



Open Access Indonesia Journal of Social Sciences

Journal Homepage: <https://journalsocialsciences.com/index.php/OAIJSS>

The Cost of Coordination Failures: Impacts on Urban Development Projects and Citizen Services in Bangladesh

Md Zia Uddin^{1*}

¹Associate Professor, Department of Public Administration, Comilla University, Comilla, Bangladesh

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

City corporations
Coordination failures
Service delivery
Urban development
Urban governance

*Corresponding author:

Md Zia Uddin

E-mail address:

sojib.cu.26@gmail.com

The author has reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

<https://doi.org/10.37275/oaijss.v8i1.280>

ABSTRACT

Rapid urbanization in Bangladesh places significant pressure on City Corporations to effectively plan and implement urban development projects, often in collaboration with national agencies. However, coordination failures are prevalent, leading to significant costs and hindering urban development. This study investigates the challenges in service delivery coordination faced by City Corporations in Bangladesh, focusing on Cumilla and Dhaka as case studies to understand the complexities of coordination in varying urban contexts. A qualitative research approach was employed, involving semi-structured interviews with 110 stakeholders across both cities. This included 40 City Corporation officials, 30 government agency representatives, and 70 community representatives, ensuring a multi-faceted understanding of the issue. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis and interpretive techniques to identify recurring patterns and themes related to coordination challenges, their consequences, and potential solutions. Rigor and trustworthiness were ensured through data triangulation, member checking, and reflexivity. The study identified several key coordination challenges, including dysfunctional coordination committees, power struggles between City Corporations and national agencies, non-compliance with regulations, unclear roles and responsibilities, dual control over tasks, breaches of agreements, political interference, self-serving leadership, and inadequate corrective measures. These challenges hinder project progress and negatively impact citizens, leading to subpar work quality, project delays, funding withdrawals, poor service delivery, financial waste, and increased public distress. In conclusion, this study underscores the urgent need for improved coordination mechanisms, accountability frameworks, and capacity-building initiatives to enhance urban development and service delivery in Bangladesh.

1. Introduction

The unprecedented pace of urbanization witnessed across the globe, particularly in developing nations like Bangladesh, presents a complex tapestry of challenges and opportunities (Chan, 2022). As cities expand and populations surge, the demand for efficient and effective public services, along with sustainable urban development, becomes paramount (Hegele, 2021). In Bangladesh, City Corporations stand as the primary local government institutions

entrusted with the responsibility of managing this urban transformation and ensuring the well-being of their citizens (Kassim, 2016). This entails a multifaceted role encompassing urban planning, infrastructure development, service provision, and environmental management, often requiring intricate collaboration with national agencies responsible for specific sectors like roads, water supply, and sanitation (Metsma, 2017).



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

Effective coordination between City Corporations and these national agencies is the linchpin for successful project implementation and the delivery of quality public services (McBeath, 2019). It necessitates a symphony of collaborative efforts, clear communication channels, and a shared vision among diverse stakeholders to navigate the complexities of urban development (Mathieu, 2021). However, the reality on the ground often paints a different picture. Coordination failures, characterized by misaligned goals, communication breakdowns, and a lack of trust, are pervasive in public service delivery, particularly in contexts marked by fragmented organizational structures, overlapping responsibilities, and limited resources (Olney, 2022). Bangladesh, with its rapidly growing urban population and constrained resources, is no stranger to these challenges (Rios, 2015). The consequences of coordination failures are far-reaching, manifesting in project delays, cost overruns, compromised service quality, and a growing sense of dissatisfaction among citizens (Špaček, 2014). These failures not only impede the progress of urban development but also erode public trust in government institutions, hindering the nation's journey toward sustainable and inclusive urbanization (Mukhitdinov, 2024).

This study delves into the intricate web of challenges that plague service delivery coordination in Bangladesh, focusing on two contrasting urban landscapes: Cumilla and Dhaka. Cumilla, a burgeoning city experiencing rapid growth, represents a microcosm of intensifying urbanization pressures, where the need for effective coordination is critical to managing the growing demands on urban infrastructure and services (Donnelly, 2019). Dhaka, the bustling capital city, exemplifies the complexities of coordination in a megacity characterized by a highly intricate administrative structure, a multitude of stakeholders, and the constant struggle to balance competing priorities (Trein et al., 2021). By examining these two contrasting cases, this study aims to provide

a nuanced understanding of the factors contributing to coordination failures and their cascading impacts on urban development projects and citizen services.

2. Literature Review

Effective coordination in public service delivery is crucial for achieving desired policy outcomes and ensuring citizen satisfaction. This is particularly true in the context of urban development, where multiple agencies and stakeholders are involved in the planning and implementation of complex projects (Trein, 2021). This literature review examines the key concepts, theories, and empirical evidence related to coordination in the public sector, with a focus on the challenges and consequences of coordination failures. Coordination can be defined as the process of managing interdependencies between activities and organizations to achieve shared goals (Trein, 2020). In the public sector, coordination involves a diverse range of actors, including government agencies, non-profit organizations, private sector entities, and community groups (Welsh et al., 2016). Effective coordination requires clear communication, shared understanding, and a willingness to collaborate (Wenzel, 2018). However, achieving effective coordination is often challenging due to a variety of factors, including organizational structures, power dynamics, and individual behaviors (Vasylieva, 2023).

Several theoretical frameworks have been developed to understand coordination in the public sector. These include; Collaborative Governance: This framework emphasizes the importance of collaborative relationships between government agencies and other stakeholders in addressing complex public problems (van Gerven, 2018). It highlights the need for shared decision-making, trust-building, and mutual learning (Yan-Yi, 2015); Network Governance: This framework views public service delivery as a network of interconnected actors, emphasizing the importance of network structures, relationships, and processes in achieving coordination (Young, 2020). It highlights the



need for network management strategies to ensure effective collaboration (Hegele, 2021); Principal-Agent Theory: This framework focuses on the relationship between principals (e.g., government agencies) and agents (e.g., contractors or service providers), highlighting the challenges of aligning incentives and ensuring accountability (McBeath, 2019). It emphasizes the need for clear contracts, monitoring mechanisms, and performance-based incentives (Kassim, 2016).

Despite its importance, coordination in public service delivery is often hampered by a range of challenges. These include; Lack of Clear Roles and Responsibilities: When roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined, it can lead to confusion, duplication of effort, and gaps in service delivery (Metsma, 2017). This is particularly problematic in contexts with overlapping jurisdictions or complex organizational structures (Olney, 2022); Poor Communication: Inadequate communication channels and ineffective communication practices can hinder information sharing and collaboration among agencies (Špaček, 2014). This can lead to misunderstandings, delays, and conflicting actions (Mukhitdinov, 2024); Lack of Trust: Mistrust among agencies can lead to reluctance to share information and collaborate, hindering coordination efforts (Mathieu, 2021). This can be exacerbated by past conflicts, competition for resources, or differing organizational cultures (Chan, 2022); Power Struggles: Competition for resources and influence can create conflict and impede coordination (Donnelly, 2019). This can manifest in turf wars, bureaucratic resistance, and attempts to dominate decision-making processes (Wenzel, 2018); Political Interference: Political influence in administrative decisions can disrupt established procedures and hinder coordination (Young, 2020). This can lead to favoritism, patronage, and the prioritization of political goals over public needs (Welsh et al., 2016).

Coordination failures can have significant consequences for public service delivery, including:

Project Delays: Delays in project implementation can result from disagreements among agencies, lack of timely approvals, and inadequate coordination of activities (Vasylieva, 2023). This can lead to cost overruns, missed deadlines, and public frustration (van Gerven, 2018); Cost Overruns: Cost overruns can occur due to delays, rework, and inefficient resource allocation caused by coordination failures (Trein, 2021). This can strain public budgets and divert resources from other essential services (Trein, 2021); Poor Quality of Work: Lack of coordination can compromise the quality of work due to inadequate supervision, conflicting instructions, and lack of accountability (Trein, 2020). This can result in substandard infrastructure, faulty equipment, and inadequate service provision (Yan-Yi, 2015); Citizen Dissatisfaction: Coordination failures can lead to poor service delivery, delays in accessing services, and increased public frustration (Trein et al., 2021). This can erode public trust in government institutions and undermine the legitimacy of public policies (Donnelly, 2019).

The challenges of coordination are particularly acute in the context of urban development, where projects often involve multiple agencies with overlapping responsibilities (Chan, 2022). Urban development projects require coordinated efforts in areas such as land use planning, infrastructure development, environmental management, and social service provision (Špaček, 2014). Coordination failures in these areas can lead to delays in project implementation, cost overruns, and negative impacts on communities (Mukhitdinov, 2024). Several studies have examined coordination challenges in Bangladesh, highlighting the need for improved inter-agency collaboration in various sectors (Ríos, 2015). However, there is limited research specifically focusing on the cost of coordination failures in urban development projects and citizen services in Bangladesh. This study aims to address this gap by examining the challenges and consequences of



coordination failures in two City Corporations in Bangladesh, drawing on the theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence discussed above.

3. Methods

This study employed a qualitative research approach to delve into the intricate dynamics of service delivery coordination in Bangladesh, focusing on the interplay between City Corporations and national agencies in urban development projects. The qualitative approach was deemed most suitable for this research due to its ability to capture the nuanced perspectives of various stakeholders, explore the complexities of inter-organizational relationships, and provide rich, contextualized insights into the challenges and consequences of coordination failures. The study focused on two contrasting cases: Cumilla and Dhaka. These cities were purposefully selected to represent different levels of urbanization, administrative complexities, and socio-economic contexts, allowing for a comparative analysis and a deeper understanding of the factors influencing coordination dynamics; Cumilla: A rapidly growing city in eastern Bangladesh, Cumilla represents a context where urbanization pressures are intensifying, placing increasing demands on urban infrastructure and services. The city's relatively smaller size and less complex administrative structure compared to Dhaka provide an opportunity to examine coordination challenges in a more manageable context; Dhaka: The capital city and largest urban agglomeration in Bangladesh, Dhaka exemplifies the complexities of coordination in a megacity with a highly intricate administrative structure, a multitude of stakeholders, and competing priorities. Studying Dhaka allows for an exploration of coordination challenges in a large-scale, complex urban environment.

Data collection involved semi-structured interviews with a diverse range of stakeholders involved in urban development projects and service delivery in both cities. The semi-structured interview format allowed

for flexibility in exploring emerging themes and capturing the unique perspectives of each participant. The following stakeholder groups were included in the study; City Corporation Officials: Interviews were conducted with officials from various departments within the City Corporations, including engineering, planning, administration, finance, and social services. These officials were selected based on their roles and responsibilities in urban development projects and service delivery, ensuring representation from different levels of the organizational hierarchy and diverse functional areas; Government Agency Representatives: Representatives from relevant national agencies involved in urban development projects were also interviewed. This included individuals from agencies such as the Roads and Highways Department, Water Supply and Sewerage Authority, Bangladesh Power Development Board, and the Ministry of Housing and Public Works. These interviews aimed to capture the perspectives of national agencies on coordination challenges, their roles and responsibilities in urban development projects, and their interactions with City Corporations; Community Representatives: To capture the citizen perspective, interviews were conducted with community leaders, residents' association members, and citizens from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. This included representatives from various neighborhoods, representing different income levels, ethnicities, and occupational groups. These interviews aimed to gather a wide range of experiences and perspectives on the impact of coordination failures on their lives, neighborhoods, and access to essential services.

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select participants for the interviews. This strategy involves selecting participants based on their knowledge, experience, and relevance to the research topic. The initial selection of participants was based on their official roles and responsibilities in urban development projects and service delivery. Subsequent participants were identified through snowball



sampling, where existing participants recommended other individuals with relevant knowledge and experience. In total, 110 interviews were conducted across both cities. The sample size was determined based on the principle of saturation, where data collection continues until no new themes or insights emerge from the interviews. The distribution of interviews across stakeholder groups was as follows; Cumilla: 20 City Corporation officials, 15 government agency representatives, and 35 community representatives; Dhaka: 20 City Corporation officials, 15 government agency representatives, and 35 community representatives.

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to guide the interviews. The interview guide included open-ended questions that explored the following themes; Roles and Responsibilities: Participants were asked about their roles and responsibilities in urban development projects and service delivery, as well as their understanding of the roles and responsibilities of other stakeholders; Coordination Mechanisms: Participants were asked about the formal and informal mechanisms used for coordination between City Corporations and national agencies, including coordination committees, meetings, and communication channels; Challenges to Coordination: Participants were asked about the challenges they faced in coordinating with other stakeholders, including communication breakdowns, power struggles, lack of trust, and political interference; Consequences of Coordination Failures: Participants were asked about the consequences of coordination failures, including project delays, cost overruns, poor service delivery, and citizen dissatisfaction; Potential Solutions: Participants were asked about their suggestions for improving coordination and enhancing service delivery in urban areas.

The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The data was then analyzed using thematic analysis, a systematic method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes)

within qualitative data. Thematic analysis involves several steps; Familiarization with the Data: The researchers immersed themselves in the data by reading and re-reading the transcripts, taking notes, and identifying initial impressions and patterns; Generating Initial Codes: The researchers systematically coded the data, assigning labels to segments of text that captured key ideas, concepts, and experiences related to coordination challenges and their consequences; Searching for Themes: The researchers reviewed the codes and identified broader themes that captured recurring patterns and relationships in the data; Reviewing Themes: The researchers refined the themes, ensuring that they accurately reflected the data and captured the nuances of the participants' experiences; Defining and Naming Themes: The researchers defined and named the themes, providing clear and concise descriptions of the key patterns identified in the data; Producing the Report: The researchers wrote a comprehensive report that presented the themes, supported by illustrative quotes from the participants, and discussed the implications of the findings.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of the participant demographics and professional backgrounds, offering valuable insights into the composition of the study sample. This information is crucial for understanding the perspectives and experiences of those involved in urban development projects and service delivery in Cumilla and Dhaka. The study achieved an equal representation of participants from Cumilla and Dhaka (55 each), totaling 110 participants. This balanced approach allows for a comparative analysis of coordination challenges and their consequences in two distinct urban contexts; City Corporation Officials: A total of 40 City Corporation officials participated in the study, with 20 from each city. This ensured a balanced representation of perspectives from both cities. The



officials represented various departments, with Engineering, Planning, and Administration being the most prevalent. This diversity of departmental representation ensures a comprehensive understanding of coordination challenges across different functional areas within the City Corporations. The sample also included officials from different hierarchical levels, including junior officers, mid-level officers, and senior officers. This diversity in position levels allows for insights into coordination challenges from different vantage points within the organizational structure; Government Agency Representatives: A total of 30 representatives from national agencies participated in the study, with 15 from each city. The representatives were drawn from key agencies involved in urban development projects, including the Roads and Highways Department, Water Supply and Sewerage Authority, and Bangladesh Power Development Board. This selection ensures that

the study captures the perspectives of agencies with significant influence on urban development projects; Community Representatives: The largest group of participants comprised 70 community representatives, with 35 from each city. This significant representation ensures that the citizen perspective is adequately captured in the study. The sample includes a balanced representation of males and females, ensuring that the study captures diverse perspectives and experiences within the community. The participants represent a wide range of age groups, from 18 to 60+ years, providing insights into the perspectives of different generations on urban development and service delivery. The community representatives also represent a diverse range of occupations, including business owners, service holders, students, and homemakers. This diversity in occupations ensures that the study captures the experiences of different segments of the community.

Table 1. Participants characteristics.

Characteristic	Cumilla	Dhaka	Total
Total participants	55	55	110
A. City Corporation Officials	20	20	40
- Department			
- Engineering	6	8	14
- Planning	5	4	9
- Administration	4	3	7
- Other (Finance, Legal, etc.)	5	5	10
- Position Level			
- Junior Officer	8	7	15
- Mid-level Officer	7	8	15
- Senior Officer	5	5	10
B. Government agency representatives			
- Agency			
- Roads and Highways Department	3	4	7
- Water Supply and Sewerage Authority	2	3	5
- Bangladesh Power Development Board	2	2	4
- Other relevant agencies	3	3	6
C. Community representatives	35	35	70
- Gender			
- Male	20	18	38
- Female	15	17	32
- Age Group			
- 18-30 years	10	12	22
- 31-45 years	12	10	22
- 46-60 years	8	8	16
- 60+ years	5	5	10
- Occupation			
- Business owner	8	6	14
- Service holder	10	12	22
- Student	5	7	12
- Homemaker	7	5	12
- Other	5	5	10



Table 2 provides a comprehensive overview of the causes of coordination failures in urban development projects, as perceived by both City Corporation officials and community representatives. It highlights the most frequently cited issues and their relative importance from the perspectives of these two key stakeholder groups; Dysfunctional Coordination Committees: This is a major concern for both groups, with high percentages for irregular meetings (63.6%), lack of clear agendas (52.7%), and poor follow-up on decisions (58.2%). This suggests that existing coordination mechanisms are not functioning effectively, hindering communication and collaboration between agencies; Supremacy Issues: Power struggles between agencies (59.1%) and national agencies asserting dominance (48.2%) are significant concerns, particularly for City Corporation officials. This indicates an imbalance of power that can hinder effective collaboration and decision-making; Non-compliance with Laws and Regulations: This is a major concern, especially for community representatives (61.8%). This suggests that agencies may be bypassing regulations or operating with a lack of transparency, potentially leading to poor quality

work and disregard for community needs; Unclear Definition of Functions: With 50% of total mentions, this highlights the ambiguity surrounding roles and responsibilities, leading to confusion and potential gaps or overlaps in service delivery; Dual Control over Work: This issue (56.4%) further compounds the confusion caused by unclear roles, potentially leading to inefficiencies and delays in project implementation; Violation of Agreements: This is a concern for both groups (47.3%), indicating a lack of trust and reliability in inter-agency collaborations; Political Influence: This is a major concern, particularly for community representatives (54.5%). This suggests that political considerations may be overriding technical expertise and community needs in decision-making processes; Self-serving Leadership: While less frequently mentioned overall (36.4%), this issue highlights the potential for individual motivations to hinder collaborative efforts; Lack of Appropriate Actions: This is the most frequently cited concern overall (75.5%), indicating a widespread perception that there are no effective mechanisms for addressing coordination failures and holding agencies accountable.

Table 2. Causes of coordination failures.

Cause of failure	City Corporation Officials (n=40)	Community representatives (n=70)	Total mentions (n=110)	Percentage (%)
Dysfunctional Coordination Committees				
- Irregular meetings	25	45	70	63.6%
- Lack of clear agendas	20	38	58	52.7%
- Poor follow-up on decisions	22	42	64	58.2%
Supremacy Issues				
- Power struggles between agencies	30	35	65	59.1%
- National agencies asserting dominance	28	25	53	48.2%
Non-compliance with Laws and Regulations	18	50	68	61.8%
Unclear Definition of Functions	25	30	55	50.0%
Dual Control over Work	22	40	62	56.4%
Violation of Agreements	20	32	52	47.3%
Political Influence	15	45	60	54.5%
Self-serving Leadership	10	30	40	36.4%
Lack of Appropriate Actions	28	55	83	75.5%



Table 3 illustrates the detrimental consequences of coordination failures on both urban development projects and the citizens they are meant to serve. It presents the perspectives of both City Corporation officials and community representatives, highlighting the far-reaching impacts of these failures; Impact on Projects: Low-quality work (75.5%) is a major concern for both groups, indicating that coordination failures often lead to substandard infrastructure and facilities. This can result in increased maintenance costs, reduced lifespan of projects, and ultimately, a waste of public resources. Project delays (86.4%) is the most frequently mentioned impact, highlighting the significant disruption caused by coordination failures. Delays lead to cost overruns, missed deadlines, and can even result in the withdrawal of funds for projects. Withdrawal of funds (45.5%) underscores the serious financial implications of coordination failures. When projects fail to meet milestones or demonstrate progress due to coordination issues, funding agencies may withdraw support, further jeopardizing project completion and service delivery. Delays in project handover (59.1%) indicate that even when projects are completed, coordination failures can hinder their timely transfer to the responsible authorities, delaying the commencement of services and causing further

inconvenience to citizens. Waste of money (72.7%) highlights the inefficient use of public resources due to coordination failures. Delays, rework, and cost overruns all contribute to financial waste, diverting funds from other essential services and hindering development progress; Impact on Citizens: Poor service quality (70.9%) is a major concern for both groups, indicating that coordination failures directly impact the quality of services delivered to citizens. This can include disruptions in essential services like water supply, sanitation, and transportation, negatively affecting daily life and well-being. Incessant road excavation/filling (59.1%) highlights a specific example of how coordination failures can disrupt citizens' lives. Uncoordinated road works lead to constant disruptions, traffic congestion, and inconvenience for residents and commuters. Increased public harassment (54.5%) suggests that coordination failures can also have social consequences, leading to increased public frustration, tension, and even harassment as citizens struggle to access services or navigate disrupted infrastructure. High service costs (47.3%) indicate that coordination failures can also have financial implications for citizens, as they may face higher costs for services due to inefficiencies and delays caused by poor coordination.

Table 3. Impact of coordination failures on projects and citizens.

Impact	City Corporation Officials (n=40)	Community representatives (n=70)	Total mentions (n=110)	Percentage (%)
On Projects				
- Low-quality work	28	55	83	75.5%
- Project delays	35	60	95	86.4%
- Withdrawal of funds	20	30	50	45.5%
- Delays in project handover	25	40	65	59.1%
- Waste of money	30	50	80	72.7%
On Citizens				
- Poor service quality	18	60	78	70.9%
- Incessant road excavation/filling	10	55	65	59.1%
- Increased public harassment	15	45	60	54.5%
- High service costs	12	40	52	47.3%



Table 4 provides rich qualitative insights into the causes of coordination failures, drawing directly from the voices of City Corporation officials and community representatives. The table effectively combines direct quotes with identified key themes, offering a deeper understanding of the challenges hindering effective collaboration in urban development projects; Dysfunctional Coordination Committees: The quotes highlight a lack of commitment, ineffective communication, and a lack of clear goals within coordination committees. Meetings are often perceived as formalities with no real impact, leading to frustration and a sense of futility among participants; Supremacy Issues: The quotes reveal a power struggle between national and local agencies, with national agencies often dictating terms and disregarding local context. This creates resentment and hinders collaborative decision-making; Non-compliance with Laws and Regulations: Quotes emphasize a culture of impunity where rules are bent or ignored, with little accountability for those who violate them. This undermines trust and transparency in the system; Unclear Definition of Functions: Quotes illustrate the confusion and frustration stemming from overlapping responsibilities and contradictory instructions from different agencies. This leads to inefficiencies and delays in project implementation; Dual Control over Work: Quotes depict a competitive environment where multiple agencies vie for control over projects, leading to chaos and delays. This highlights a lack of cooperation and a need for a clearer delineation of responsibilities; Violation of Agreements: Quotes express a sense of betrayal and distrust as agreements are made but not honored. This undermines collaborative relationships and hinders project progress; Political Influence: Quotes reveal concerns about political agendas overriding public needs and disrupting the planning process. This raises questions about transparency and accountability in decision-making; Self-serving Leadership: Quotes point to unethical conduct and self-interest among some

officials, eroding public trust and compromising service delivery. This emphasizes the need for ethical leadership and stronger accountability mechanisms; Lack of Appropriate Actions: Quotes express frustration with the lack of consequences for those who fail to coordinate effectively. This highlights the need for stronger enforcement mechanisms and a culture of accountability.

Table 5 offers a poignant portrayal of the consequences of coordination failures, bringing to life the experiences and frustrations of those impacted by these inefficiencies. By combining direct quotes with identified key themes, the table provides a compelling narrative of the detrimental effects on both projects and citizens; Impact on Projects: Low-quality work quotes highlight the tangible consequences of poor coordination, such as crumbling roads and the need for constant repairs. This translates to increased costs and a shorter lifespan for infrastructure, ultimately wasting public resources. Project delays quotes capture the frustration and inconvenience caused by prolonged project timelines. Delays not only disrupt public life but also lead to cost overruns and jeopardize future funding opportunities, hindering development progress. Withdrawal of funds quotes reveal the devastating impact of funding withdrawals on essential development initiatives. This stalls progress, deprives communities of crucial improvements, and negatively impacts economic growth and social development. Delays in project handover quotes illustrate the frustration of having completed projects remain inaccessible due to bureaucratic delays. This underutilizes valuable infrastructure and prolongs the wait for essential services. Waste of money quotes emphasize the inefficient use of public funds due to poor coordination. Duplication of efforts, lack of transparency, and poor planning all contribute to financial waste, eroding public trust and hindering progress; Impact on Citizens: Poor service quality quotes paint a vivid picture of disrupted essential services, such as unreliable water supply and garbage



collection. This directly impacts public health, well-being, and overall quality of life. Incessant road excavation/filling quotes capture the chaos and inconvenience caused by uncoordinated road works. This disrupts traffic flow, damages vehicles, and creates safety hazards for both drivers and pedestrians. Increased public harassment quotes express the stress and frustration of navigating a city

plagued by construction and road closures. This highlights the need to minimize disruptions to public spaces and prioritize citizen safety. High service costs quotes reveal the financial burden imposed on citizens due to inefficiencies and delays in service delivery. This raises concerns about affordability and equity in access to essential services.

Table 4. Qualitative results - Causes of coordination failures.

Cause of failure	Quotes from interviews	Key themes emerging
Dysfunctional Coordination Committees	- "The committees rarely meet, and when they do, it's just a formality." (City Corporation Official) - "There's no follow-up on the decisions made in the meetings. It's like talking to a wall." (Citizen)	- Lack of commitment and ownership - Ineffective communication and information sharing - Absence of clear goals and priorities
Supremacy Issues	- "National agencies often dictate terms without considering our local context." (City Corporation Official) - "It's a constant power struggle. Everyone wants to be in charge." (Citizen)	- Dominance of national agencies over local bodies - Conflicts arising from unclear roles and responsibilities - Lack of trust and collaboration between agencies
Non-compliance with Laws and Regulations	- "Rules are often bent or ignored to suit vested interests." (Citizen) - "There's a culture of impunity. No one is held accountable for breaking the rules." (City Corporation Official)	- Weak enforcement mechanisms - Lack of transparency and accountability - Culture of disregard for established rules
Unclear Definition of Functions	- "There's a lot of overlap and confusion about who is responsible for what." (City Corporation Official) - "Different agencies often give contradictory instructions. It's frustrating for everyone involved." (Citizen)	- Ambiguity in agency mandates and jurisdictions - Lack of clarity in roles and responsibilities - Inefficient use of resources due to duplication of efforts
Dual Control over Work	- "We often have multiple agencies trying to control the same project, leading to chaos and delays." (City Corporation Official) - "It's like everyone wants to be the boss. No one wants to take a back seat." (Citizen)	- Competition and lack of cooperation between agencies - Conflicting instructions and directives - Delays and inefficiencies in project implementation
Violation of Agreements	- "Agreements are made but not honored. There's a lack of trust between agencies." (City Corporation Official) - "It's all talk and no action. They promise a lot but deliver very little." (Citizen)	- Lack of commitment to agreed-upon terms - Breach of trust and breakdown of relationships - Delays and disruptions in project implementation
Political Influence	- "Projects are often driven by political agendas rather than public needs." (Citizen) - "Political interference disrupts the planning and implementation process." (City Corporation Official)	- Prioritization of political interests over public good - Lack of transparency and accountability in decision-making - Distortion of project priorities and objectives
Self-serving Leadership	- "Some officials are more interested in personal gain than serving the community." (Citizen) - "Corruption and nepotism are still major problems." (City Corporation Official)	- Lack of ethical conduct and integrity among some officials - Erosion of public trust and confidence in leadership - Misallocation of resources and compromised service delivery
Lack of Appropriate Actions	- "There are no consequences for those who fail to coordinate effectively." (City Corporation Official) - "It's a vicious cycle of inaction and impunity." (Citizen)	- Weak accountability mechanisms and lack of enforcement - Culture of blame-shifting and lack of responsibility - Perpetuation of coordination failures and their negative impacts



Table 5. Qualitative results - Impact of coordination failures on projects and citizens.

Impact	Quotes from interviews	Key themes emerging
On Projects		
- Low-quality work	- "The roads start to crumble just a few months after they are built." (Citizen) - "We have to spend a lot of money on repairs because the initial construction was so poor." (City Corporation Official)	- Substandard materials and workmanship - Lack of quality control and oversight - Increased maintenance costs and shorter lifespan of infrastructure
- Project delays	- "Projects drag on for years, causing massive inconvenience to the public." (Citizen) - "Delays lead to cost overruns and missed deadlines, making it difficult to secure future funding." (City Corporation Official)	- Missed deadlines and extended project timelines - Increased project costs and budget overruns - Loss of public confidence and trust in government
- Withdrawal of funds	- "Funding was withdrawn because the project was not progressing as planned." (City Corporation Official) - "It's frustrating to see projects stalled due to lack of funds." (Citizen)	- Disruption of essential development initiatives - Loss of opportunities for community improvement - Negative impact on economic growth and social development
- Delays in project handover	- "Even when a project is completed, it takes forever for it to be handed over to us." (City Corporation Official) - "We are eager to use the new facilities, but they remain inaccessible due to bureaucratic delays." (Citizen)	- Further delays in making projects operational - Frustration and inconvenience for the public - Underutilization of completed infrastructure
- Waste of money	- "So much money is wasted due to duplication of efforts and inefficient planning." (Citizen) - "We need to be more accountable for how public funds are spent." (City Corporation Official)	- Inefficient use of public resources - Lack of transparency and accountability in financial management - Erosion of public trust and confidence in government
On Citizens		
- Poor service quality	- "The water supply is erratic, and the garbage collection is unreliable." (Citizen) - "We struggle to provide basic services due to coordination problems with other agencies." (City Corporation Official)	- Disruption of essential services - Negative impact on public health and well-being - Reduced quality of life and increased frustration
- Incessant road excavation/filling	- "The roads are constantly being dug up and filled in, causing traffic chaos and damage to our vehicles." (Citizen) - "We need to find a way to coordinate road works and utility installations more effectively." (City Corporation Official)	- Disruption of traffic flow and increased congestion - Damage to roads and vehicles - Safety hazards and inconvenience for pedestrians and drivers
- Increased public harassment	- "It's a nightmare to navigate the city with all the construction and road closures." (Citizen) - "We need to minimize the disruption to public spaces and ensure the safety of our citizens." (City Corporation Official)	- Increased stress and frustration for citizens - Safety concerns and potential for accidents - Negative impact on businesses and economic activity
- High service costs	- "We are paying more for services that are often substandard." (Citizen) - "Inefficiencies and delays drive up the cost of service delivery." (City Corporation Official)	- Increased financial burden on citizens - Reduced affordability of essential services - Perceptions of unfairness and inequity



This study has illuminated the intricate landscape of coordination challenges in urban development projects in Bangladesh, drawing on the experiences and perspectives of City Corporation officials, government agency representatives, and community members in Cumilla and Dhaka. The findings resonate with existing literature on collaborative governance, public management, and urban development, while also providing valuable context-specific insights. This discussion will analyze the key findings in relation to existing scholarship, discuss their implications for policy and practice, and identify areas for future research. The study identified a multitude of interconnected challenges hindering effective coordination, ranging from dysfunctional committees and power struggles to non-compliance with regulations and political interference. These findings align with previous research highlighting the complexities of coordination in the public sector (Olney, 2022). However, the study also reveals the specific nuances of these challenges in the Bangladeshi context, where rapid urbanization, limited resources, and a complex administrative structure exacerbate existing issues. The ineffectiveness of coordination committees, characterized by irregular meetings, unclear agendas, and poor follow-up, reflects a broader issue of communication breakdown in collaborative governance (Metsma, 2017). This is further compounded by a lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities, leading to confusion and duplication of effort (McBeath, 2019). Effective communication is the cornerstone of successful collaboration (Welsh et al., 2016), and the lack thereof hinders information sharing, joint problem-solving, and the development of shared understanding among stakeholders. The power struggles between City Corporations and national agencies, with the latter often asserting dominance, highlight the challenges of collaborative governance in contexts with unequal power distribution (Young, 2020). This resonates with principal-agent theory,

where imbalances in power and information can create challenges for accountability and alignment of interests (Wenzel, 2018). In the Bangladeshi context, this power dynamic is further complicated by political interference, where political considerations often override technical expertise and community needs (Trein et al., 2021). The prevalence of non-compliance with regulations and a lack of effective corrective measures point to a systemic issue of weak accountability mechanisms in Bangladesh (Trein, 2020). This resonates with findings from other developing countries, where weak institutional capacity and enforcement mechanisms hinder effective governance (Rios, 2015). The lack of consequences for non-compliance perpetuates a culture of impunity, eroding public trust and hindering progress towards sustainable urban development. The presence of self-serving leadership within both City Corporations and national agencies raises concerns about ethical conduct and integrity in public service (Mathieu, 2021). This resonates with literature highlighting the importance of ethical leadership in promoting public trust and effective governance (Kassim, 2016). The findings underscore the need for stronger ethical frameworks, codes of conduct, and accountability mechanisms to ensure that public officials prioritize the public good over personal gain.

The consequences of coordination failures extend far beyond project delays and cost overruns. They ripple through the entire system, impacting the quality of infrastructure, the efficiency of service delivery, and the well-being of citizens. This study provides compelling evidence of the tangible costs of coordination failures, both in terms of financial resources and social impacts. The high prevalence of project delays, often leading to funding withdrawals and cost overruns, highlights the significant financial implications of coordination failures (van Gerven, 2018). This not only strains public budgets but also hinders development progress, as resources are



diverted from other essential services and projects. The findings underscore the need for efficient project management practices, clear communication channels, and effective dispute-resolution mechanisms to minimize delays and ensure the timely completion of projects. The prevalence of low-quality work and poor service quality directly impacts the lives of citizens, hindering access to essential services and compromising their well-being (Chan, 2022). This resonates with findings from other developing countries, where infrastructure deficits and inadequate service provision contribute to social inequalities and hinder economic development (Donnelly, 2019). The study highlights the need for stronger quality control mechanisms, performance-based incentives, and citizen feedback mechanisms to ensure that infrastructure projects and service delivery meet the needs of the community. The findings reveal the social consequences of coordination failures, including increased public harassment, stress, and frustration (Ríos, 2015). This highlights the importance of considering the social impacts of infrastructure development and service delivery, and the need for citizen engagement and participatory planning approaches to ensure that projects are responsive to community needs and concerns (Yan-Yi, 2015). The study underscores the importance of building trust and fostering a sense of ownership among citizens to ensure the success and sustainability of urban development initiatives.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights for policymakers, urban planners, and public administrators in Bangladesh and beyond. They highlight the urgent need for a multi-faceted approach to address the challenges of coordination and promote collaborative urban development. Strengthening governance frameworks includes clarifying roles and responsibilities, enhancing accountability mechanisms, and promoting transparency in decision-making processes (Wenzel, 2018). It also involves strengthening the capacity of City Corporations to

effectively plan and manage urban development projects, providing them with adequate resources and decision-making authority (Vasylyeva, 2023). Promoting collaborative culture requires fostering a culture of trust, communication, and shared decision-making among stakeholders (Olney, 2022). It involves promoting joint problem-solving, conflict-resolution mechanisms, and capacity-building initiatives to enhance mutual understanding and cooperation (Hegele, 2021). Empowering citizens entails incorporating citizen perspectives in planning and decision-making processes, ensuring that projects are responsive to community needs and priorities (McBeath, 2019). It involves establishing effective channels for citizen feedback, complaints, and redress to ensure accountability and responsiveness in service delivery. Addressing ethical concerns requires promoting ethical leadership, strengthening codes of conduct, and implementing effective anti-corruption measures (Young, 2020). It involves creating a culture of public service and accountability, where public officials prioritize the public good over personal gain.

5. Conclusion

This study has provided a comprehensive analysis of coordination failures in urban development projects in Bangladesh, drawing on rich qualitative data from Cumilla and Dhaka. The findings reveal a complex interplay of factors hindering effective collaboration between City Corporations and national agencies, including dysfunctional committees, power struggles, non-compliance with regulations, unclear roles, and political interference. These failures result in significant consequences, including poor work quality, project delays, funding withdrawals, and ultimately, compromised service delivery and increased public distress. The study underscores the urgent need for a multifaceted approach to improve coordination and enhance service delivery in urban areas. This includes strengthening governance frameworks, promoting a collaborative culture, empowering citizens, and



addressing ethical concerns. By implementing these recommendations, Bangladesh can move towards a more efficient and responsive system of urban development, ensuring that projects are completed on time, within budget, and to the benefit of all citizens. Further research is needed to assess the long-term impact of these interventions and to explore the specific challenges and opportunities in different urban contexts.

6. References

- Chan W-K, Shi S-J. 2022. Central coordination, regional competition, and local protectionism: Social decentralisation in China's long-term care reform. *Social Policy & Administration*. 56(6): 956–69.
- Donnelly M. 2019. Coordination of European policy inside the British government. *Public Administration*. 97(1): 226–30.
- Hegele Y. 2021. The impact of department structure on policy-making: How portfolio combinations affect interdepartmental coordination. *Public Policy and Administration*. 36(4): 429–51.
- Kassim H. 2016. London Calling: Revisiting the National Coordination of EU policy in the UK. *Revue française d administration publique*. N° 158(2): 431–46.
- Mathieu E, Matthys J, Verhoest K, Rommel J. 2021. Multilevel regulatory coordination: The interplay between European Union, federal and regional regulatory agencies. *Public Policy and Administration*. 36(3): 343–60.
- McBeath B, Chuang E, Carnochan S, Austin MJ, Stuart M. 2019. Service coordination by public sector managers in a human service contracting environment. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health*. 46(2): 115–27.
- Metsma M. 2017. Network-based coordination of civil-service training: Lessons from the case of Estonia. *NISPAcee Journal of Public Administration and Policy*. 10(1): 81–98.
- Mukhitdinov RD. 2024. Innovation policy coordination: The role of communication for Uzbekistan. *NISPAcee Journal of Public Administration and Policy*. 17(1): 120–41.
- Olney S, Devine A, Karanikolas P, Dimov S, Malbon J, Katsikis G. 2022. Disability and work in a health and economic crisis: Mitigating the risk of long-term labour market exclusion for Australians with disability through policy coordination. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*. 81(1): 163–80.
- Ríos AA. 2015. The political environment of metropolitan coordination: a political analysis of the metropolitan area of Guadalajara (Mexico). *Public Policy and Administration Review*. 3(1).
- Špaček D. 2014. Coordination of and through E-government: The case of the Czech Republic. *NISPAcee Journal of Public Administration and Policy*. 7(1): 83–106.
- Trein P, Biesbroek R, Bolognesi T, Cejudo GM, Duffy R, Hustedt T, et al. 2021. Policy coordination and integration: a research agenda. *Public Administration Review*. 81(5): 973–7.
- Trein P, Maggetti M. 2020. Patterns of policy integration and administrative coordination reforms: a comparative empirical analysis. *Public Administration Review*. 80(2): 198–208.
- Trein P, Tosun J. 2021. Varieties of public-private policy coordination: How the political economy affects multi-actor implementation. *Public Policy and Administration*. 36(3): 379–400.
- van Gerven M, Ossewaarde M. 2018. Beyond the neoliberal paradigm? Images of Social Europe in open method of coordination employment peer reviews. *Social Policy & Administration*. 52(7): 1354–66.
- Vasylieva O, Markushin O. 2023. Approaches to providing coordination of the regional development policy regarding the restoration of the territories damaged during the course of the war. *Public Administration and Regional Development*. 21, 642–66.



- Welsh WN, Knudsen HK, Knight K, Ducharme L, Pankow J, Urbine T, et al. 2016. Effects of an organizational linkage intervention on inter-organizational service coordination between probation/parole agencies and community treatment providers. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health*. 43(1): 105–21.
- Wenzel B. 2018. Rational instrument or symbolic signal? Explaining coordination structures in the Directorate-General for Fisheries and Maritime Affairs of the European Commission. *Public Policy and Administration*. 33(2): 149–69.
- Yan-Yi C, Huang ER-Y. 2015. The policy coordination of Taichung city government: The case of promotion office of low Carbon City. *Public Policy and Administration Review*. 3(1).
- Young AL. 2020. Radiation research and Policy Coordination: a successful model. *Urban Studies and Public Administration*. 3(3): 183.

