions even due to urban and rural settings. As Narayan (2002) states, “empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives”.

Kishore (2000) considers it as women's decision-making roles, their economic self-reliance, and their legal rights, inheritance, access to education and information. According to Batliwala (1994) empowerment is, first and foremost, about “power”. Alkire (2007) considered it as “control over personal decision, domain specific autonomy and increase in certain kind of agency”. To Rowlands (1997), empowerment is more than participation in decision making. Sen (1993) stated that empowerment was reflected in a “person’s capability”. Kabeer (2008) views it as ‘the expansion’ in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them. According to Karl (1995) ‘empowerment’ as ‘a continuum of several interrelated and mutually reinforcing components’ which include awareness building, capacity building, participation, and action.

Table No. 2.3 Definition of Empowerment in Different Context

Authors	Core idea
Sen (1993)	Capability
Batliwala (1994)	Power
Karl (1995)	Awareness building, capacity building
Rowlands (1997)	‘Opening up access’ to decision-making
Kishore (2000)	Decision-making, economic self-reliance, access to education and information, legal and inheritance right.
Narayan (2002)	Capabilities, Participation
Kabeer (2005)	Three dimensions-resources, agency and achievements
Alkire (2007)	Autonomy and agency
World Bank (2009)	Access to information, participation in local org.& capacity

2.2.2.1 Naila Kabeer’s Empowerment approach

Naila Kabeer's (1991) approach on women's empowerment is closely related with the women’s life of the third world countries. Thus, in considering the present context, the empowerment approach of Naila Kabeer (1999) has been also chosen here to address the real scenario of Bangladesh.

In this study, Naila Kabeer’s (1999) “Three Dimensional model” is used for developing the conceptual framework of this study. To Naila Kabeer ‘empowerment

refers to the processes by which those who are denied the ability to make choices, acquire such ability' (Kabeer, 1999a, 1999b).

Kabeer saw empowerment as a process of change in three interrelated and interdependent dimensions that make up choice. These are resources, agency, and achievement. In this process, women have access to and control over resources that enable them to strengthen their voices and influence their choices. Agency is the ability to make decisions in fulfilling their own aspirations.

Resources (pre-conditions):

Resources are the medium through which agency is exercised (Kabeer, 2005). They are tangible and intangible assets and sources of power that women and girls have. There are three types of resources; human, social and material. Resources increase the capacity to make choices and are the means through which agency is exercised (Kabeer, 1999). They are obtained through the social institutions and with the relationships in the society (Kabeer, 2005). Human resources encompass an individual's school attainment, skills, creativity, access to training programs, engagement with solidarity groups, self-efficacy, imagination, and creativity. Control over resources can benefit both the individuals and groups. Social resources are embodied in participation in organization, access to networks, and role-models outside the family. Strong social networks can increase women's self-awareness. The economic resources or material assets include earning property and land, equipment, finances (Kabeer, 1999). Access to economic resources can contribute to access to school, training, skill or health care. Resources are mutually dependent and interact with each other. The availabilities of such resources make women capable of developing the agency. Women use resources to strengthen choice and voice through decision-making.

Agency (process):

Kabeer (1999) has explained "agency as the ability to define one's goals and act upon them". Agency is an individual's or group's ability to express voice, make purposeful choices, pursues goals and influence decisions. In short, agency is an individual's decision-making ability. It encompasses actions like bargaining, negotiation,

deception, subversion, manipulation, resistance, protest and cognitive process of reflection and analysis. Agency is the heart of the empowerment process. Access to and control over resources is a necessary pre-condition of empowerment. Agency refers to women’s own aspirations, their skills and capabilities. It incorporates the meaning, motivation and purpose which individuals bring to their actions (Kabeer, 1999b, 2001, Gammage et al., 2016, Kulgman, 2014). It also encompasses actions like bargaining, negotiation, deception, manipulation, subversion, resistance, protest, cognitive processes of reflection and analysis. Kabeer differentiates between effective agency and transformative agency. Effective agency bestows women greater proficiency to execute their roles, whereas transformative agency provides women the capacity to confront the limiting nature of their roles. Transformative agency provides women with greater ability to challenge the patriarchal constraints in their lives.

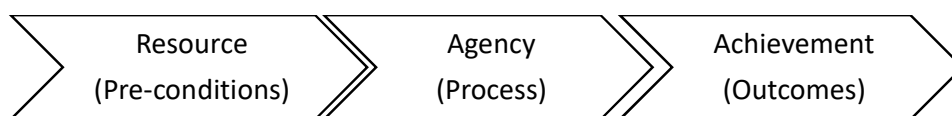
Achievements (outcomes):

Kabeer has described achievements as the extent to which one’s capabilities (i.e. resources and agency) are materialized. These are the outcomes of choices made. It is critical to note whether differences in achievements are because of one’s ability to challenge inequalities, rather than a difference in personal preference, or individual characteristics, such as laziness, where power is not an issue (Kabeer, 1999; Kabeer, 2005). These are the outcomes of choices made.

Triangulating the Dimensions

Thus, Kabeer’s conceptual understanding of empowerment is based on these three dimensions. They are considered as indivisible when it comes to developing meaningful and valid measures of empowerment (Kabeer, 1999). The validity of each dimension is dependent upon others.

2.1 Figure: Kabeer’s Three Dimensional Model.



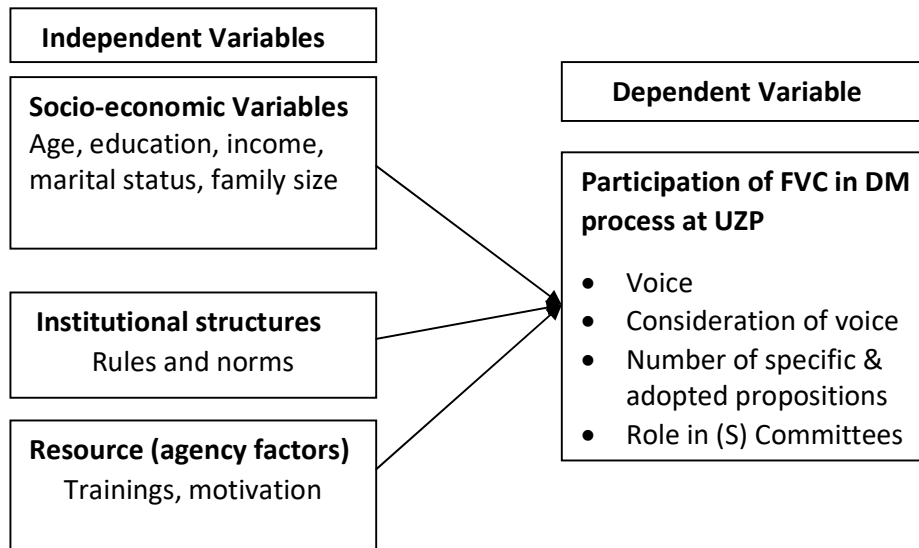
Source: Naila Kabeer (1999)

2.3 Analytical Framework

Dependent and independent variables have been extensively drawn from the existing literature. The dependent variable is participation of FVCs in decision-making process at UZP. Independent variables are broadly classified as socio-demographic, institutional structure and resources (agency factors). Socio-economic variables include age; educational attainment; income; marital status, family size of FVCs. Institutional structure includes rules and norms; on the other hand, resources (Agency factors) are training, motivation for this study. The variables that are identified as key determinants of decision-making at Upazila Parishad are socio-demographic, institutional structures and resources.

By using these variables the framework is used based on the assumption that participation of FVCs at Parishad depends on how clearly the rules and laws are understood by the women and how rules are framed to support FVCs in the present socio-cultural context. Understanding and practice of formal rules and laws help women to influence the decision-making process. Agency factors, including resources, skill, education, training and motivation make them capable in this respect. The Analytical Framework has been used to give an overview of variables in this study. Here within the framework, an attempt has been drawn to point out the casual links between these variables.

Figure 2.2: Analytical Framework



Thus, the decision-making impact of FVCs depends not only on their sharing ideas, views, propositions or voices in the meetings, but also on the acceptance of those voices or on the consideration of those voices by the other members of the meetings (including the local member of Parliament (advisor of Upazila Parishad), Upazila Chair (UZC), UNO (Upazila Nirbahi Officer) and Line-depart officials of the Upazila Parishad or other members of the Upazila committee and finally by their ability to influence the decisions of the Parishad).

When they understand the existing rules, laws regarding their rights, responsibilities and other related information of governance, they become confident. Their capability grows high when they have their own income sources. Moreover, socio-political condition of the locality is also connected with how well their male colleagues accept their enhanced voices at the discussion table. The social-cultural context of Bangladesh creates barriers in their mobility in the society and sometimes restricts them from going outside to attend meetings or public events. Due to inadequate knowledge, it has become difficult for them to have a clear idea or understanding about the rules, laws and policies of governance. Thus, in the decision-making or agenda setting or other important affairs, they feel neglected, even sometimes seem to be deprived of getting notice of the important meetings in time.

2.4 Operational definitions of Participation & Decision-making

Political Participation

The dependent variable of the study is political participation of FVCs in decision-making processes at UZP. There are different ways in which women can participate in politics. They can engage in political organisations as voters and as candidates in elections and as elected representatives in LGIs.

For this study, political participation means the respondents' participation as elected representatives UZPs and their engagement in decision-making. Here the 'participation' means engagement of respondents in development activities (particularly project related), conducting of committee meetings, involvement in political deliberations and meetings of UZP.

Decision-making

Decision-making means FVCs engagement in sharing ideas, views, propositions, raising their voices in case of any deprivation or discrimination and effect of such raised voices (through support by other members and finally influencing the decisions of UZP). Here, the indicators of the dependent variable are shown in the table below:

Table 2.4: Dependent Variables and Indicators.

Dependent Variables	Indicators
Participation of FVCs in decision-making process at UZP.	Voice in UZP decision-making
	Consideration of voice
	Number of specific propositions
	Number of adopted propositions
	Effectiveness of (s) Committees.

2.5 Measurement Indicators of Variables

a) Rules refer to understanding and perception of Acts and rules by the FVCs as well as the practice of those formal rules by the influential actors of the Parishad.

b) Norms refer to gender norms, particularly male domination in UZP activities, especially in project selection and implementation.

c) Training means respondents' access to training provided to them by joint collaboration of GoB and donor agencies to enhance their capacity and FVCs perception about those trainings.

d) Motivation refers to respondents' self-inspiration to enter into the political offices as well as their involvement in committees and project implementation.

Table 2.5 Independent Variables and Indicators:

Independent Variables	Indicators
Rules	Understanding of rules and laws
	Practice of formal rules
Norms	Male dominance
Resources	Training, motivation
Socio-economic	Age, education, income, marital status, family size.

Chapter 3

Historical Background of Local Government with reference to Upazila

This chapter begins with the evolution of local government in Bangladesh. Then it proceeds with a brief overview of the organogram of present LGIs, concluding with the story of the evolution of the Upazila Parishad, with its roles and functions, within the constitutional and policy framework.

3.1 Evolution of Local Government

The local government system in Bangladesh has a long history that goes back to ancient India. Evidence from the oldest Hindu writings, “The Rig Veda” written approximately in 1200 B.C., stated that there were some forms of village self-government system in ancient India (Siddiqui, 2005).

However, the modern system originated in the nineteenth century under the British regime (Aminuzzaman, 2013). At that time, Bangladesh was the eastern part of Bengal, the Indian province. The administrative system of Bengal and the other parts of British India centred around a district-level administrative system, where the district was the core administrative unit. Under the district, there were several sub-divisions (sub-districts) consisting of a number of police stations locally known as ‘Thana’.

In 1885, the Bengal Local Self Government Act established a three-tier rural government system: districts, sub-divisions and unions (Siddiqui, 2005). Under the Act of 1885, for the first time, the villages were segmented under unions, one union covering 15 villages. The local government council at ‘Union’ level was the ‘Union Board’ (now Union Parishad). Sub-divisional Boards were established but existed only for a short time. On the other hand, ‘District Councils’ later ‘District Boards’ and Unions, were headed by the elected representatives. Thus, both District and sub-divisional boards were partially democratic, although always subject to British administrators.

Then in the Pakistani period (1947-1971), there emerged a new form of local government, the 'Thana council', under the direct supervision of the sub-divisional officers (SDOs). This was connected with the local government system established for all of Pakistan by Gen Mohammed Ayub Khan, after he seized power, to tolerate democracy only at a local level. But the Thana councils had no power of taxation which the district and union boards exercised.

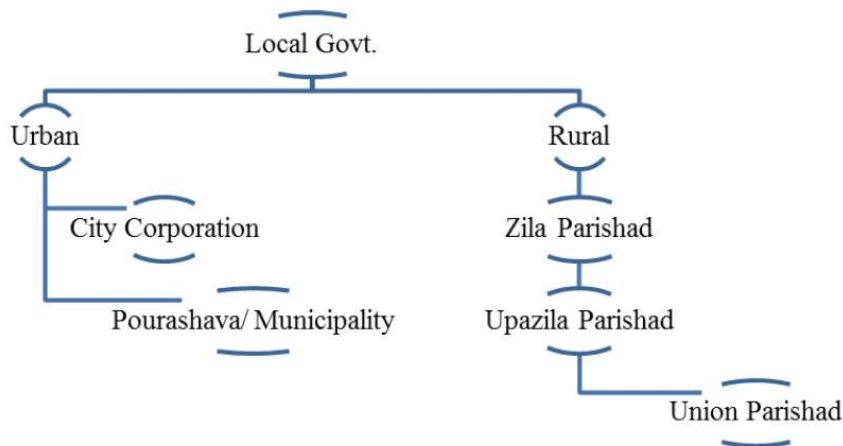
After independence in 1971, the same system of three-tier local government continued in Bangladesh (Blair, 1985; Ali 1987 cited in As-Saber & Rabbi, 2009). In 1973, The Local Government Act was introduced which continued a three-tier system calling the Union Board a "Union Parishad" (UP), the Thana Training and Development Committees (TTDC), and the District Councils the "District Board" (now Zila Parishad). Only Union Parishads had elections. The other two levels remained under bureaucratic control.

In the late 1970s, the Government of Gen. Ziaur Rahman, tried to introduce a 4th tier, called the "Gram Sarker", with elections at the village level. However, the policy died with President Ziaur Rahman, who was assassinated in 1981. The Nationalist-led Government of 2001-2007 reintroduced the Gram Sarkers but the Supreme Court declared them unconstitutional (Blair, 1985; Ali, 1987; Khan, 1987 cited in As-Saber & Rabbi, 2009).

3.2 Present Structural Arrangement of LGIs

With the rewriting of local government legislation in 2009, there are now two types of local government systems in Bangladesh - urban and rural. The urban local government institutions have two tiers: they are City Corporations and Town Councils ("Pourashavas"). The rural local governments maintain the former three tiers: –Union Parishads (groups of villages), Upazila Parishads (groups of Unions)(sub-districts) and the District Councils (Zila Parishads). The organogram of local government system is given below:

Figure 3.1: Organogram of Local Government



Source: Popy, 2016

3.3 Upazila Parishad: Its Emergence, Structure and Functions

In 1982, under President Lieutenant General HM Ershad, Sub-divisions were upgraded to Districts and Thana Committees were upgraded to Upazila (Sub-districts) based on the report of a Commission empanelled to study local government (Committee for Administrative Reorganization/Reform (CARR)). CARR proposed a three-tier local government system- Zila Parishad (ZP) at the district level, Upazila Parishad (UZP) at the sub-district level and Union Parishad (UP) at the union level. Subsequently, Upazila Parishads were introduced in the Upazila Parishad Ordinance, 1982.

The first election of the Upazila Parishads was in 1985, followed by another election in 1990. A Upazila Parishad consisted of a Chair, three women members appointed by the President selected line departmental officials, the Chair of the Upazila Central Co-operative Association and one nominated member from the freedom fighters (veterans of the Liberation War in 1971).

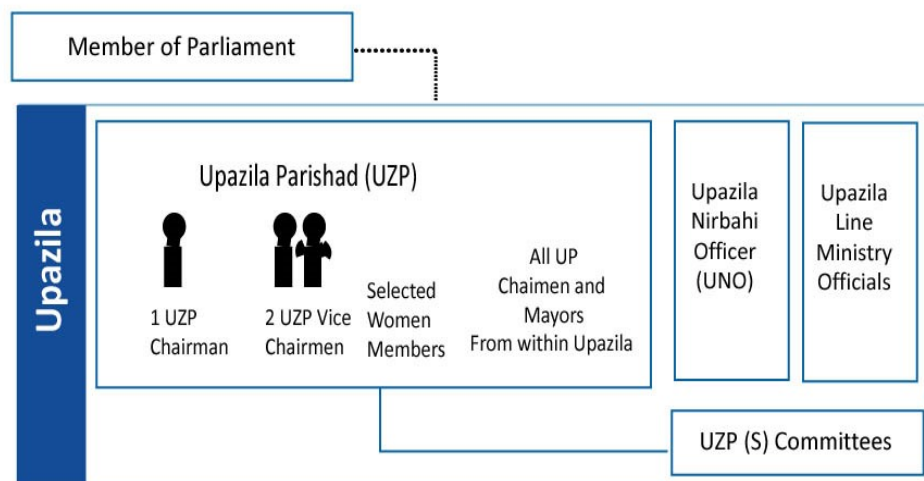
When Gen Ershad was driven from power in 1990, the elected Nationalist Government abolished the Upazila Parishads in 1991. With the abolition of the Upazilas, the Nationalist Government established a Local Government Commission.

Awami League Governments restored elected Upazila Parishads in the Upazila Parishad Act, 1998 and the Local Government (Upazila Parishad) Act 2009. Upazila Parishads were elected in 2010 for the first time since 1990. The Act was further amended in 2011. Under the legislation, there were 17 Departments devolved to the UZP: health, education, water and sanitation, agriculture etc. The redefined role of the UZP includes local level development planning (both annual plans and five year plans) and budgeting, designed to introduce inclusive development to meet United Nations’ MDGs and to make local government more participative and citizen-centred.

3.3.1 Composition of Upazila Parishad (UZP)

Today’s Upazila Parishad, under the 2009 legislation, consists of a Chair, two Vice-Chairpersons (one of them a woman), Chairmen of all Union Parishads under the Upazila concerned, mayors of all municipalities (if there are any), and women members of the reserved seats. The Chair and Vice-Chairs are elected directly. One-third of the total women members from reserved seats of Union Parishad under an Upazila will be the Upazila Parishad members.

Figure3.2 Present Structure of UZP



Source: Aminuzzaman et al., 2017

3.3.2 Roles and Functions of UZP

Different categories of actors are involved with the governance process of UZP. Their roles are statutorily defined. The Upazila Chair (UZC) will play a pre-eminent role and will exercise executive powers to implement the decisions taken by the Parishad. An Upazila Parishad Chair's duties include chairing and conducting Parishad meetings, monitoring and controlling all officers and employees, meeting financial expenditure of certain limits fixed by the government and commission. The Chair will also prepare the annual confidential reports of all officers and employees of the Parishad. The Chair is to supervise all accounts of the Parishad with the joint signature of the Upazila Nirbahi officer (UNO). He/she has also the authority to appoint employees of UZP and take disciplinary action if necessary. The two Vice-Chairs are the chairpersons of the 17 committees of the Parishad. They play as 'acting chair' in absence of UZC. Their responsibilities are very limited. They can recommend measures on the undertaken activities of the Parishad.

The role of members, especially the UP Chairs, is very important. As a group, they are the majority of the UZP. As the heads of the Union Parishads, they have some executive powers. The Member of Parliament is the most influential actor for the Parishad even though he is formally only an "advisor" of the Parishad.

Central government officials, who are devolved to UZPs, are non-voting members of the Parishad. As heads of the line departments at the Upazila level, they have an important role: they are there to implement UZP decisions consistent with Government policy. All officials (except UNO) work under the supervision of UZC and with the co-ordination of UNO (Upazila Nirbahi Officer).

The UNO is the link between central government and the local government. He/she plays a crucial role on behalf of central and local government. For the UZP, the UNO acts as a secretary. Yet, in fact he/she coordinates the work of the different departments and is basically the boss of the bureaucracy at the UZP level.

The LGIs are not only responsible for economic development but also for social and community advancement. The roles and responsibilities of UZP are illustrated in Section 23 of the UZP Act. According to Schedule 2 of Local Governance (UZP) Act, 1998 there are 18 (eighteen) functions of UZP (see- Annex III). In brief, the functions of Upazila Parishad are to prepare five year development plans, repair and maintenance of linking roads, initiate and implement irrigation projects and to create job opportunities to reduce poverty. UZP also deals with administrative and establishment related issues and ensures law and order. Planning for people's welfare, economic and social developments are the leading issues for UZPs. The following diagram presents the overall functions of LGIs at a glance.

Figure 3.3: Functions of LGIs as per Local Government (UZP) (Amendment) Act, 2011



Source: UZP (Amendment) Act, 2011

Some core functions and issues of UZPs are-

- (1) UZP decision-making
- (2) Planning and Development
- (3) The Preparation of the Budget

Decision-making in Upazila Parishad (UZP)

According to the 2009 legislation, UZPs meet once in a month. Monthly meetings are called and chaired by the UZC. For conducting meetings, a quorum is not necessary. There is no reference to the issue of who sets the agenda. Emergency meetings can be held at short notice (i.e 24 hours). Regulations under the 2009 Act provide:

- When an issue is placed in monthly meeting, the Chair can take the required decision. If necessary he/she can put the matter to a vote. [section 6 (1) of Upazila Parishad (Implementation) Rules 2010]
- All decisions will be adopted by consensus of all members. In case of any dispute or confusion, issues may be settled by majority vote. [Section 6 (4) of Upazila Parishad (Implementation) Rules, 2010]
- The decisions of the meetings should be circulated for necessary actions [section 8 (1) of Upazila Parishad (Implementation) Rules, 2010]
- The UNO will take necessary measures to implement the decisions of UZP [section 5 of Upazila Parishad (Implementation) Rules, 2010]

Planning and Implementation of Development Projects

One of the major functions of the UZP is to plan and implement development projects for the greater benefit of the local people. For this development work, the UZP should prepare an annual development plan and a five-year plan. [No. 1 of 1st Schedule (as cited in Section 15.1) of the Upazila Parishad Act, 2009 & also mentioned in Section 42 of the Upazila Parishad Act, 2009] UZP should implement those development activities as per the directive of the Ministry of Local Government, circulated in October 2009, specifying the manner in which the UZP has to use development funds. The circular was revised in 2010 to state the main sources of the fund, as follows:

- Block grants from the central government under ADP
- Revenue surpluses
- Local donations
- Funds received for project implementation from any organisations.

The working areas of UZP, in which the UZP can take decisions, allocate resources to different sectors and identify the types of projects it can undertake were also set out in the amended circular.

The Preparation of UZP Budget

According to the Local Government (Upazila Parishad), Act, 2009 UZP prepares a budget in accordance with directives of government at least 60 days before the commencement of new financial year and fixes a copy on the UZP notice board seeking public opinion, suggestions and comments. It will consider all the comments and suggestions in approving the budget and then a copy of it will be forwarded to the DC office. Recently, the government has introduced “Upazila Parishad Budget (Formulation and Approval) Rules 2010 that suggests for two parts of budget: revenue account and development account. The Rules also allow the formulation of a revised budget.

The new institutional practices of UZP that are related to decision-making discussed below:

Features of Committees

The seventeen (17) Committees (see-Annex-V) are the part of formal structure of UZP. They can play a very noteworthy role to develop the decision-making process of the LGIs. Each committee has to meet every two months. Decisions take by the committees will be further approved by the members of monthly meetings. There are two ways, by which committees can take initiative to improve the service delivery at UZP. First, it can monitor the quality of service delivery of UZP and line-agencies. Second, it can draw attention the members of monthly UZP meetings for appropriate action.

It can be argued that keeping committees at all levels of governance has become an integral part of law-making. Committees are now considered an important mechanism to ensure transparency and accountability in governance. Yet these committees are limited in their ability to carry out this role, as they are volunteers who have neither financial nor executive authority. Still, the Upazila Parishad committees can ensure coordination of activities of different departments and keep the focus of service delivery on the poor (Panday & Islam 2016). According to Aminuzzaman et al., (2017), Standing Committees are the most effective and potential means that can make UZP more accountable, responsive, inclusive and participative.

Women Development Forum (WDF)

WDF plays an effective role to accelerate political empowerment of women. It was set up in 2013 with involving elected representatives from UZP, UPs, and Paurashavas (municipalities) at the Upazila Level and District level. At Upazila level, FVC of the respective UZP works as chairperson of the WDF. The core objective of it is to enhance the capacity and network of women. It has created a space for them to assemble and join together, from different parts of the locality of UZP at FVCs office and hold meetings, share their ideas, views, raise voice and influence the decision-makings of UZP.

WDF actively works for raising community awareness regarding the curse of child marriage, need for female education and women rights etc. WDF facilitates to increase political leadership in women at grass root level. The members of the WDF have been playing as the effective “change agent” for women community. WDF has been integrated with the national policies and institutions. In 2015, with a circular issued from Local Government Division has been made mandatory to allocate 3% of Annual Development budget to WDF. It is gradually evolving as a catalyst body to encourage, mobilize and engage female leadership for women development, right based advocacy and social mobilization, activities to ensure gender rights and responsive service delivery for the women (Aminuzzaman et al., 2017).

Chapter 4

Participation of Women in Local Government: A Historical Overview

This Chapter discusses women's participation in Local Government from an historical point of view. It discusses the present state of women's political participation in Bangladesh and their representation in LGI's, with particular reference to UZPs, along with the scope and nature of such participation. Finally, the Chapter ends with emphasis on some initiatives that Government have introduced to enhance the participation of women in LGIs.

4.1. Present State of Women's Political Participation in Bangladesh

Women in Bangladesh face several challenges due to socio-cultural practices. The society is largely dominated by patriarchy that curtails women's mobility. Women's role is underrated by the public-private divide. Women's role is confined to preparing food, rearing children, and looking after the needs of the family at home: private life. Their work is not only unpaid, but largely unrecognized (Karl, 1995). Subsequently, their contribution is considered insignificant and their participation is limited in the 'outside world': public life (Karl, 1995; Ahikire, 2001).

Politics is considered as an arena for men and masculine in nature: clearly public life (Ahikire, 2001). This public-private gender distinction has not only dominated women's role in the family and their social relationships but also entered into the political system.

Due to this compartmentalised way of social thinking, women's participation remains low at all levels of the political structure. This type of attitude and perception of society leads women to functional marginalization in the political structure and it still predominates.

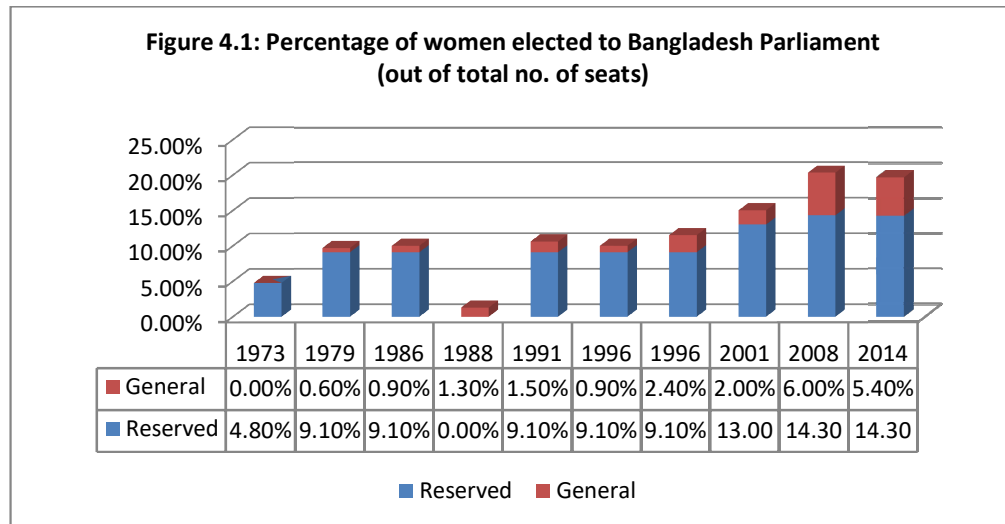
The difference between men and women also appears on the issue of content and priorities of decision-making, which is determined by backgrounds, interests and working patterns of both sexes (Samiuddin & Khanam, 2013). Women's priorities

centre around societal issues such as women and girls' security, gender awareness building, health care and child-related issues. On the other hand, male priorities in politics come from the issues in Parliament as well as matters of structural development in the community. In short, women want safe streets, clinics and good schools. Men want roads, irrigation projects and building construction for jobs and income. Moreover, women are overworked and overstretched with dual burden (role as mother, wife, sister, daughter and grandmother as well as political operative, should they want to take that on). So they have little time to contribute to the community in meeting and social action.

In Bangladesh, women's political participation is at two levels, national and local. Women can play a role as law- and policymakers at the national level. At local level, they can play a role in development policy implementation through councils like the UZP.

In the Parliamentary elections of 2001, more than 48 women candidate contested non-reserved seats and 13 women were elected. This was in addition to the 30 seats reserved for women. However, the participation of women in the general seats in 2008 was the worst among the previous 6 elections. The total female candidates nominated for non-reserved seats constituted less than 7% of all candidates (Panday, 2016). The effect of reserving "women's seats" in Parliament has been to cap women's participation rather than broaden it. Major political Parties tend to nominate women for reserved seats and fewer women for general seats. As a result, a small number of women sit in the national Parliament.

The first Parliament (1973-1975) introduced 15 reserved seats for women. From second to seventh Parliament there were 30 reserved seats. There was a provision of indirect election for the reserved seats. The eighth Parliament (2001-2006) enacted the 14th Constitutional Amendment which introduced 50 reserved seats for women with direct election. In the 1st Parliament (1973-1975) no women won in the general seats. After that the number increased by two, three, four and seven, and twenty, respectively (Panday, 2013). Figure 3.1 shows these elections and the representation of women in both reserved and general seats.



Source: Paasilinna, 2016

From the above Figure, it is clear that participation of women, in both general and reserved seats in Parliament, has increased over time. While that is progress, the 20% of Parliamentarians who are women are still a far smaller proportion than the 50% in the country who are women. Table 3.1 shows women's participation in non-reserved seats from Parliament down to the Union Parishads.

Table 3.1: Number of women general seat holders at all levels of government

General seat position	Number of women in General seat	Total Number of General seats	Percentage (%) of women in General seats
Member of Parliament	20	300	6.7
Upazila Chair	03	483	0.6
Upazila Vice-Chair	01	483	0.2
City Corporation Mayor	01	09	11.1
City Corporation Councillor	00	134	0.0
Municipality Mayor	03	234	1.3
Municipality Councilor	07	2202	0.3
Union Parishad Chair	27	4534	0.6
Union Parishad Member	45	40806	0.1

Source¹: Paasilinna, 2016

¹ Table of women general seat contestants and holders, provided by the ECB Secretariat to IFES on October 23, 2015 cited in Paasilinna, 2016).

The participation of women in Parliament is increasing but their participation in local government is declining. It is optimistic that women are participating in Parliament. In 1997, the opportunity of women's participation in reserved seats was introduced at the grass root level (UP). Later this provision was extended to all tiers of LGIs. In spite of these initiatives, the participation of women in elections showed a declining trend. According to Naznin Ahmed (2016), although the participation in reserved seats at local government initially reached its object, over the years, that participation declined. She found that, in the UZP elections of 2009, out of 2,900 female contestants, 481 women were elected to the reserved seats for the post of Upazila Vice Chair. In the 2014 elections, the number of female contestants dropped to a total of 1,507 in 458 Upazilas, a 48% decline in one term.

Several organizations tried to find the reasons for the decline in women's participation in local elections as candidates. Sharique² stated that local levels of national Parties do not care about reserved seats. The political Parties' campaign for UP/UZP Chair and general seats but do not fight for support in the reserved seat elections. Aparajita³ conducted a study on Upazila Parishad reserved seat elections held in June 2015, when local elections were still officially non-partisan. The study showed that, following the declaration of the election schedule, the local MPs, UZCs, and local leaders of the ruling Party performed the primary selection of their endorsed candidates and final nomination. Many women candidates, who were competent and enthusiastic but had no strong base in the Party, failed to get endorsement. From these two studies, it becomes evident that reserved-seat elections are being neglected by the major political parties.

4.2. Women's Representation in LGI's (With UZP Focus)

After independence, the local government system for Bangladesh was a big concern for policy-makers. In 1976, to ensure women's participation at the local level, Gen

²Sharique- A Swiss Development Co-operation (SDC) Funded Local Government Project. Primarily works for the capacity development of women in Union Parishad.

³Aparajita -Women's Organization ,Democracywatch, monitors elections, youth and Local Government, Bangladesh.

Ziaur Rahman promulgated a Local Government Ordinance. A three-tier local government system was introduced in Bangladesh as explained in Chapter 2 of this thesis. In Union Councils two reserved seats were given to appointed women (Ahmed, 2001). Women thus entered into the arena of local government for the first time.

Over time, different Governments tried increased the numbers of reserved seats for women. The Local Government (Union Parishad) (Second Amendment) Act, 1997 came as a 'milestone' that opened up the door for women's participation in LGI elections (at the UP level). It was considered as a great step towards women's political participation (Sultana, 2000). This amendment provided women the opportunity to contest elections for the 'reserved seats'. This reform provided the structural framework for women's participation in political decision-making and provided an opportunity to develop new grassroots-level political leadership among women.

The Local Government (Upazila Parishads) Act, 2009 first brought women into Upazila Parishads. Changes were made with respect to the composition of the Parishads. Two positions of Vice Chairmen (one of them a woman) have been created [Section (6)(1)]. Thus, the participation of women in UZPs is comparatively more of a new idea than women's participation in UPs. By keeping one position reserved for women, the Government hoped to create further opportunity for their inclusion and empowerment, by making women more active participants in "public life" at the local level. Section 12 of the Act has made provision for constituting a 'Chair Panel' by the Vice Chairmen with the Chair, bringing the female Vice-Chair directly into decision-making, which had been usually done by the Chair alone, in practice, in local government.

Initially starting with reserved seats in Union Parishads , gradually representation of women has been extended to all levels of LGIs, UZPs, Municipalities, and City Corporations by the 2009 local government legislation. The provisions for reserved

seats are adding value and ensuring women's representation in all tiers of local government.

4.3. Scope and Nature of Participation for FVCs

Women have scope to participate in development activities such as project selection, implementation and monitoring from their positions in the LGIs. According to the Local Government (Upazila Parishad) Act, 2009 (Schedule-IV), there is a list of functions that will be performed by the FVC (See-Annex-IV). However, LGIs women's participation is not satisfactory due to male dominance. Instead, there is a difference between statutory positions created in the statutes and "de facto politics" in the LGIs, where things really get done (Vjoylashmi, 2002, cited in Panday, 2015).

The Government have introduced 'reserved seats' to ensure a critical mass of women in LGIs. Thus, they have a 30% quota of reserved seats. But at the same time, the reserved seats have been designed in such a way that there is 'a separate women-only tier', which results in 'overlapping mandates' for reserved and general seats holders. Each constituency has a general seat and then three or four constituencies are combined to create a constituency for a women's reserved seat. As a result, the members for the general seats, usually men, are considered the "real" representatives for the women's constituency and the woman elected in the reserved seat is considered "extra" (Paasilinna, 2016).

Thus, the UZP can easily function with only the male general seat members, without taking any notice of the women members for reserved seats: and that is what happens. Every voter knows that the general seat member is there speaking for the constituency that the voter lives in. The voters do not understand why those extra women members are there (maybe to please the women's groups, to please the Government), so there is no pressure on the general seat members to include them in decision-making.

Therefore, the women members become tourists in the UZP. All types of decisions are taken by male representatives in general seats without them. They can see

everything that is happening but they are not directly involved. Like tourists, they are lucky if they get a smile from their colleagues, and a wave, but they are not really involved or necessary.

However, there are some female representatives who make themselves important in their UZPs. Some even lead the decision-making. They have empowered themselves, as the system failed to do, considering that 'empowerment' is a process (Kabeer, 2005). They are powerful in influencing the UZP's decisions, either by political connections (usually through the local governing Party or with the Member of Parliament) or by other means.

4.4. Government Initiatives to enhance Women's Participation

The Government have taken several initiatives to enhance the participation of women in LGIs as summarised in this Chapter thus far. Articles 9, 10, 28(1), 28(2), 28(3), 28(4), 29(1), 29(2), 65(2), 65(3) and 122 of the Constitution of Bangladesh ensure equal fundamental rights, opportunity to participate in State affairs and private occupations, elimination of all kinds of disparity, equal distribution of wealth, voting rights, rights to become members in all associations and institutions. These general provisions, which make all Bangladeshi citizens equal, imply equality between all Bangladeshi men and women. In Article 9, it is required that special representation be given to women in LGIs, with protection to that right of representation for ten years (Article 65(3)). In 2005, finally a Constitutional amendment was passed increasing the size of the quota for women in Parliament from 30 to 50. The amendment also specified that the quota for women would be distributed among political Parties based on their strength (number of seats) in the Parliament. Quota system was also introduced in all tiers of LGIs, as following the Beijing Platform 1995. Following this, the Government also greatly enhanced participation of women in political decision-making in local government in rewriting the local government law in 2009.

Chapter 5

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

This Chapter presents empirical data, including as well as field-based observations from the study. The prime concern of this Chapter is to analyse the factors that affect the decision-making process of women representatives in UZPs. It focuses on those factors in line with analytical frameworks of this study.

5.1 Data Scaling and Analysis Method

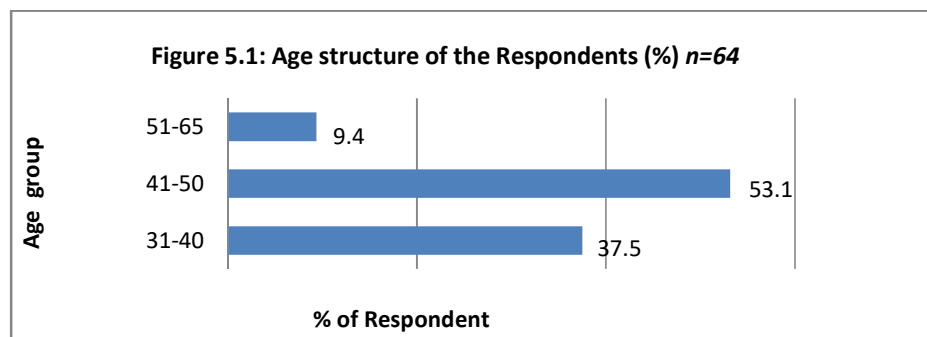
The quantitative data have been analyzed by SPSS, presented in tables, following key questions asked in the study. Then the qualitative data from case studies, in-depth interviews and KIIs have been synthesised and used to validate the quantitative data. Thus the qualitative data has performed a triangulation function which has become almost standard in social science research.

5.2 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The demographic profile, expressed through age group, educational attainment, income, marital status and family sizes, of the respondents is presented below.

Age-Composition of the respondents:

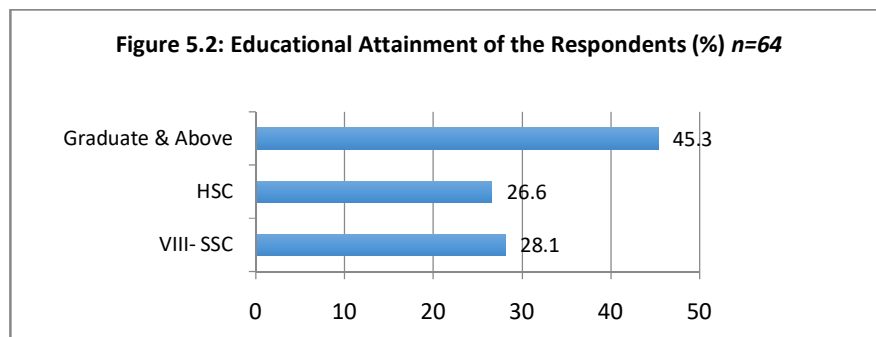
Figure 5.1 reflects the age structure of the respondents. It is found that half (53.1%) of the total respondents belong to 41-50 age groups and the following 31-40 age group.



constitutes 37.5%. The chart presents that a matured section of respondents was covered by the survey. It is assumed that age maturity brings experience, wisdom knowledge and awareness in a person. Moreover, the extent of expressing voice and choice varies in different stages of life. So, from this study, it can be apprehended that the findings may reflect more experienced-based understanding of the adult population, but possibly more conservative and more influenced by traditional gender-based norms than young people in the community would be.

Educational Attainment

Out of 64 respondents, 45% were highly educated: they belong to the Graduate and above group. 27% were on the HSC group (completed only higher secondary education) and the remaining 28% belong to from class VIII to Secondary (SSC) group (primary and lower secondary education).



It is widely believed and expected that educated people tend to participate more actively in decision-making processes. As about half of the respondents of this study belong to higher educational background, it can be apprehended that the findings may reflect an inclusive viewpoint. Thus, in their participation in political decision-making, it is expected that the educated women can understand better their needs and utilize the opportunity within the policy framework to a great extent. Data of the chart implies that higher-educated women are comparatively more interested in participating in UZP, although there is no limit of age for participating in the election.

Income

Table-5.1 shows that most of the respondents (72%) belong to 27,000-35,000Tk per month income range and only 8% are in the high-income range. It reflects that majority of the respondents' income level is low. These people are not desperately poor but functioning on a needs-level, not a wants-level. It is notable that a woman representative in Upazila levels every month draws 27,000Tk as honorarium from the LGIs. Then, adding allowances for travel and living costs, the honorarium exceeds 34,000 to 35,000 per month.

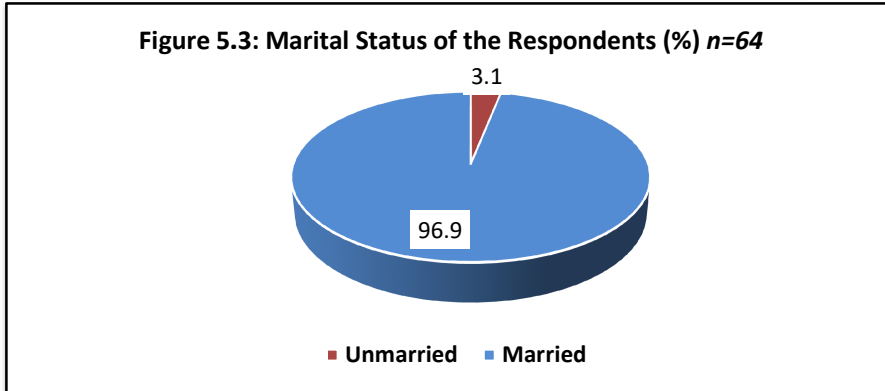
Table 5.1: Income Distribution of the Respondents (%), (n = 64)

Income Range (BDT)	Percentage
27000-35000	71.9
35001-75000	20.3
75001+	7.8
Total	100

Particularly in the third world countries, the rich tend to influence politics offices and have more access to the local government facilities. Thus, it can be assumed that, having adequate income and assets, a representative may tend to influence decision-making process more than those have little or no wealth. So, the relatively high honoraria and allowances act as both an incentive for women to stand for election and an empowerment to women members once elected.

Marital Status

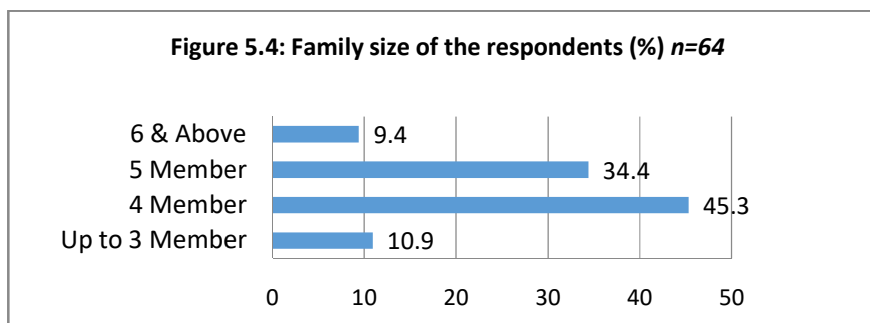
The following chart shows information about the marital status of the respondents. Data from the chart show that 97% of the respondents are married, including the widowed, divorced, and separated. Only 3% respondents had never married.



In a patriarchal society like Bangladesh, marital status is an important feature for a woman in participating at LGs. Women’s identity is first determined by their fathers and after marriage by their husbands. Thus, marital status may be a significant issue in their participating in the decision-making process at UZP. An unmarried woman would probably create the impression of “having problems” and get the votes neither of women nor men.

Family size

Figure 5.4 presents family size distribution of respondents. From the graph, it is found that families of the 45% respondents consist of ‘4 members’ followed by ‘5 members’ (34%).



Due to family responsibilities, it becomes impossible for women to play the political role. This agrees with “the role conflict theory” of Bochel et al (2000) that emphasises the traditional role of women where a woman feels guilty if she fails to

fulfil her expected family roles. Women may participate less in their work due to such guilt.

5.3 Women's Participation in UZP Decision-making: Engagement & Voices

In the development discourse, women's 'engagement' in development activities and their 'voice' in the decision-making process are now prime concerns. They are considered as powerful elements of empowerment. In addition to community activities, women get involved in other development work. Project selection, implementation and monitoring are very much related to that development work. Mere participation is not enough for their empowerment. To ensure their active and vibrant participation their 'ideas', 'propositions', 'demands', and 'voices' need special consideration in the decision-making process. GoB has taken several initiatives for their critical mass and also to make sure of their substantive representation.

Now a pertinent question arises, how much opportunity the women get in the UZP to voice their demands and to pursue their strategic interests and whether they are really heard. This will be clear whether they are "participating" or merely "present".

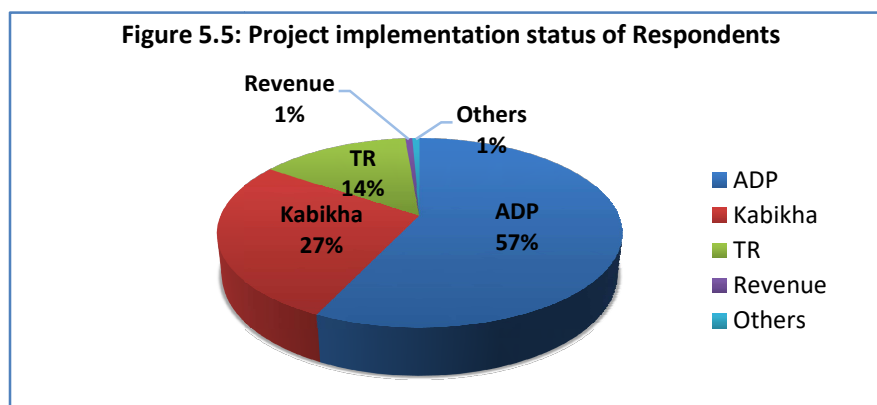
5.3.1 Women's Participation in Development Activities & Committees

To find out the meaning of "participation" of the Female Vice-Chairs in the 2017-2018 financial year, the data like how many specific projects they proposed and how many of those project propositions were adopted by the UZP, has been looked at. Studying the role of FVCs in different types of project implementation will also give a clear picture of their level of participation.

Role in Project Implementation:

Figure 5.5 implies that, in the 2017-2018 financial year, more or less all respondents were involved in project implementation activities. Out of 149 projects, which constituted 70% of the proposed project proposals, were implemented by them. Among them, they implemented 85 (57%) projects from ADP funds, 41 (27%)

projects from Kabikha⁴ and 21 (14%) projects from TR (Test Relief⁵). It is found that project implementation from revenue funds (of the UZP) is the lowest in number.



Field data show that, on an average, each Vice-Chair proposed 3.44 projects and ultimately they were able to implement 2.32 projects (see-Table-1 & 2 in Annex-IX). The list of projects they implemented shows that most of them were mainly concerned with women-related issues (See the list of implemented projects in Annex-VI).

It appears from the above analysis that the 70% success rate of the proposed projects reflected the capacity of “female leadership” in the newly established Upazila Parishad. They implemented those projects using their own visions and designs enlightened by their understanding of the peoples’ needs. Project implementation needs some special and technical skill. It means that women representatives have gained such “skills” and “knowledge” that make them capable of engaging in different types of project implementation activities.

Women representatives’ engagement in project implementation gives a clear picture of their participation. They are now deciding, by themselves, what kinds of projects they will undertake/need for the people, where it will be implemented and how it

⁴Kabikha means *Kajer Binimoye Khadya* in English ‘Food for Work’, a Safety Net System for Poorest Project under Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief

⁵ Test Relief (TR)-a program under Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief to create employment opportunities for rural poor, wage-laborer, & unemployed people through implementation of small rehabilitation projects.

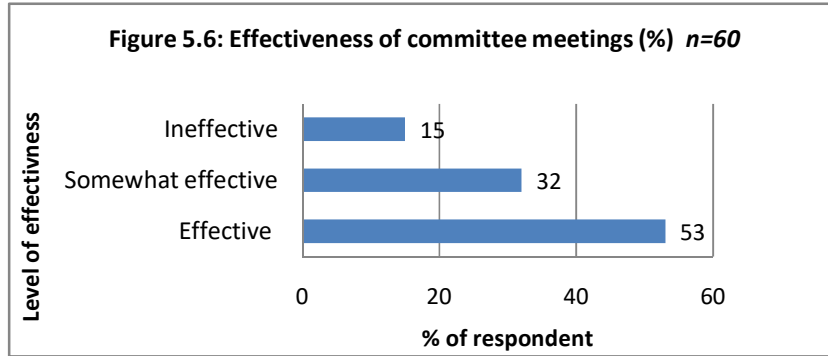
will be implemented under their leadership. Through the process of project selection and implementation they try to fulfil their election promises and make themselves prepared for re-election or to stand for a post of top leadership (like Chair of UZP or MP).

It is notable that gender- and inclusion-related issues are getting priority among FVCs. This suggests that they understand their (women's) community's needs and priorities. By implementing these types of projects, they are playing the 'women's leadership role' and becoming 'role models' for womenfolk.

Perception of FVCs regarding their Role in (S) Committees

Data (Table-3 in Annex-IX) reveal that most of the respondents (94%) conducted their committee meetings regularly. It reflects that an overwhelming majority of women are interested and enthusiastic to conduct committee meetings, an important part of their statutory responsibilities. According to the Local Government (Upazila Parishad) Act, 2009, each Vice-Chair will be the chairperson of the committees and will conduct the meetings. These committees play a key role in executing and implementing different activities for the proper maintenance of the functions of UZP.

To learn about the effectiveness of the committee meetings, the FVCs were asked about their perception of those committees. Figure 5.6 reveals that, out of 60 respondents (who conducted committee meetings), 53% felt that the decisions of those committees were 'effective'. 32% said the meetings were 'somewhat effective'. Only 15% of respondents said that the decisions taken in the meetings were not effective, meaning not properly addressed by the Parishad. Some stated that committee meetings lacked quorums. Unwillingness on the part of the member-secretary (line Department officials) and absence of UP Chairs were the other reasons for ineffective committee meetings.



In this regard, one FVC stated how much effort she had to spend to keep the committees under her supervision active. Regarding the irregularities of the committee meetings, she explained her views in the following way:

Officers are always reluctant to call meetings of the committees. If I do not exert pressure, they will try to escape it. Actually without pressure, the system does not work.

The most-supported view about for meetings being ‘ineffective’ is as follows-

I conduct committee meetings regularly as it is my duty. But the decisions taken in these meetings are not duly considered by the Parishad.-Statement of a disheartened FVC.

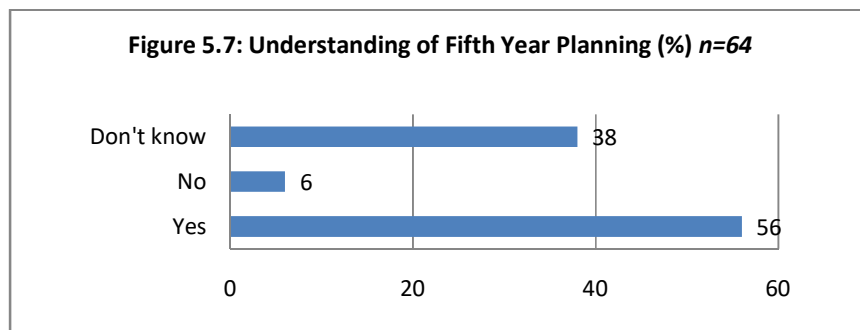
However, some different views were found from some Line-department officials and UNO’s in interviews. Some UZCs and UNOs state that the Parishad only considers those decisions that are rational and need-based (implying that the committee proposals are irrational or unnecessary).

Moreover, they have some limitations (which has partly disclosed during in-depth interviews). In most of the cases in decision-making, they have to comply with the advice of the local Member of Parliament (MP). Some MPs determine the priorities for the Parishad. The Parishad can then only take up the committee reports later, after that, with whatever resources are still left unspent.

A study conducted by Aminuzzaman et al., 2017 found that there is a very weak linkage between suggestions made by the standing committees and the percentage of their actual or direct incorporation into annual plan.

Role in Five Year Plan and Understanding its Importance

Preparing the Five year plan is considered the first and foremost duty of the UZP. During the survey the FVCs were asked “Do you have Five Year Plan in Your Upazila? If so, , how many of your specific project propositions have been included in the Five Year Plan of the Upazila Parishad? “



The above figure reflects that about 56% respondents know about Five Year Plans. On the other hand, 38% did not answer on that issue. Some others reported that they had not prepared it yet. A significant number of the respondents seemed to have no clear idea about the Five Year Plan and during interview, they were found unconcerned and disinterested about it.

Moreover, in conversation with them, it seemed that some FVCs considered it the duty of the line-department officials to prepare the Five Year plan. One possible explanation might be that their Upazila Parishads still had not completed their Five Year Plans. FVCs may not be fully aware of the importance and process of doing the Five Year Plan.

Making Five Year Plans is crucial to establish the FVC's voice in the decision making process. Having adequate knowledge about the Five Year Plans, they can bargain, negotiate and challenge the long-term priorities of the existing power structure.

However, during the survey, some FVCs were found more enthusiastic and concerned about the implementation of development projects than the Five Year Plan. Again, they did not seem to understand the connection between the Five Year Plan and the annual project selection process of the UZP. A question is posed whether the link between five year plan and annual plan is maintained in UZP. Now, the Five Year Plan is the main document to be used in getting funding from the donor agencies. Effective use of the Five Year Plan process can make the FVCs more effective and confident in getting funding for their projects.

5.3.2 Participation in Decision-making process

In this study, participation in decision-making means speaking in the meetings, sharing ideas and views, voice raises and being heard by the other members of the Parishad. FVCs are participating in different types of activities, but it does not necessarily mean that they are really influencing the decision-making structure. This study intends to know the level of their participation in decision making at UZP.

Voice⁶ in UZP decision-making

The FVCs were asked *“Do they raise voice in the Parishad, when they feel discriminated against?”* (see Table-6 in Annex IX) 100% of the respondents positively answered this question. It implied that women were raising their voices in decision-making at UZPs. As one FVC from Dhaka district stated:

After being elected to UPZ, the males did not like to give us a chance to be heard. Now they understand that we have a capacity to speak (raise voice), and so the situation has changed.

The following case study will give a clear idea about how FVCs are speaking out on project-related issues. The facts show that their ‘individual’ as well as ‘collective’ action provided opportunities to voice their needs and demands.

⁶Voice means capacity to speak up, to shape and share discussions and decisions, ideas, views in UZP meetings including (S) committee meetings.

Case study-1

One Vice-Chair, from Dhaka District, proposed in the monthly meeting to undertake a project regarding training for self-employment for destitute women from the ADP fund in the “2017-2018 financial year. But the proposal was not supported by the members of UZP and the Chair. The UZC denied the proposal on the ground that they had many things to do with the ADP fund. Being denied, she called a meeting of WDF immediately. All members attended the meeting. Then she decided to meet with UZC with all the members of WDF. They met with the Chair and were able to make him understand the importance of the issue. After a long discussion, the Chair at last agreed to their proposal. That project was implemented within a very short time.

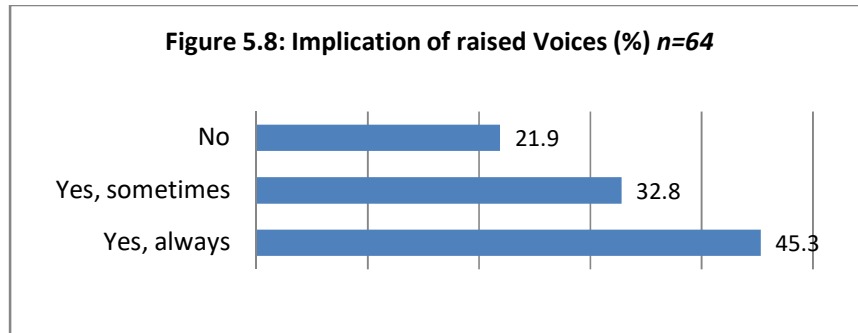
This is an example of how women are organizing to fulfill their interests, particularly on the issue of development of their locality. Such outcome is well-supported by the data and also by the responses of some important actors (UZP Chair, UNO, Engineer, PIO, Women and Children Affairs Officer). There is a lot of evidence that women are raising their voices on the matter of project selection or implementation, women related issues⁷, planning and budgeting, law and order situation and other societal issues.

Consideration of Voices

Respondents were asked how far their voices were heard in the decision-making process. The study found that 78% of respondents stated ‘yes’ they were heard (45% acknowledged that they were ‘always’ heard, 33% said ‘sometimes’). On the other hand, 22% respondents stated that their opinions were never addressed by the Parishad. According to them, the UZC, being the supreme authority, acted without attention to their ideas and views. Most of their propositions remained unheard due to his (UZC) unwillingness and arrogance. Some stated that MP was in a similar position to decide about the project selection and implementation.

⁷Women related issues include awareness building against child marriage, dowries, violence against women, rape, acid throwing, eve-teasing, adolescent health, lactating mother care etc.

The 33% of respondents who said that ‘sometimes’ their voices were heard said that they still had to push and bargain consistently until getting the issues actioned. It may be an example that voices really matter but that merely speaking may not be enough.



To cross-check the (78%) responses of the FVCs, they were asked to give an example of an incident or a project, which she proposed in the Parishad and that was accepted and implemented accordingly. All of the respondents whose voice had been considered by the Parishad were able to give examples in support of their answers.

Moreover, there are instances where the ‘bargaining capacity’ of women has increased and been enhanced. Women are consistently raising voices, bargaining and negotiating with the power structure until they reach their targets, as the case study shows:

Case study-2

A Vice-Chair from Dhaka district proposed a project (financial year 2017-2018) for arrangement of training for the poor, helpless women in all UPs of the Upazila. Recently they had got the JICA project fund. She put forward a proposal to arrange training for 60 women and proposed that, after completion of the training, the successful participants would be awarded sewing machines. But the Chair did not agree with her proposal. The Chair argued that there were lots of other problems that they needed to address. Then she reminded the Chair that their Upazila Parishad had

got the JICA⁸ fund project as a result of her action. In order to get a JICA project, each Upazila must fulfil some criteria. One of these criteria was the meetings of standing committees. She told the Chair that he could not deny her demand as she had performed her duties and responsibilities in the standing committee sincerely and that's why the Upazila was enlisted for granting the fund of JICA project. In the meeting she was supported by the UNO and the Upazila Engineer. Although the Chair did not really agree, he could not deny her demand. Finally, the project was implemented under her leadership.

However, this is not the scenario in every case. The following case study is an example of how an FVC was disappointed in spite of her repeated efforts to get a project implemented. .

Case Study-3

A Vice-Chair of Rajshahi had been elected as female UP member for three times. Now for two times, she had been the Vice-Chair and serving the people of the locality. In Chamarga Union, in her nearest village, a road was broken. There was no ongoing project with which it could be reconstructed. But if the issue was not addressed urgently, the damage would get worse. Later, the cost would be higher. So, she addressed the issue at the monthly meeting and proposed to take immediate initiative from the revenue fund of the Parishad, as they had a big revenue fund. All the members of the monthly meetings knew the importance of the issue but no one paid heed to her. She raised her voice on the issue continuously. She said, "Being women, how many times can I go to the UNO (the UZC was sick) to talk about the issue personally? He is always busy with lot of work. When he does not understand me, I feel very upset. My position is like water on the arum leaf which will fall down with a little shake. I want to do something for the people around me. We are not ornaments to keep in the showcase to present. We need fresh air to breathe."

Despite her eloquent metaphors, the FVC did not get the road repaired. It appears from the above analysis that women are not always being heard. To make them heard; sometimes they need to bargain, push consistently and keep the pressure

⁸ JICA-Japan International Co-operation Agency (Japan's "foreign aid") which is supporting Bangladesh government to accelerate sustainable economic growth with equity and bringing people out of poverty towards becoming a middle income county.

on behind the scenes.

Some respondents (45%) stated that they are being always heard. They may be lucky in having the right Chair and male members or they may have good relations with local Party leaders and/or the Member of Parliament. According to Kabeer (2005), these FVCs are powerful not empowered. It is because empowerment is a process. Perhaps they were never disempowered. There are women in Bangladesh who were born into politically-powerful families and inherit power.

The two women Prime Ministers of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina (1996-2001, 2009 -) Begum Khaleda Zia (1991-1996, 2001-2007) inherited power. Sheikh Hasina's father, when she was born, was just finishing his Bachelor of Arts degree in Calcutta, the son of a rural court clerk. Later, he became the leader of the Awami League, winner of the 1970 general election and finally leader of the revolution which made Bangladesh independent of Pakistan: "the father of the nation." When her father was assassinated as President of Bangladesh in 1975, Sheikh Hasina was in West Germany and the military Government did not allow her to return. She took refuge in India, until 1981, when she was allowed to return to Bangladesh as leader of her father's Awami League, a position she has held since then. Khaleda Zia was a 15 year old village girl who married a young Captain, age 24, in the Pakistan Army, named Ziaur Rahman. Her husband later rose to chief of staff of the Bangladesh Army and, in 1975, took leadership of the nation. When her husband, as President of Bangladesh, was assassinated in 1981, Khaleda became vice-leader of his Bangladesh Nationalist Party. When the Party leader was removed in a military coup the next year, Khaleda became leader, where she has been since. In their Parties, their power is supposedly unlimited. The love of everyone in their Parties for their famous deceased family members still shines around them, blinding all critics. Their voice is always heard and most often it is the only voice heard. Yet they are quite typical Bangladeshi political women: there is no one else like them in the country on any level.

On the other hand, some respondents reported that they were heard sometimes. For implementing their decisions they had to bargain and maintain informal pressure. It is noted that the bargaining ability of women and its impact in decision-making process is becoming more effective and more necessary. In a male-dominated society, it is expected that 'women's voice' will not be easily accepted. Women have to shout loudly or whisper and sulk a lot: but they will be heard if they do not keep silent. Women will need to push or bargain for establishing their voice consistently.

So, what is important here is that, although the number is not high, some women are 'challenging the power structure' successfully and making a difference. 'Knowledge', 'skill' and 'capability' of elected FVCs have increased and that has started to make a difference. Such capacity-building bring confidence in women politicians generally, silently trashing the common stereotype that they are all 'incapable', 'inefficient' and 'irresponsible'. However, during discussions with some UZP Chairs, UNOs and officials, even they had to admit that women had achieved sufficient knowledge and skill to speak effectively and make valuable contributions in the decision-making of Parishads.

Of course, when some women stated that they were heard sometimes, it means that women's voices were considered at least sometimes. It does not mean that their propositions are always getting priority while decisions are taken, nor are men's. But it is no longer true that women's voices are totally ignored in the decision-making process of UZPs and that is real progress.

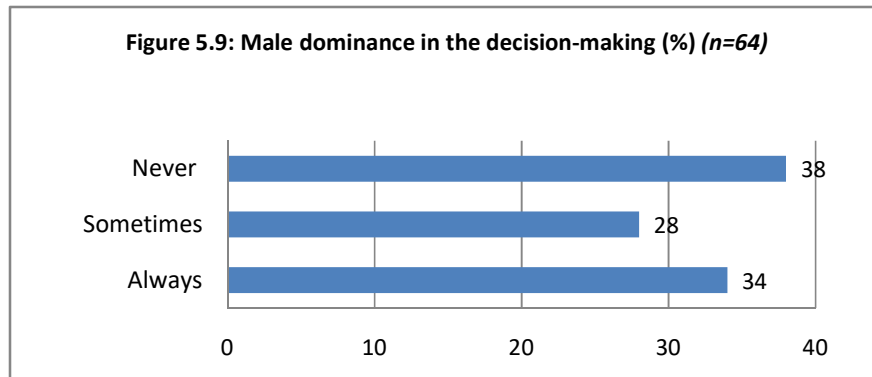
5.4 Socio-cultural Factors: Decision-making

5.4.1 Extent of Male Dominance In Decision-making: Perception of FVCs

In this study, male domination is considered as a set of social norms that may affect the participation in decision-making of FVCs. To know the level of male domination and its behavioural pattern, FVC's were asked the following questions:

Do you feel that male office bearers tend to dominate the decision-making process of Upazila Parishads?

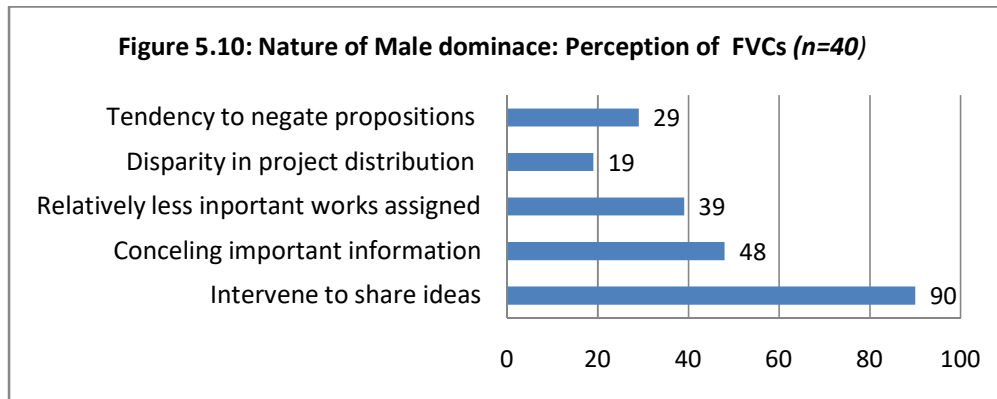
What type of male dominance do you feel from your colleagues in decision-making?



Data in Figure 5.9 reveals that about 38% of surveyed FVCs never felt that men were dominating their UZP's decision-making processes. Yet almost an equal number, 34% of FVCs, felt that there was a high level of male dominance in the decision-making of their UZPs. Thus, 62% FVCs are facing male dominance either 'always' or 'sometimes' in the existing UZP set up. The obvious conclusion is that UZP decision-making is still usually a male-dominated process.

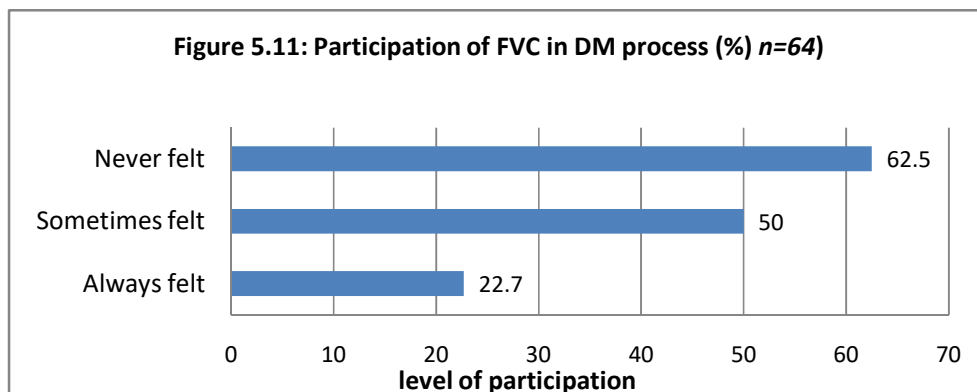
5.4.2 Nature of male dominance

Those who said that their UZP decision-making was male-dominated explained that the male members do not share ideas, they conceal information and they give the FVCs less-important tasks to carry out. Even they are intervened during sharing important ideas. In summary, it is exactly a male dictatorship in UZP that keeping women out while decision-making.



5.4.3 Socio-culture context: Does it matter in decision-making?

Despite male-dominance of the process, Figure 5.11 suggests that the respondents (38%, n=22) who never felt that they were in a gender-unequal environment, had been able to influence decision-making (62.5%) of Parishad more than the respondents (34%) who were always in male dominance. Thus, the tendency figures out that “lesser the male domination, better the performance in decision-making.



The result of a Chi-square test also finds the variance of male domination and women’s engagement to be significant at 0.05 levels. This means that male domination significantly influencing women’s engagement in decision-making. While the correlation between male domination and women’s participation in

decision-making is ($r=-0.318$), a negative relationship, indicating that an increase of male domination will reduce the engagement of FVCs in decision-making.

The statistical findings have similarity with the findings of the qualitative data. During in-depth interviews, some statements of FVCs reflected picture in the quantitative data. One FVC from Rajshahi district disclosed how she felt upset trying to get action to materialise.

“For getting projects approved, I have to visit the UNO or UZC several times. Sometimes, I have to wait hours to speak to them privately, before the meeting. Why don't they understand that I feel disappointed having to do that? How long do I have to sit around waiting for them, just because I am a woman?”

Another Vice-Chair, who was a lecturer in a non-government college, asserted that the women members were facing ‘subordination’, ‘marginalization’, and ‘discrimination’ in their daily lives:

There is always male domination, inside the house and outside the house. Everywhere I need to go, first I have to wait for permission. In Parishad, UZC and some officials do not care about me and even consider me as incapable of doing anything. Sometimes, I hear people saying “Parishads do not need female representatives. They are just like ornaments of the Parishad.

The following case study is an example of male domination in the Parishad, which illustrates how women are treated by their male counterparts. An FVC was challenged for being a woman. To her, male colleagues were reactionary, conservative and vindictive.

Case study-4

A Vice-Chair in Rajshahi district, after completing her master's from National University, wanted to start her career as a teacher. But her husband did not let her do it. After some years, her husband told her to participate in the election for the position of FVC. She did not agree, but

her husband told her that it was the decision of his political Party. . She contested as directed and won in that election. After the election, as per rule there was the issue of selecting panel Chairs -1 & 2. The UNO requested her personally, saying “Apa (sister), don’t go for election. Let us offer the position of Panel chair-1 for the Vice-Chair who is male”. She disagreed with the then-UNO and told him that she was elected by vote. So, if the majority of the members wanted, she could become Panel Chair-1. Eventually she got the majority vote and was elected as Panel Chair-1. Then, after one and half years, the Chair died after suffering six months. Then it became the duty of the UNO to send a letter to the Ministry asking that the Chair’s financial power be bestowed on Panel-1. The FVC told the UNO to do it quickly but the UNO told her that as he was only an in-charge (temporary) UNO, it would not be right for him to write such an important letter to the Ministry. But at night, suddenly, a meeting was called by the UNO and a decision was taken that, as the FVC was a woman and the Upazila was adjacent to City Corporation area, it would not be possible for a woman Vice-Chair to act as acting Chair. So, they planned to change Panel 1. After the meeting, the letter embodying this decision was sent to the Ministry with the recommendation of the DC. Within a very short time, the male Vice-Chair was appointed acting Chair by the Minister. When the FVC asked the UNO and male VC, “Why do you think I can’t be the Chair? Why are you ignoring my capacity as an FVC, as our Prime Minister is a female”. After becoming the Chair, the male VC began to behave roughly with her. When she proposed to implement a project, the acting Chair rejected her proposal. Then she went to the High Court and filed a Writ Petition against the Ministry regarding the change of Panel-1 to exclude her. The court asked the Ministry why they thought that a woman could not perform the duty of a UZC? The court asked why they tried to humiliate a woman and ignore her capacity? As per the court decision of the Writ Petition, the FVC became the acting Chair of the Upazila. All was going well then. The male Vice-Chair and UNO said ‘sorry’ to the FVC for what they had done. From then on, they all worked well together and had a good relationship with MP, Vice-Chair, UNO and other line department officials.

However, this is not the overall situation of Bangladesh. There are examples where a different situation was found.

Case-study-5

One Vice-Chair stated that she never felt discriminated in doing her duties at Parishad. UZC and UNO both were very active and caring for her. In project selection meetings, there was no hide and seek. All projects were selected on the basis of the Five Year Plan. Projects were equally distributed among them, so that they could implement and monitor equally. In the 2017-2018 financial year, the FVC had already completed one project from ADP funds and the other two projects (TR) had been already passed in the Parishad meetings. She felt that male domination could not affect decision-making if UZC and FVC possessed knowledge about existing rules and acted accordingly.

However, some FVCs were unhappy with their positions in UZPs, as one FVC from Rajshahi district explained:

Upazila Parishad is just like the in-laws' house. As in the in-law's house, to get any little thing, a woman ought to shed tears. To get all their rights, women had to cry rivers.

Thus, the qualitative data of this current study also support the statistical data and suggest that male domination significantly constrains women agency, whether or not they feel it and even though they could defeat it with great effort.

Panday (2011), in a study on local government, found that, due to paternalistic and discriminatory attitudes of male representatives, women's role in local governance has been marginalised. In fact, these groups are the majority. They believe that men enter LGIs by merit and popularity and women enter LGIs only by Government privilege: a women's quota that has given women an unfair free ride into office (Mukhopadhyaya, 2003).

A study under UNDP, conducted by Aminuzzaman et al., (2017), also found that the attitudes of male members in some cases created constraints for women's participation.

Thus, a conclusion can be drawn that gender norms and attitudes are key aspects of institutional structure that shape women's empowerment. Male domination prevails in local government institutions and affects decision-making participation

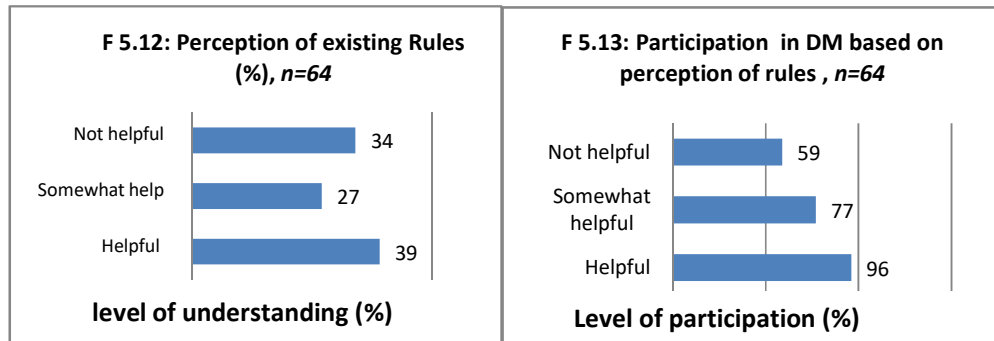
of women representatives in various forms. In most cases, the effects are not formally expressed but come out in words and acts, in the behavioural patterns of male office bearers.

5.5 Rules, Laws and their Implications

Formal laws and policies are enacted by the State. Sometimes, they originate from international treaties, conventions, sometimes from local government authorities.

However, it is rules and regulations which are the key factors to strengthen and constrain women’s voices. In this study, the understanding of Acts and Rules from the respondents’ perspective is highlighted. At first, this study aims at finding out the respondents’ understanding of the existing rules and acts.

From Figure 5.12, below, it is found that 39% of respondents considered the existing rules and laws as ‘helpful’ for executing their duties, 27% perceived them as ‘somewhat helpful’ whereas 34% took them as ‘not helpful’.



Now, the study would like to find out whether the understanding of existing rules has any effect on engagement in decision-making or vice versa. Figure 5.13, above, demonstrates that of the respondents who considered rules and laws as ‘helpful’ 96% had been engaged in decision-making. The people who stated ‘somewhat helpful’ among them 77% and who felt ‘not helpful’ among them 59% been engaged in decision-making. Thus, it can be concluded that those who rated existing acts as helpful, participated better than those who rated them as ‘somewhat helpful’ or ‘not helpful’.

The result of a Chi-square test also finds the variance of understanding of rules and women's engagement to be significant at 0.05 levels. This means that understanding of rules significantly influencing women's engagement in decision-making. While the correlation between them is ($r=0.309$), a positive relationship, indicating that an increase of understanding will increase the engagement of FVCs in decision-making.

The following case study is an example of how acts and rules had become a source of empowerment for the FVC. FVCs were able to challenge the power structure due to their knowledge of rules and laws.

Case Study -6

A Vice-Chair of Rajshahi District in the 2017-2018 financial year stated that, when she tried to implement her proposed project, UNO and UZC told her that she would not be able to implement the project through PIC⁹ and she needed to follow a tender process. It would not be lawful to implement the project through PIC. Upazila Chair and UNO both were determined in their position. They both declared in the open meeting that there was no way except by tender process. Respondent told both of them "How can you say this? Don't you read the Upazila Parishad Manual? What a VC can do is clearly written there". But UZC and UNO were not convinced with her words. Then she brought out the manual from her bag, which she always carried with her. She opened it to the related page no 105 of the manual and then let them see what was written there. Both UNO and UZC checked the manual and became quiet. They approved her project to be implemented under PIC. UZC told, "UNO saheb, Baby (nickname) carries the Manual with her always. We won't be able to keep her in darkness anymore". After that UZC and UNO both listened to her attentively when she was talking about any law-related issues. She affirmed that this event had been a memorable event in her life, which gave her mental strength.

⁹PIC means Project Implement Committee

Thus, a clear conception of Rules and Acts seem to influence decision-making of FVC in UZP activities. One FVC stated the influence in the following way:

It's my second time as FVC in Parishad. In my first term, I could not keep pace with a male (male office bearers) in the Parishad. Now I know the law, policy and how to implement any task I need to complete.

Such data were well-supported by the UNOs and UZCs during the interviews. They considered FVCs as now more knowledgeable and careful of Rules and Acts.

Why were some FVCs considering existing Rules and Acts as helpful? Field data (section 5.3.1) showed that, during the 2017-2018 financial year, among the different types of Funds sourced, most of the FVC's were engaged in implementing projects from the ADP Fund. This was apparently because of a Circular of the Local Government Ministry. The Circular (46.45.020.09.06.006.2015-580 dated 31 May, 2015, Local Government Division (see in Annex-VIII) articulated that up to 3% of ADP funds would be allocated to Women Development Forum (WDF) for the development of women and backward people of the Upazila. This Circular helped many respondents to speak for or demand their share of these funds for their constituents. The Circular constituted empowerment for women members to access the ADP Fund. As Kabeer (2011) states "law is an important source of working women to improve their working condition".

The FVCs (34%) who rated negatively about the Rules and Acts asked if a Chair would not allocate "3% of ADP Fund", to the WDF, as provided in the Circular, what would be the remedy. They claimed that it was not articulated clearly in the Circular. Here lies a 'scope for misusing the law' by the powerful actors (Kabbeer, 2005). Laying aside the possible remedy of a Writ Petition, in fact, the Rules and Acts do not change anything: they create a possibility for action which women members must be well-informed, assertive and persuasive enough to use in the UZP debates to get opponents to change their positions.

Moreover, the respondents felt that the existing Rules and other regulations had “inconsistency” with overlapping mandates. In this regard, they stated that Rules and Acts were effective but they were not implemented properly. For this kind of “scofflaw” behaviour, UZPs had very limited accountability. This implied that there was a gap between what was written in paper and what was actually being practiced. Again, law is not magic: it is a weapon.

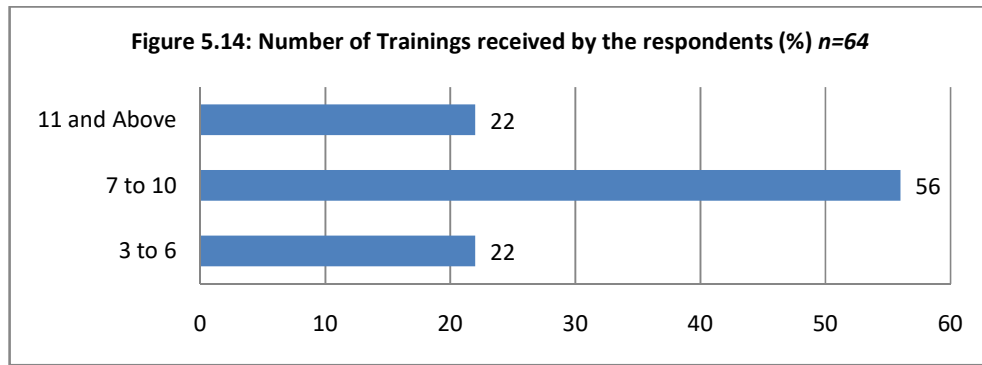
However, about half of the total respondents considered Rules and Acts as “not helpful” on the ground that “existing rules and acts offer supreme power to the Chair”. Although, according to the Rules, a majority of the members of UZP can overrule the Chair’s decision, in reality, it was not happening. Power relations are not changed by Rules and Acts.

5.6 Transformation in Women: Capacity building perspectives

FVCs were asked “Does the capacity of an FVC matter in the decision-making process?” Following the theory of Naila Kabeer as a guide on women’s agency, the study selected three parameters: training, motivation and education. It is important to note that, as educational attainment is considered a part of agency building and also of demography, this study will try to analyze the impact of education to increase knowledge and skill of the FVC (Section 5.7).

5.6.1 Training provided to FVCs and its Effectiveness

Figure 5.14 below shows that all the respondents had received at least 3-6 training courses during their tenure. Among the respondents, 56% received 7-10 courses and 22% received more than 10 courses up to data collection time. The majority of the respondents had access to 7-10 courses. It is likely that these female representatives had received sufficient training.



Annex- VII shows the specifics of the training courses which respondents received.

Effectiveness of trainings:

To know the effectiveness of the training, the respondents were given a measurement scale to rate them.

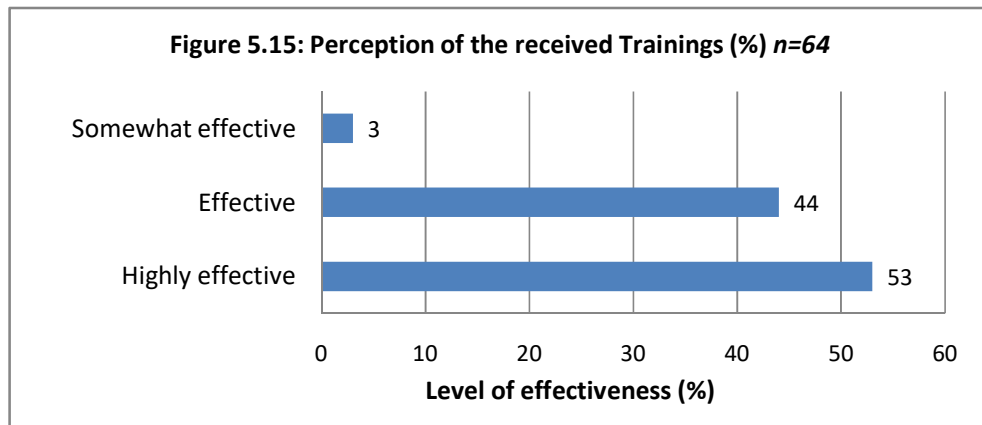
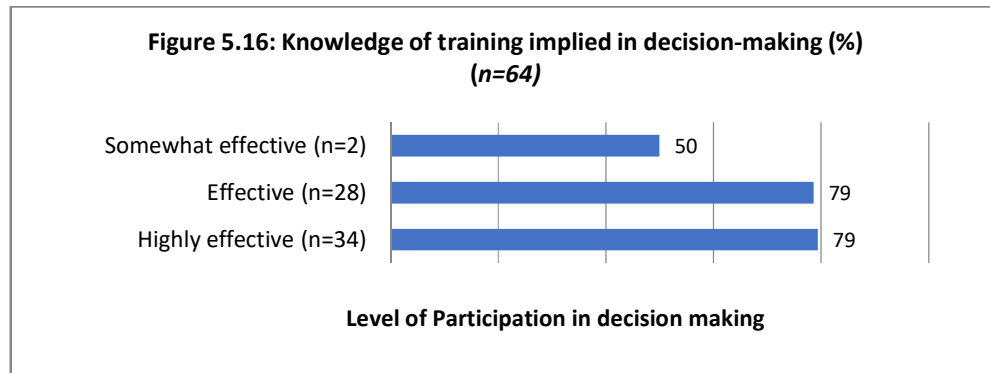


Figure 5.16 shows that around 53 percent of the respondents considered training to be 'highly effective' in performing their roles and duties and 44% of them rated training as 'effective'. Only 3% of them considered training as 'somewhat effective'. It is interesting to note that nobody rated the trainings as 'ineffective'.



Data show that the respondents (53%) who considered training as ‘highly effective’, among them 79% participated in decision-making and of those who rated training as ‘effective’ 79% of them were decision-makers. This indicates that training is effective and had impact in their daily duties. However, one FVC stated during interview:

I never missed the training. Training increased my knowledge and skill. I think these courses create scope for us to share our understanding with other FVCs. It gives a chance to enhance networking among the FVCs around the country.

Training can enhance knowledge and skill of the women representatives. With such knowledge, they can participate in and influence the decision-making process better than before. As one UZP Chair commented about the FVC of his Upazila.

We both are elected for the second time. I found her (FVC) more knowledgeable, skilled, experienced and capable than before she was (first time as FVC). Trainings may be one of the causes for her capacity development.

To validate the responses, perceptions of key informants were triangulated. Besides this, in discussion with some influential actors like UNO, UZC, and line department officials’, perceptions about the performance of FVCs were sought.

So, from their views, we may infer that there were some ‘capable and active’ FVCs, who were engaged in UZP activities and utilizing their skills and knowledge.

The majority of them expressed positive views regarding the capacity of the FVCs in conducting committee meetings, project selection and implementation, reducing violence against women, child marriage and other societal issues.

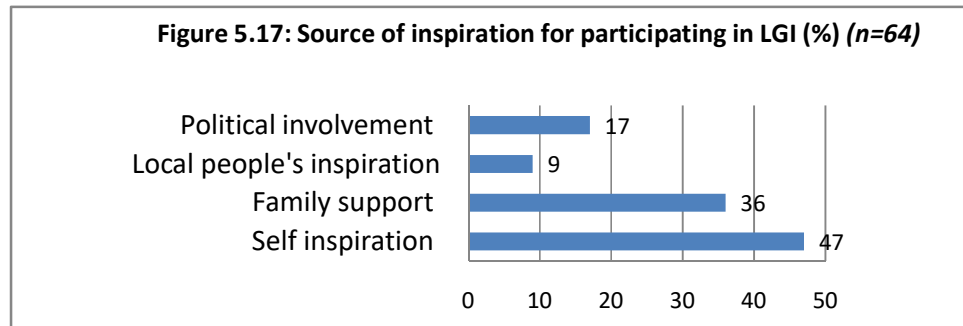
Thus, in considering the views of those influential actors of UZP, it is assumed that the training courses were the 'valuable resources' for them to enhance their capacity. They were ultimately able to apply training in their UZP activities effectively. After receiving training, they understood their roles and responsibilities, UZP Acts and Rules better, which ultimately enhanced their 'bargaining and negotiating capacity' for getting things approved or done.

From the analysis, it seems that most of the respondents perceived training as an asset/resource that helped FVCs to increase their knowledge and skill. Some respondents, who had rated training as 'effective' or 'highly effective', had not seemed to be able to utilise the knowledge from training in decision-making. Perhaps, they did not have the congenial atmosphere or opportunity in the Parishad be listened to and given serious consideration when they tried to utilize their knowledge from training. Maybe the UZC and other male members did not pay due attention to their ideas and proposals.

5.6.2 Motivation and Aspiration in Decision-making

To understand the level of motivation of female Vice-Chairs, the respondents were asked, "*What are the factors that inspired them to participate in the decision-making?*" Multiple options were offered as per the Table below. In this study, 'motivation' refers to self-inspiration of the FVC to participate in decision-making bodies. Motivation must not only be sufficient to inspire women to contest seats and be elected but also sufficient to speak and take action when they are in office. It takes more motivation to react to discrimination, to steer proposals through hostile groups of opponents, to persuade "brick walls" and to keep pushing until one sees an effect, than to waive the flag and make speeches at election rallies. In fact, one criticism about the reformed UZP system for women is that it is too easy to get elected and too difficult not to give up after a short time

in a hostile place. It takes a powerhouse lady to keep the momentum going.



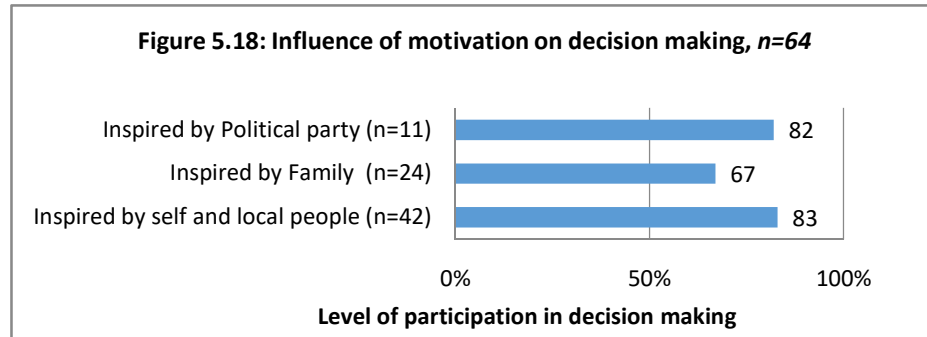
According to the above Figure 5.17, the majority of respondents (47%) agreed that self-inspiration was the driving factor that motivated them to reach their present position. 36% of respondents were also inspired by their family members: especially by their husbands. 17% of the respondents were inspired by their political Party to stand for their office. On the other hand, 9% of respondents claimed that they were inspired by local people.

Self-motivation, determination and the support of local people can cause a great change in one's personal or social life. It becomes a source of inspiration to strive for the betterment of the locality. As one FVC stated how she got involved with the UZP election and its further activities, being motivated.

After being elected, one newspaper reported me in headlines "Maid is FVC too!" Due to self-inspiration and local people's love for me, I am now in this position. I meet the officials personally to remind them of the committee meetings.

-A Female Vice-Chair from Rajshahi District

Data of Figure 5.18 below show that respondents who were inspired by themselves as well as by the local people had greater participation in decision-making (83%). On the other hand, people who were politically-involved previously participated more (82%). Thus, self- inspiration, local people's encouragement and political involvement strengthened participation of respondents in decision-making process.



The following case study is an example of how a woman, being self-motivated, participated in LGIs and with such motivation how she performed in the Parishad.

Case study-7

A Vice-Chair of Rajshahi District commented “Maid Becomes Vice-Chair Too”, was published in the local newspaper when she was elected as a Female Vice-Chair. It was true that once she had worked as a maid for five years in people’s houses because those were her bad days. Her husband had worked on other people’s land. It was difficult for him to maintain the family alone. So, she started working on other people’s houses as a maid. At night, she used to sew designed *katha* (bed covers) to support her family. Soon she formed a women’s group in her locality that sewed *kathas*. Within a very short time, she became famous for her handiworks. When she found herself a bit financially more solvent, she started a business to provide food for the patients at the Upazila Health Complex. Her elder son had already completed a BSc in Engineering from RUET (Rajshahi University Of Engineering and Technology). Soon, people of the locality, started to see her as their confidant. When she took the decision to participate in the Upazila elections, she did not get the nomination from her desired Party. She was not disappointed by the decision of the political Party and participated in the election as an independent candidate. She got a huge vote from the people, which made her confident. When she stood for re-election, the political leaders came to the Upazila to give her their nomination. This time, the people of the locality wanted her as a Chair of the Parishad. Every two months, she personally visited line department officials and told them to call meetings of the Standing Committee. It was due to her performance in the committee meetings that they got the JICA fund for the development of the Upazila. Only two Upazilas of Rajshahi district had got a fund of 25 lakhs under this project. Her Upazila stood first in terms of performance of Standing Committee meetings regularly.

To validate the response of the FVCs, data were triangulated. Regarding the motivation of FVCs in UZP activities, some UNOs and Line Department officials expressed their opinions positively. They acknowledged that FVCs regularly participated in UZP or any other meetings called. Some officials like Upazila Engineers and PIOs (Project Implementation Officer) rated their project implementation activity as better than those implemented by VCs and UZCs. Thus, motivation made them confident in their participation and enhanced their capacity. As one UNO who served in two Upazilas at different times stated that:

FVCs are motivated and sincere in performing committee meetings of UZP. In many cases, they always keep the officials aware of timely meetings and keep themselves engaged in other societal activities. When they are involved in project implementation, they are seen to visit the projects frequently. That's why the quality of their implemented projects is better compared with their colleagues".

A study conducted by Julia Moin (2012) at different levels of women representatives in LGIs (Union Parishad and City-corporation) at Rajshahi found that self inspiration is the stimulant in their participation. Another study conducted by Panday (2013) on women representatives of Rajshahi and Sunamganj districts found the same view that women representatives being motivated and having received training were performing well in UP activities. Thus, the conclusion can be drawn that self-inspiration and involvement with local people and political will expedites participation in decision-making process.

From the above discussion and analysis, it may appear that women (47%) are entering into the political offices by their own inspiration. In a patriarchal society, women are choosing their path themselves and keeping their choices first. It can be considered as a step ahead towards empowerment. They are considered as the forerunners to other women and the role model of their own community. They are confident in expressing their voice and make the Parishad convinced to take action.

A good number of women (36%) were also inspired by family members especially, by their husbands who were in most cases actively involved in politics. Its possible explanation may be that people tend to keep in touch with power structure. So, the politician husbands inspired their wives, to a great extent, to be involved in the power structure. Most of the respondents were simple housewives before entering into political arena. It is interesting that husband's are now inspiring their wives more. It may indicate that males are now accepting their wives as political leaders. Maybe the attitude of the males in the house has been to some extent changed, although in the Parishad they are victim of male domination in different ways.

17% of women entered LGIs due to their commitment to political Parties that made them involved with the decision-making bodies. Only 8% were involved in societal activities before being elected. It means that they (8%) possessed good leadership quality and also have acceptance to the locality.

This study also considers motivation in participating in committee meetings and in project implementation. In section (5.3.1) out of 64 respondents 94% respondents acknowledged that they were conducting those meetings regularly. Some were rewarded with (JICA) project funds due to their excellent performance.

Motivation of an FVC can be found by their project implementation status. Field data (see Table 1& 2 in Annex IX) show that, in the 2017-2018 financial year, on average each FVC proposed 3.34 projects and on an average they implemented 2.24 projects. These include those funded by ADP, Kabikha, TR, Revenue and others. With motivation, they raised voice and pushed their demands consistently until things got done. This was because of their motivation that kept them striving towards fulfil their choice.

Thus, motivation is a driving force that can make a woman more confident and effective in the development activities and decision-making processes. Personal motivation is a crucial variable especially for engagement in local government, where women are considered less motivated because of different pressures. With

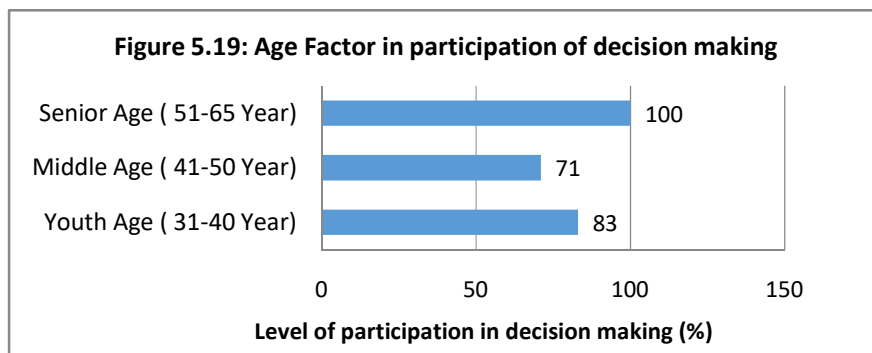
motivation and determination, women can reach the highest levels in the political positions. It is believed that, with the right combination of knowledge and motivation, women can involve themselves in community activities as well as decision-making process to a great extent. They can bargain and pursue their choice and interest until those are fulfilled.

5.7 Impact of Socio-demographic Features in Decision-making

In this study, as demographic features like age, educational attainment, marital status, and their family size have been considered.

5.7.1 Age factor in decision-making

Empirical data of Figure 5.19 reveal that comparatively lower age group (31-40) years and relatively older (51-65) years appear to have higher level of participation in the decision-making process. The middle age group (41-50) years were less participatory in decision making process. Data suggest that older and younger respondents are more active in participating in decision-making process at UZP.



In discussion with KII, it is found that the youth/young aged people have more access to information, have better networks with peers, enthusiasm and vigour that instigate them to involve themselves actively in decision-making process. On the other hand, seniors have more motivation in the same process.

Being relatively older, it is likely that elders are participating for the last time. This may make them more serious and knowledgeable about UZP activities and more

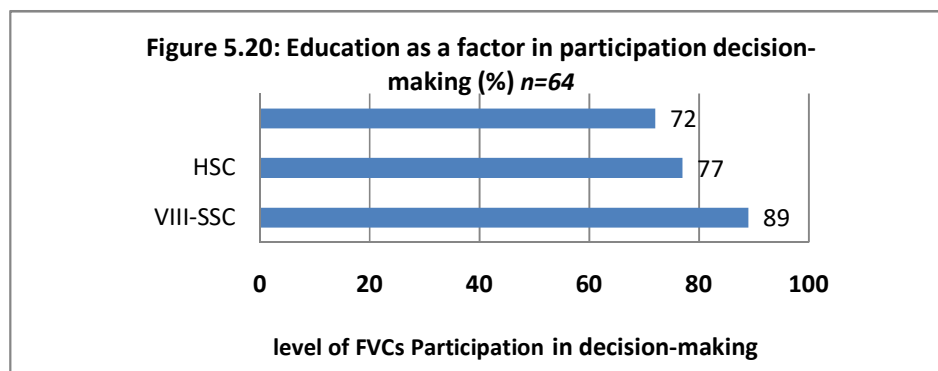
vocal, not worried about losing anything. Moreover, in the society of Bangladesh, senior people are usually respected and it is likely that when, in Parishad, such a senior raised voice or shared opinions, nobody would dare to oppose due to social values.

A study conducted in Ethiopia by Muhammed (2017) found that comparatively senior women are more involved in local councils than the young ones. It may be that in middle age, people are likely to be more compromising, bear the tendency to avoid risks, more cautious to speak against the prevailing social system. This study has similarity in the context of Bangladesh.

From the analysis, it seems that age is a factor that influences the participation/engagement in decision in Upazila Parishad. Experience and knowledge vary from young and adult due to age. So, it can be assumed that age level might cause a remarkable difference for engagement in decision-making.

5.7.2 Educational Attainment and Engagement in Decision-making

Figure 5.20 shows that 72% among the participants who had higher degrees participated in decision-making whereas 89% of the respondents with academic qualifications from class VIII to SSC participated in decision making process at Parishad. The empirical data revealed that the respondents, who had higher level of education, were less participatory in decision-making process. Moreover, it is surprisingly found that the higher the level of educational attainment, the lower the engagement in decision-making.



Why are highly educated women less participatory? Does education matter in decision-making? It is expected that a highly-educated person will understand Rules, Laws and Acts better than those who have a minimum level of education and perform better. One possible explanation of this strange result is that education is likely to increase self-esteem. They may consider themselves above common practices of everyday affairs at UZP. It is because, the respondents have already reported that they need to bargain consistently to have their ideas duly addressed. Sometimes, they need to keep in touch with the actors and need to care for them. It seems that an educated woman having strong self-esteem, self-ego might feel humiliated at having to bargain with UZC and UNO.

However, case studies and in-depth discussion with the FVCs reveal that they are 'concerned', 'worried', and 'self-guarded' as regards their 'self-respect'. They tend to feel humiliated by the 'refusal', 'dishonoured', and 'mal-treatment' by the male dominated office set-up. Educated women might be more effective in participation but might more clearly perceive how difficult it would be. Blissfully-ignorant less-educated women plough on, unaffected by the likelihoods.

Another possible explanation may be in the rural context, women from the well-off families generally get the opportunity of 'higher education' *"in the hope of getting a dignified life, becoming a good mother, good wife and so on"*¹⁰. They may have passed but not been so well-educated because they did not try very hard. Due to the solvency of their parents, they do not have to go through hardship in life. In spite of being highly-educated, most of the time they do not have their voice regarding major family decisions which consequently keep them aloof from major decision-makings at family level, resulting in 'disempowerment thinking'.

¹⁰ Observation drawn from the interview with local gender expert & prominent Professor of Dhaka University, Dr. Sadeka Halim.

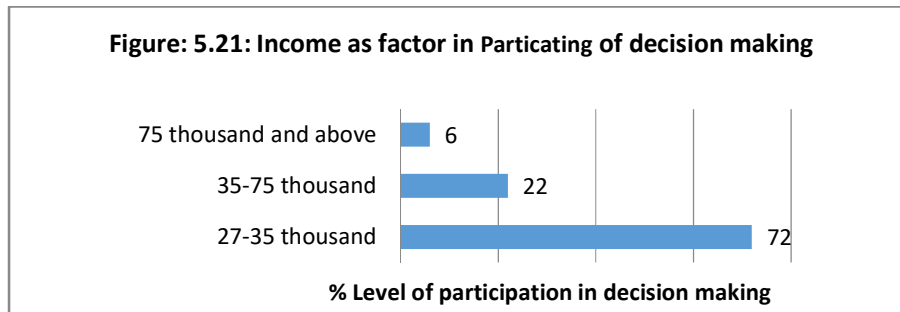
Moreover, when¹¹ these highly-educated women come to play the role of the local representatives at UZP, they lag behind in comparison to those less-educated women who entered into the political process from the grass root level (having experiences as UP women representatives). The higher-educated women generally enter into the UZP as women representatives only to please their family. They avail the role of the local representatives at the UZP because they nourish the dream of becoming MPs (for reserved seats) of the respective constituencies. These highly-educated women representatives fail to use their influence because they do not care to. Less-educated representatives need more, for themselves and their constituents who are like them, so they work hard to get it.

Some literature argues that education increases political participation. Education is a stimulant to increase skills and knowledge that are needed for their participation (Lenz, 2010) and it also increases their civic skills necessary to communicate and organize effectively (Brady et al., 1995). Again, they have the capacity but do they want to use it? It comes down to why they are there. If only to satisfy their fathers or husband, or a political Party, they have no reason to try.

5.7.3 Income and Engagement in Decision-making

Figure 5.21 reflects that the respondents who have income within the range of 27,000-35,000 BDT 72% are able to influence decision-making of the Parishad. On the other hand, respondents who belong to 75 thousand and above income group, are less participatory. Empirical data reveal that low-income group respondents seem to have participated better in decision-making process.

¹¹Observation drawn from the interview with local gender expert & prominent, Professor of Dhaka University, Dr. Salma Akhter



Similarly other demographic variables like marital status and family size seem to have no influence on decision-making (see-Annex IX).

The explanation here is the same as for education. Rich representatives have more capacity to influence decision-making but less reason to try. Poor representatives need the UZP more, for themselves and their constituents. In fact, the correlation is logical because, in Bangladesh, one does not get a lot of education if one does not have a lot of money.

5.8 Pattern of Participation: Factors affecting decision-making

The study examines and analyses several factors that affect decision-making of women representatives at LGIs. These factors have been analysed from two perspectives: institutional and individual (agency). In this study, both factors seem to play influential roles affecting decision-making processes in the rural context of Bangladesh. This study also examines some demographic factors to determine their influence in this regard.

5.8.1 Institutional structures Affecting Decision-making

Institutional structures are social arrangements of formal and informal rules, practices which enable and constrain women's participation in LGIs. Formal rules and policies are important for the participation of women in political offices. As we have seen, they can give unanswerable answers to those who are trying to stop women from participating fully, if the woman understands them and can articulate their application.

Rules define the role of women as well as offer them certain level of authority to exercise or govern others. Government have formulated the Local Government

(UZP) Act, 2009 to ensure that UZPs have a critical mass of women: through the reservation of 30% seats for women. According to the Acts, the women's roles are defined. Moreover, to enhance their participation Government have, from time to time, issued many circulars: women representatives will allocate 25% of the ADP fund; 3% of ADP will be allocated to WDF and implemented by women leaders, etc. These types of institutional support expedite women's participation.

On the other hand, it is necessary to look at what happens in practice when the Acts and Rules are implemented. This Act has created some scope that can easily exclude women from decision-making process. In English, there is an old proverb: "The Lord giveth, so the Lord taketh away". It means that God can give someone everything, so God can take everything he or she has. It is true of Governments too. The Act empowers women but at times also disempowers them.

With regards to the scheme selection meetings at UZP, due to the quorum system, women face challenges to get involved in this meeting, which is considered as one of the important meetings. Quorum system does not require female participation although some circulars stated that there must be 25% women representation in project implementation.

Gender norms and mind-sets of male and female are key aspects of institutional structure. In a patriarchal society, gender norms and ideologies justify male privileges and male dominance, which constrains women's agency. In the decision-making process at UZP, women representatives face the fact that male members do not take them seriously or as important. Their capacity is ignored on the ground that they are inefficient. Important issues remain concealed from them. Their ideas are not cordially accepted by the Parishad. Due to such socio-cultural impediments, it is difficult for women to participate in LGIs.

5.8.2 Resources (Agency factors) affecting decision-making

Human resources are embodied in individuals. They encompass one's knowledge, skill, motivation, training, and educational attainment. Education and training

provide women knowledge and skill in performing their roles and responsibilities. Knowledge and skill are necessary to exercise voice and choice. The women representatives in Bangladesh have obtained such knowledge through training, formal and informal education. Motivation is another kind of resource that stimulates women to become engaged in different types of activities of UZP. The agency of women is expressed through the medium of resources.

5.8.3 Demographic factors affecting decision-making

Personal profiles, including the age, educational attainment, income, marital status, family size of the women representatives, help to develop a comprehensive idea about them. All these data, collectively, help us to understand the socio-economic background of women representatives in a comprehensive way.

In the social context of Bangladesh, a woman's identity is first determined by her husband and father. These factors may affect a woman in contesting in the election but in the case of decision-making these factors seem to have very little influence. In the same way, income has seemed to have no influence. Age is likely to affect decision-making in a different way in different stages of life. In fact, in this study, education seems to have negative influence in decision-making, which is surprising and interesting as well.

5.9 The views of Key Informants

- Participation of FVCs in UZP activities as well as decision-making level is both demand side and supply side.
- Capable and educated women are less interested and poorly patronized by the political parties to enter in to the position of general posts.
- Due to quota system, women representation has increased in LGIs.
- Education and training affect decision-making little: decision-making is very much political.
- Women representatives are more concerned about women-related issues.

- Women's tendency to fulfil their commitment is gradually increasing.
- Women are less corrupted and more careful about project implementation: so the projects under them are better implemented than those of their male colleagues. As they are naturally sincere, they monitor the ongoing projects sincerely and care whether the benefits are getting to the people or not.
- Capacity of women representatives is gradually improving.
- Women are more visible in the locality, especially in dealing with social issues, and more fluent in public speaking than before.
- The position of women in UZPs is far better than the position in the UPs because of the higher educational attainment of FVCs.
- To improve the capacity of women, some capacity building training is being provided to them.
- The political deliberations of FVCs are becoming more attractive and convincing because women are increasingly active.
- Some circulars or rules are circulated only to UZCs, UNO & Line-ministry officials, but VCs (of both genders) are neglected.
- Some FVCs are very supportive and active in participating in government activities
- Male office bearers have no confidence or trust in the capacity of FVCs. Mind-set of the UZCs, UP Chairs, UNOs and Line department officials need to be changed. FVCs also need to understand that the distribution of VGF, VGD (food and money for vulnerable groups) cards is the work of UP members but still they should monitor whether these cards are distributed properly or not.
- MPs and Party leaders most of the time only heard the males [(UZC), UNO] and take important decisions only consulting with them.
- There are some powerful (with political connections) FVCs who influence the decisions like their male counterparts in UZP.

5.10 Conclusion

The above discussions lead to the conclusion that women's participation has increased at UZP. Some space has been created for women to get involved in the

UZP activities as a whole. Being a minority at the Parishad, they are gradually becoming influential in the decision-making structure.

Still, there are some obstacles that hinder their participation. Dual role, male dominance at home, religious constraints, lack of mobility and lack of transport affect them constantly. On the other hand, very often, in their working areas, they become the victims of male dominance from the part of their male colleagues. They remain unheard and unaddressed. They also become victims of unequal project distributions and are kept in darkness by their male counterparts regarding many decision-making issues.

It is important to note that still, in such a women-unfriendly atmosphere, some women are influencing the decision-making process because they are politically powerful or capable. Some women are consistently pushing their choices and voices forward and striving to influence the decisions with their increased knowledge and skill as well as capacity, gained through training, understanding of Rules, and motivation. They are very limited in number but it means that voice does matter now and can matter more in future if it is developed.

Finally, the participation of women in the decision-making depends on Rules (which can empower FVCs with a legal framework) and the capacity (gained and increased through knowledge, education, training, skill, motivation and assets) that enable them to influence the decision-making within the socio-cultural context.

Chapter 6

Findings, Observations and Conclusion

In the preceding Chapters, an effort has been made to investigate and analyse the factors that affect women's participation in the decision-making process. This Chapter summarizes the key findings in the light of the analytical framework. It focuses on the answers to the research questions. Furthermore, based on the analysis and observation this study concludes with raising some issues for future research.

6.1 Summary of the Key Findings of the Study

With regards to women's involvement in decision-making process at LGIs (UZP) this study comes up with some interesting findings.

Finding 1: women representatives work in a strongly male-dominated and negative environment, where women are considered incapable and inefficient to carry out their jobs and responsibilities.

Male dominance in UZPs stands out to be the most significant constraint for FVC's extent of participation.

Finding 2: despite strong male dominance, women feel that some space for "voice raising", "bargaining" & "negotiation" have been created to influence the decision-making.

Raised voices of female representatives seem to have visible impact in the decision-making process. Such findings are a positive signal for a future democratic environment for women's political participation in LGIs. 20 years from now, strong, effective female leadership in the local governments of Bangladesh will look back on today's brave but clumsy pioneers, smile and say a silent "Thank you".

Finding 3: women are selecting schemes and implementing projects mostly concerning women-related issues, which mean that they are more concerned for their own community.

This is partially a result of the fact that it is the poor, less-educated FVCs who are most active: they and their constituents are in the process because they need a lot from the UZP. So they are not sitting back and thinking about what is ideal for the District as more solvent and well-educated policymakers might do. Still, through such projects' implementation, they are performing as 'role models' for the women folk. They are showing women, especially the poor who might be discouraged or disinterested, that yes, politics can get results for them. They are showing male members that they are neither inefficient nor unimportant but in fact can get action for their constituents even without benefiting male villagers. It indicates that women representatives of reserved seats are not just symbols, "tokens" or Government placeholders but real politicians doing the kind of rice-and-fish politics that defines success in rural Bangladesh.

Finding 4: technical capacity appears to be a strong stimulant for women representatives in UPZ decision- making process.

Training is the catnip of the FVCs. It gets them out from under the sofa, where they were sleeping in the daytime, and out chasing mice. Moreover, in a patriarchal society, the crucial political activity of 'project implementation' was previously considered to be a male activity that needs the kind of special and technical skill that women just do not possess. Show that women can do it, by upgrading their capacity, and 1,000 patriarchal bubbles start bursting. Men begin to question their whole concept of women and women members and actually start listening when they speak instead of rolling their eyes and staring at the ceiling.

Finding 5: women consider the existing Acts and Rules to be ‘helpful’ for their participation.

This is not to say that the Acts and Rules always empower women and never disempower them. They do both at different times. However, most of the time, conforming to formal rules in UZPs can expedite women’s participation, where, as now, the rules are purposefully empowering of women’s participation, in place of the informal norms that governed before and prevented it. Women are challenging the power structure in case of any violation of Rules and Acts which impedes them.

Finding 6: respondents consider training as their capacity-development initiatives.

They have participated in different types of training regarding existing Rules and laws. They understand now that such training is an instrument to increase their knowledge and skill to perform their roles and duties and thus gives them power. They have implemented a number of projects which they could not even understand before the training, using the managerial skills which they have acquired in training as well.

Finding 7: for this study age, income, marital status, family size seem to have no influence on decision-making process.

Although some FVCs considered them as important factors for their participation, demographics of FVCs did not seem to make a difference in practice. Of course, in the literature, social class and related attributes like age, wealth and education are considered as the most powerful means to participate and influence decision-making. Still, this study surprisingly finds no such significant link of education, for example, with decision-making impact on UZP. In fact, with education specifically the relationship is negative and with age the relationship is bowl-shaped: the youngest and the oldest are most successful, the middle-aged least so.

The problem seems to be that education gives capacity but may actually retard motivation. Motivation and capacity are necessary and sufficient conditions for UZP success but capacity without motivation cannot produce anything.

Regarding age, young FVCs have more energy, more idealism and more hunger that strongly motivate them. Older people have the high confidence that comes from experience and the knowledge that soon they will be dead and face less consequence from their advocacy. The middle-aged are conservative internationally: they have produced all they can and worry about losing it by taking any risks.

The well-educated woman, with more money and at middle age, may be in politics for social reasons or at the behest of her family or her Party. She may not care that much about the issues and may consider the rough and tumble of politics beneath her. When the poor, poorly-educated woman FVC goes to the UNO 30 times to ask for ration cards for her voters until he agrees just to get her to leave him in peace, she feels like a warrior. The well-educated, middle aged, relatively rich FVC would never do it: she would feel like a beggar.

Finding 8: motivation is the strongest driving force for the FVCs in participating as well as in engaging with development work.

Stated above: capacity without motivation produces nothing. That is a fact. Yet this study shows that very strong motivation can actually cover over shortages in capacity.

Politics is a people process, not a mathematical one. One cannot calculate capacity and then interpolate results from that. That may be the most important finding of this thesis, as it is maybe also the strangest one.

As stated in the example above, the poor, hungry, sincere FVC, short on technical capacity but determined not to let the authorities rest until she gets help for her

constituents, may render her lack of capacity irrelevant. Her motivation and awareness increase her performance level in decision-making. The quantitative data will never show it because motivation cannot be objectively quantified. Yet it is real. And that is *realpolitik* in its literal meaning.

6.2 Revisiting the Research Questions (RQs)

As mentioned in Chapter One, the objective of the research was to assess the role and function of FVCs in the decision-making process of UZPs. Three research questions were raised in the study: (i) Do the existing rules and laws have any influence on FVCs decision-making? (ii) How do socio-culture and demographic factors affect FVCs decision-making? (iii) Does the capacity of FVC matter in decision-making process?

Do the existing rules and laws matter?

It appears, from the empirical data, extraction of case studies and in-depth interviews with the key informants, that understanding of Government Rules, and practice of formal rules expedites women's participation in decision-making. They are not the whole story but they are tools. Used well by FVCs, formal rules can change the ending of the story.

The findings reveal that 39% of respondents' perceived the Government's Rules and laws to be helpful for performing their roles and duties. Those who rated rules and laws as 'helpful' are more participatory in their UZPs than those who rated them as 'not helpful'. When they know how to use these tools, they participate more, achieve more and want to participate more: so it is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Those who do not know how to use them, who perceive them as not helpful, do not use them, accomplish less and so participate less.

The key informants identified that practice of formal rules, clarity and consistency among the rules are necessary in this regard. Therefore, understanding of formal Rules and Acts and conformity with them can be an instrument for women to use to push, bargain with and challenge the power structure. It is this that lets them

influence the decision-making process. Thus, it can be the source of empowerment for women in local government.

The extent of socio-cultural and demographic factors in decision-making?

As a socio-cultural factor, the main factor identified has been male dominance in LGIs. Chi-square tests reveal that socio-cultural factors affect the decision-making of FVCs significantly. Such findings are well supported by the case studies and key informants. Moreover, some key informants identified patriarchy and its effect on the mind-sets of both male and female UZP members, UZCs and UNOs, as important issues in this regard. This study reveals that 62% of the women representatives are victims of male dominance either always or sometimes. On the other hand, this study has also found that those who never felt male dominance influenced the decision-making process to a great extent.

Does the capacity matter?

The short answer is “Yes” but only in the presence of motivation. Motivation + Capacity = TSuccess (T = 100%). Motivation = SSuccess (0 < S < T). Capacity (in a theoretical sense, without motivation and action) = 0.

For this study, capacity (internal power) is measured by the respondents’ ability to acquire the necessary resources to attain their goals. Having the opportunity to make decisions, take on responsibility, being free to act on one’s will and use one’s resources (education, knowledge, skill, training, motivation, assets): this is capacity.

Respondents increased Knowledge (about their roles and responsibilities, Acts, rules) and skill gained through training and experience have increased their capacity in decision-making. Self-motivation is using their capacity.

In UZPs, some FVCs have reached a certain level of capacity to participate in different social activities, development activities (project selection, implementation and monitor) and in decision-making process. They have gained

the ability to make their own decisions; ability to influence decision-making and control those who make decisions for one's behalf. In UZPs, there are some FVCs who make decisions for others (for the marginalized group (women) in the society). Thus, capacity (internal power) adds significance in the process of decision-making.

6.3 Theoretical Implications

Theories of William Richard Scott (2008) and Naila Kabeer (1999) have been examined in this research to clarify the subject matter. Now it is important to have a brief discussion on the justification of the application of those theories in the context of Bangladesh.

Scott's Institutional theory helps to explain how institutional structure (rules and norms) influences decision-making of FVC at UZP. It is clearly indicated how the understanding of rules and laws help FVCs to gain "knowledge" and "confidence" that enable them to raise voice and challenge the power structure in case of any discrimination and finally influence the UZP decision-makings. Thus, this study established that the more clear understanding of rules by the FVCs, the better the possibility of influencing decision-making process. Again, it is not the whole story but it is a significant variable in producing the story.

Empirical data show that, in LGIs, some women are participating in decision-making processes due to the support of existing institutional framework. Here, an individual's role is defined by the rules which provide context for action. However, women's choice is strongly shaped by what options are available for them from Government and the conditions under which they make choices. Government have formulated the Local Government (Upazila Parishad) Act, 2009 with some scope for women to participate in the LGIs (UZP). Moreover, the circular containing the provision that 3% of ADP fund will be implemented under women's leadership, helps FVCs to be involved in development activities.

On the other hand, still there are some FVCs who remain unsuccessful to influence decisions because of weak implementation or compliance of rules and laws by the

powerful actors in the UZP. As institutional rules specify who will do what, when and how and the role of women representatives is not clearly defined by the Act, the probability of facing challenges by dominant males is significant. As there is no clear indication about the consequences of violating or not complying with Rules, some FVCs were deprived of getting 3% of the ADP funds by their male counterparts. Thus, the practice of formal rules expedites participation of women in decision-making in the context of UZPs in Bangladesh.

In a patriarchal society like Bangladesh, gender norms always justify male dominance and privileges, gender inequalities and disempowerment of women. In UZPs, male dominance curtails FVCs' access to information regarding projects, justifies unequal project distribution and neglects women leadership in meetings as well as development activities. When norms are taken for granted, they operate as invisible and silent forms of power (Scott, 2008). Thus, informal laws, social norms, practices restrict or exclude FVCs from their participation, which is clearly explained by Scott's theory. For, as Scott said, an institution that tries to run contrary to the norms of its environment will have a short lifespan. On the other hand, FVCs who prove themselves effective, even as conceded, however reluctantly, by the biased court of male dominance, are actually changing some of those norms. So maybe that is the way forward.

Kabeer's empowerment theory helps to explain how resources influence the agency of women. It explains how the agency factors make women capable of raising their voice, influence decisions, make decisions and also be able to act upon them. In this study it is found that training, motivation strongly help FVCs to enhance skill, knowledge that strengthen women's capacity (agency) to influence decisions. But Kabeer's theory in terms of 'education as a major force in women's life' (Kabeer, 2011) to increase knowledge and capacity seems to have been partly disproven for this study. Perhaps Kabeer (2005) was not wrong in saying that "educated women in rural Bangladesh participate in wider range of decision than uneducated ones". It is also really important when she reminds us that women's access to education may improve their chances of a good marriage or the capacity

to sign their names on a document, but unless it also provides them with the analytical capacity and courage to question unjust practices, its potential for change will be limited. Because the changes associated with education are likely to be conditioned by the context in which it is provided and the social relationships that it embodies and promotes. However, it is further observed that the unique socio-culture factor has more impact on the process of decision-making.

6.4 Implications For Future Research

The 7th Five Year Plan, Vision 2021, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) all emphasized the strengthening of LGIs in Bangladesh. To ensure democracy, women's substantive representation is necessary. The study also observes that women's participation in decision-making is increasing. This study tries to measure whether some institutional, demographic and agency factors affect decision-making at UZP. Some indicators like rules, norms, motivation, and training are found to be statistically significant and further validated by the case studies.

In the context of Bangladesh, political economy is also a factor which has not been adequately explored. This factor can be revealed by further in-depth interview and analysis. Future research should address this issue to give us a comprehensive idea about women's participation in decision-making. Moreover, findings of this study reveal a very different view against the conventional perception of education as a driving force in making women effective participants in decision-making. Thus, future research is needed to clarify this anomaly.

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Annex I
Questionnaire for Survey

Part A (Socio-demographic)

Respondent's Name: _____

Name of Upazila: _____ Age: _____

District: _____

Educational background: Secondary (VI-X) SSC HSC Graduate Post-Graduate

Monthly income: 27000-35000 35001-45000 45001-65000 65001-75000
 75001- 850000 85001-above.

Marital status: Unmarried Married Widowed Divorced Separated

Number of family members: Two Three Four Five Six Seven & Above

Part B

1. What are the reasons/factors that inspired you to participate in Local government (Upazila Parishad) election?

- Self inspiration
- Inspired by family members
- Inspired by the people of the locality
- Inspired by the self and people of the locality
- Inspired by the political party
- Others (specify.....)

2. Do you raise voice in the meetings held at Upazila Parishad?

- Yes No

2.1 If your question is "Yes" do other members support you? Can you give any example or instances where you are supported by them or your voice is heard?

- Yes/Always Sometimes No/Never

Example:

.....

.....

 2.2 If your answer is “No” why don’t you raise your voice?

.....

3. How many specific project proposals/ propositions (including ADP, TR and Kabikha, WDF and others) did you make to the Upazila Parishad meetings during last six months?

ADP fund	Test Relief	Kabikha	Revenue fund	WDF (3% of ADP)	Others	Total number

3.1 How many of those project proposals/propositions were actually adopted by Parishad?

ADP Fund	Test Relief	Kibikha	Revenue fund	WDF	Others	Total number

3.2 Give the name some of those projects

S/I	Name of funds	Name of Projects
1	ADP	
2	TR	
3	Kabikha	
4	WDF (3%)	(1)
		(2)
5	Others	

4.0 Do you have **Five year plan** in Your Upazila?

Yes No Don't know

4.1 If your answer is 'yes', how many of your specific project propositions have been included in the Five Year Plan of Upazila Parishad?

None 3-4 4-5 6-7 8-9 10-12 Not known

5.0 Do the meetings of different committees under your chair held regularly?

Yes No

5.1 (If the answer is 'yes') How frequently have you conducted those meetings within the last six months?

(Highly effective =1, Effective=2, Somewhat effective=3, Ineffective=4, Highly ineffective=5)

S/L	Name of the Committee	Frequency of meetings held	Effectiveness of the meetings				
			1	2	3	4	5
1	Law & Order						
2	Communication & Physical infrastructure						
3	Agriculture and Irrigation						
4	Secondary & Madrasa education						
5	Primary and Mass Education						
6	Health and Family Planning						
7	Youth and Sports development						
8	Women & Child Development						
9	Social Welfare						
10	Freedom fighter						
11	Fisheries & Livestock						
12	Rural development & Cooperatives						
13	Cultural Affairs						
14	Environ & Forest						
15	Market Price controlling and monitoring						
16	Budget and planning, generating social Resources						
17	Public Health & Sanitation						

5.2 If your answer is '4 or 5' why these committees are not effective?

- Less interest from the part of the department officers
- Decisions of these meetings are not presented in the General Meetings
- Decisions of those meetings are not accepted by the Parishad
- Others.....

6.1 How do you rate relevance of existing rules/ laws/acts for executing duties of female Vice-Chair?

(Very helpful=1, helpful=2. Somewhat helpful=3, not helpful=4, No comments=5)

Acts/Rules	Description	1	2	3	4	5
Upazila Parishad Act, 1998, section -11	Regarding the panel Chair of Upazila Parishad					
Duties and responsibilities and financial benefits of Chair, Vice-chair Rules 2010, section-5	Regarding the duties of female Vice- Chair					

6.2 If your answer is '4' why the existing rules and acts are not helpful?

.....

.....

.....

.....

7.0 Do you feel that male office bearer's tend to dominate in the decision-making of Upazila Parishad?

- Always Sometimes Never

7.1 If your answer is "yes" What types of male dominance do you feel from your colleague's in decision-making?

- Give less chance to speak in the meeting
- Give less attention on given ideas
- Ridicules at proposed ideas
- Less importance works are given
- Important issues are kept hide.
- Others.....

8.0 How many training did you receive during your tenure?

- 3-4 5-6 7-8 9-10 11-12 13-14 Above 15

8.1 Would you name two/three among them?

SL	Name of training / Areas of training
1	
2	
3	

8.2 How do you rate effectiveness of such trainings you received?

Highly effective Effective Somewhat effective Not effective No comments

Signature (Not mandatory) _____

Date _____

Thank you very much for your time and co-operation.

Annex-II Interview guide

For UNO

1. To what extent do you think FVCs are able to share their views, opinions in the Parishad? Are they being heard duly in the decision-making?
2. Do you think their participation make any difference at UZP?
3. How do you evaluate the involvement of FVC in different UZP activities?
4. What are the problems facing FVCs in your administration and what is your contribution to solve them?

For UZC

1. To what extent do FVC contribute to council discussions/debates?
2. How do you see the participation of women in the local government in your area?
3. Do you think women's participation in local politics can make a difference?
4. What are the challenges a female Vice-Chair face in Parishad decision-making?
5. Do you think, male domination can affect women participation?
6. Some FVC feel that existing rules and acts are creating obstacle to their way of participation, what is your opinion?
7. What's your observation about the effectiveness of SC meetings?

Line departmental officials

1. What is your idea about FVC role in UZP?
2. What is her role in SC committee?
3. Are the decisions of those meetings properly addressed in the monthly meetings?
4. What is your perception about the performance of FVCs in decision-making?
5. How do you rate the quality of the projects implemented by FVCs? (for PIO & UZP Engineer)

For KII (Ministry Level high officials & DDLGs)

1. How do you evaluate the involvement of FVC in UZP?
2. What are the challenges that affect their participation in decision-making at UZP?
3. Do you think the participation of FVC making any difference at UZP?
4. Some Female considers that the existing acts are not helpful on the ground that if it is violated, there is no provision to take action, what's your opinion?
5. Some UZC considers themselves as supreme authority in decision making and agenda-setting in the Parishad-what's your opinion?

For Gender Experts

(Dr.Sadeka Halim & Dr. Salma Akhter, Professor, Dept of Social Sciences, University of Dhaka)

1. Worldwide there have been identified a problem regarding low women participation in political decision-making and in leadership positions. In your view what are the major factors that limit women participation in leadership positions in local councils.
2. At UZP a good number of women have adequate educational qualification which is considered as one of the crucial elements of women empowerment. But it is found that some women having sufficient educational back ground, relatively low influencing decision-makings of UZP. What's your opinion or observation in this regard?

Annex – III

According to the Local Government (Upazila Parishad), Act 1998, (Schedule-2) the main functions of the Upazila Parishad (UZP) are as follows:

S/L	Main Functions of UZP
1	Prepare Upazila five-year plan and other development plans of different tenure
2	Implement program of various government department which was handed over to the UZP and supervised and coordinate the activities of these departments
3	Construct, repair and maintain inter-union connecting roads
4	Follow government directives to ensure effective use of surface water through planning and implementing small irrigation project
5	Ensure public health, nutrition-related and family planning services
6	Improvement of sanitation and sewerage system and ensure pure drinking water supply
7	Motivate people about extension of education at the Upazila level and assist with the same; Supervise and monitor secondary and madrasa education;
8	Take steps for the establishment and development of cottage and small industries
9	Encourage the activities of cooperative societies and NGOs and coordinate the same
10	Cooperate with relevant authorities and implement programmes for the development of children and women, and promote sports and cultural activities
11	Undertake programmes for the development of agriculture, livestock, fisheries and forest resources
12	Review the law and order situation and activities of the police at the local level and submit reports to the concerned higher authorities;
13	Promote self-employment activities, assist poverty alleviation programmes and coordinate on-going activities

14	Provide necessary help to the UP and coordinate its activities
15	Create public awareness and take preventive measures against cruelty to women and children
16	Create public awareness and take preventive steps against terrorism, theft, robbery, smuggling, etc
17	Manage the environment and take up social forestry and other development activities of a similar nature
18	Perform any other work specified by the government from time to time

Annex IV

List of Duties and Responsibilities of FVCs

According to Upazila Parishad Act, 1998 (sec.5) the duties of FVCs are as follows:

1. Will be the Chair of (s) committees and take initiatives to implement the decisions taken.
2. Will be the acting chair in absence of Chair.
3. Will provide propositions and guidance in the following issue at times when necessary-
 - (i) Issues regarding health, nutrition, family planning, and maternity care
 - (ii) Issues related to sanitation and drainage and sewerage, supply of pure drinking water
 - (iii) Issues regarding the uplifting conditions of women and children
 - (iv) Initiate projects to setting up small and hand loom industry in the locality
 - (v) To help government to implement all kinds of program through creating employment generation activity and elimination of poverty.
 - (vi) To make people aware about the violence against women and children, dowry and child marriage.
 - (vii) To take necessary steps of development of livestock and fisheries.
 - (viii) To look after and co-ordinate the activities of NGOs and cooperatives
 - (ix) To get involved in social welfare activities

Annex-V

According to the Local Government (Upazila Parishad), Act 1998, Sec-29

Name of (17) Seventeen (S) committees

S/L	Name of Committee's
1	Law & Order
2	Communication & Physical infrastructure development
3	Agriculture and Irrigation
4	Secondary & Madrasa education
5	Primary and Mass Education
6	Health and Family Planning
7	Youth and Sports development
8	Women & Child Development
9	Social Welfare
10	Freedom fighter
11	Fisheries & Livestock
12	Rural development & Cooperatives
13	Cultural Affairs
14	Environ & Forest
15	Commodity price observation, monitoring and control of market price
16	Finance, budget, planning and local resources mobilization
17	Public health, sanitation and supply of pure drinking water

Annex VI
List of Projects

Name of the projects implemented in 2017-2018 FY by the respondents

No	Name of the projects
1	Provide Training and Distribution of Sewing machine among the poor and helpless women to make them self dependent
2	Provide Training on farming and distribution of hens and ducks, goats among poor women to make them self dependent
3	Increase consciousness about adolescent health and distribution of sanitary napkin among the girls students
4	Distribution of by-cycle among the poor and meritorious students
5	Distribution of instruments among the participants' on the basis of training on handicrafts.
6	Building awareness among the local people about the child marriage and arrangement of seminar
7	Training on beautification and catering
8	Distribution of threads among ethnic minority women
9	Distribution of school bags among the school students
10	Provides benches and tables among the schools
11	Provide computer for the laboratory of the school
12	Provide solar panel in all the governmental offices
13	Distribution of sanitary latrine among the schools
14	Distribution of tube-wells among the schools
15	Reconstruction of roads, culverts, walls, mosques
16	Construction of Drains and irrigation system
17	Distribution of sports accessories (dress, cades, football, bats) among the girls students

Annex-VII
Trainings on different issues received by the respondents

S/I	Areas of Training
1	Local government Acts/ordinance, rules and regulations
2	Local government finance including taxation, budgeting, accounting and auditing
3	Local level planning and development
4	Environment and disaster management
5	Women empowerment
6	Gender Analysis
7	Monitoring, Evaluation of development projects
8	Project management
9	Workshop on preparing draft Monitoring, Inspection and Evaluation Strategy
10	Training cum Exposure Visit on Local Level Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Resource Mobilization
11	Upazila Parishad Act and Administration
12	Finance, Audit and Public Procurement rule
13	Upazila Parishad planning, Budgeting and Property accumulation
14	Trainings for the Trainer for Women Development Forum

Annex- VIII

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
স্থানীয় সরকার, পল্লী উন্নয়ন ও সমবায় মন্ত্রণালয়
স্থানীয় সরকার বিভাগ
উপজেলা-২ শাখা
www.lgd.gov.bd

স্মারক নং-৪৬.৪৫.০২০.০৯.০৬.০০৬.২০১৫-৫৮০

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৩১ মে, ২০১৫

পরিপত্র

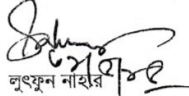
বিষয়: উপজেলা পরিষদের বাৎসরিক বাজেটের ৩% পর্যন্ত 'নারী উন্নয়ন ফোরাম' এর জন্য বরাদ্দ প্রদান এবং পরিষদের ২৫% প্রকল্প নারী সদস্যদের মাধ্যমে বাস্তবায়ন প্রসঙ্গে।

স্থানীয় সরকার বিভাগ কর্তৃক বাস্তবায়িত উপজেলা গভর্ন্যান্স প্রজেক্ট ও ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ গভর্ন্যান্স প্রজেক্ট এর আওতায় গঠিত "নারী উন্নয়ন ফোরাম" এর জন্য আগামী অর্থ বছর (২০১৫-১৬) হতে উপজেলা পরিষদের বাৎসরিক বাজেটের ৩% পর্যন্ত এবং উপজেলা পরিষদ কর্তৃক গৃহীত প্রকল্পসমূহের ২৫% নারী সদস্যদের মাধ্যমে বাস্তবায়নের জন্য নির্দেশনা প্রদান করা হলো। উক্ত অর্থ স্থানীয় সরকার বিভাগ কর্তৃক প্রণীত 'উপজেলা উন্নয়ন তহবিল ব্যবহার নির্দেশিকা' এর (৬) অনুচ্ছেদে বর্ণিত উপজেলা বার্ষিক উন্নয়ন কর্মসূচির খাতওয়ারী বিভাজনের বিবিধ খাত হতে নির্বাহ করতে হবে। উপজেলা পরিষদ কর্তৃক 'নারী উন্নয়ন ফোরাম' এর অনুকূলে বরাদ্দকৃত অর্থ দিয়ে 'নারী উন্নয়ন ফোরাম' উপজেলা পরিষদের মাধ্যমে নিম্নবর্ণিত বিষয়ে প্রকল্প গ্রহণ এবং বাস্তবায়ন করবে :

- ❖ শিক্ষা: স্কুল পড়ুয়া ছাত্রীদের ঝরে পড়ার হার রোধ ও মানসম্পন্ন শিক্ষা নিশ্চিতকরণ, মেধাবী ছাত্রীদের পুরস্কার প্রদান, ইত্যাদি।
- ❖ কর্মসংস্থান: বেকার যুব নারীদের কর্মসংস্থান বৃদ্ধিতে বিভিন্ন প্রশিক্ষণ আয়োজন ও প্রশিক্ষণ প্রদানকারী সংস্থাসমূহের সাথে সংযোগ স্থাপন।
- ❖ সাংস্কৃতিক: মেয়েদের সাংস্কৃতিক উন্নয়নে সুযোগ সৃষ্টি, খেলাধুলা ও প্রতিযোগিতার আয়োজন, ইত্যাদি।
- ❖ সচেতনতামূলক: জেডার সমতা ও মানবাধিকার বিষয়ক দিবস উদ্‌যাপন, নারীর ক্ষমতায়ন কর্মসূচিতে পুরুষদের সম্পৃক্তকরণ, নারীর রাজনৈতিক ক্ষমতায়ন ও সিদ্ধান্ত গ্রহণ প্রক্রিয়ায় অংশগ্রহণে উদ্বুদ্ধকরণ, নারীর প্রতি বৈষম্যমূলক আচরণ নির্মূল্যে কর্মসূচি গ্রহণ, প্রাকৃতিক দুর্যোগে সচেতনতা ও ঝুঁকি হ্রাসে কর্মসূচি গ্রহণ, নারী ও শিশু পাচার বিষয়ক সচেতনতামূলক কর্মসূচি গ্রহণ, ইত্যাদি।
- ❖ অন্যান্য: বিধবা, স্বামী পরিত্যক্তা, তালাকপ্রাপ্তা ও অসহায় নারীদের উন্নয়নে কর্মসূচি গ্রহণ, নারী উন্নয়ন ফোরাম এর নিয়মিত সভা আয়োজন ও অন্যান্য ব্যয় নির্বাহ, ইত্যাদি।

২. উল্লিখিত বরাদ্দ দ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট উপজেলার নারী ও পিছিয়ে পড়া জনগোষ্ঠীর উন্নয়নে ব্যয় করা হবে। প্রকল্প প্রস্তাবনা নারী উন্নয়ন ফোরাম এর সভার মাধ্যমে আলোচনা পূর্বক উপজেলা পরিষদের সংশ্লিষ্ট কমিটিতে প্রেরণ করতে হবে, যা পরবর্তীতে প্রকল্প যাচাই-বাছাই ও অন্যান্য প্রক্রিয়া সম্পন্ন করে উপজেলা পরিষদের মাসিক সভায় আলোচনা পূর্বক অনুমোদিত হবে। উপজেলা পরিষদের অন্যান্য প্রকল্পের ন্যায় এ প্রকল্পসমূহ অনুমোদিত হবে।

৩. এ আদেশ অবিলম্বে কার্যকর হবে।


লুৎফুন নাহার

সিনিয়র সহকারী সচিব

ফোন : ৯৫৭৭২৩০

e-mail : lgd.upazila2@gmail.com

পরিপত্র-১

Annex – IX
List of Tables

Table 1: Project status regarding their proposed and adopted

Type of project	1- 2 projects	3 – 10 projects	Average	Number of VC
Request for Proposal	32.8	67.2	3.34	64
Adopted proposal	58.7	41.3	2.44	64

Table 2: Project implementation status of Respondents in 2017-2018 Financial Year

	Name of implemented project					
	ADP	TR	Kabikha	RF	WDF	Others
Average number	0.62	0.98	0.71	1.00	1.17	7.00
Number of VC	26	41	31	1	59	1
Percentage						

Table-3: Conducting Standing committee meetings by the FVCs

Conducting of (s) committee meetings (%)	
Yes	No
93.8	6.2
N = 64	

Table- 4: The voice raise in the decision-making by the respondents

Voice raise in the Parishad meetings (%)	
Yes	No
100	0
N=64	

Cross Tabulation 1: Family size & Implication of voices

Family size	Influence on decisions /implication on voices		No significant relationship with UZP decision-making
	Yes	No	
Upto 3	6.0	28.6	
4	50.0	28.6	
5	32.0	42.9	
6 & above	12.0	0.0	
Number of FVCs	50	14	

Cross Tabulation 2: Marital Status of the respondents

	Influence on decisions /implication on voices		No significant relationship with UZP decision-making
Marital Status	Yes	No	
Unmarried	02	00	
Married	48	14	
Total	50	14	