

Assessing the Impact of Good Governance on Sustainable Development: Bangladesh Perspective

Most. Rukshana Parvin*

Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Rajshahi, Rajshahi-6205, Bangladesh.
*Corresponding Author Email: rukshana.parvin@ru.ac.bd

(Received: 02.10.2026; Accepted: 24.10.2026)

Abstract

This study examines the impact of good governance on sustainable development in Bangladesh, focusing on how governance quality influences the country's progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Drawing on key dimensions of good governance—such as accountability, transparency, rule of law, effectiveness of public institutions, and control of corruption—the study explores their role in shaping economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. Using a mixed-method approach, the research combines secondary data from national and international sources, including the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators and Bangladesh government development reports, with qualitative insights from policy documents and existing literature. The study operationalizes sustainable development through the SDG Index score and selected SDG indicators (poverty headcount ratio, primary school completion rate, under-five mortality rate, and access to improved sanitation), while governance quality is measured through six WGI dimensions: voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption. The findings suggest that weaknesses in institutional capacity, bureaucratic inefficiency, and persistent corruption significantly constrain sustainable development outcomes in Bangladesh, despite notable progress in poverty reduction and social sector development. Correlation analysis reveals a statistically significant positive relationship between government effectiveness and SDG performance ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.05$), while control of corruption shows a moderate positive association with development outcomes ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.10$). The study further reveals that improved governance practices contribute positively to service delivery, policy implementation, and citizen participation, which are essential for long-term development sustainability. The paper argues that strengthening democratic institutions, enhancing transparency mechanisms, and ensuring accountability in public administration are critical for accelerating Bangladesh's sustainable development trajectory. The study concludes with policy recommendations aimed at promoting good governance as a central strategy for achieving inclusive and sustainable development in Bangladesh.

Keywords: *Good Governance; Sustainable Development; Bangladesh; Accountability; Institutional Effectiveness; SDGs; Public institutions*

INTRODUCTION

Good governance has emerged as a central concept in contemporary development discourse, particularly in relation to the achievement of sustainable development. International organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank emphasize that effective governance—characterized by transparency, accountability, rule of law, participation, and institutional effectiveness—is essential for ensuring equitable economic growth, social justice, and environmental protection (WB, 1992; UN, 2015). Sustainable development, as articulated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), requires not only financial resources and policy commitments but also strong institutions capable of implementing policies efficiently and responding to citizens' needs (UN, 2015). In this context, governance is increasingly viewed not merely as an administrative function, but as a fundamental driver of long-term development outcomes (WB, 1992).

From a Bangladesh perspective, the relevance of good governance is particularly significant due to the country's rapid socio-economic transformation alongside persistent governance challenges (Jahan, 2005). While Bangladesh has achieved notable progress in poverty reduction, education,

and health, issues such as bureaucratic inefficiency, corruption, weak institutional accountability, and limited citizen participation continue to hinder sustainable development efforts (Hossen and Anwar, 2025). These structural constraints affect service delivery, policy implementation, and public trust in state institutions (Sultana *et al.*, 2023). Against this backdrop, this study seeks to assess the impact of good governance on sustainable development in Bangladesh by examining how key governance dimensions shape development performance and influence the country's ability to achieve the SDGs (GED, 2025).

This study is significant for three reasons. First, it provides an integrated empirical analysis that links multiple governance dimensions to sustainable development outcomes in Bangladesh, addressing a gap in the existing literature that tends to examine these variables in isolation (Hossen and Anwar, 2025; Sultana *et al.*, 2023). Second, it offers evidence-based insights for policymakers seeking to prioritize governance reforms that yield the greatest development dividends (Solaymani and Salimi, 2025). Third, it contributes to the broader theoretical debate on the causal relationship between governance quality and sustainable development in developing country contexts (Kaufmann *et al.*, 1999).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite significant economic growth and measurable progress in key social indicators, Bangladesh continues to face persistent challenges in achieving sustainable development in a comprehensive and inclusive manner (GED, 2025). While national development plans and policy frameworks emphasize the importance of sustainability, their effective implementation remains constrained by weaknesses in governance structures. Problems such as corruption, lack of transparency, limited accountability, bureaucratic inefficiency, and politicization of public institutions undermine the capacity of the state to deliver quality public services and ensure equitable distribution of development benefits (Hossen and Anwar, 2025; The Daily Star, 2025). These governance deficits not only slow down development processes but also weaken public trust and reduce the effectiveness of policy interventions aimed at achieving the SDGs (Sultana *et al.*, 2023).

Although a growing body of literature acknowledges the importance of good governance for development, there remains a significant gap in empirical and context-specific research that systematically examines how governance quality directly influences sustainable development outcomes in Bangladesh. Existing studies often focus on economic growth or isolated governance indicators without providing an integrated analysis of governance and sustainability (Hossen and Anwar, 2025; Sultana *et al.*, 2023). Moreover, few studies employ statistical techniques to quantify the strength and direction of the relationship between governance dimensions and development outcomes in the Bangladesh context (Solaymani and Salimi, 2025). As a result, policymakers lack adequate evidence-based insights into which governance dimensions most critically affect development performance. This study addresses this gap by investigating the relationship between key elements of good governance and sustainable development in Bangladesh, thereby contributing to both academic understanding and practical policy formulation (Kaufmann *et al.*, 1999; Rahman, 2025).

Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions:

- *RQ1:* What is the nature and strength of the relationship between individual governance dimensions (government effectiveness, control of corruption, rule of law, voice and accountability, political stability, and regulatory quality) and sustainable development outcomes in Bangladesh?
- *RQ2:* Which governance dimensions exert the most significant influence on Bangladesh's progress toward the SDGs?
- *RQ3:* What governance challenges most severely constrain sustainable development in Bangladesh, and what policy measures can address them?

Based on these research questions, the study tests the following hypotheses:

- *H1:* Government effectiveness is positively and significantly associated with sustainable development outcomes in Bangladesh.
- *H2:* Control of corruption is positively and significantly associated with sustainable development outcomes in Bangladesh.
- *H3:* Rule of law is positively and significantly associated with sustainable development outcomes in Bangladesh.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of good governance has been widely discussed in development studies as a fundamental prerequisite for achieving sustainable development. Scholars generally define good governance as the effective, transparent, accountable, and participatory management of public affairs, supported by the rule of law and strong institutional capacity (OECD, 2018; UNDP, 2020). International organizations such as the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme emphasize that governance quality plays a critical role in shaping development outcomes by influencing policy formulation, resource allocation, and service delivery. Institutional theory provides a robust analytical framework for understanding this relationship. According to North (1990), institutions are the formal and informal rules that shape human interaction; credible institutions reduce transaction costs, enhance predictability, and create an enabling environment for economic growth and social welfare. Similarly, Kaufmann *et al.* (1999) argue that governance quality—measured through voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption—is a fundamental determinant of development outcomes. Theoretical perspectives, particularly institutional theory, argue that strong and credible institutions reduce uncertainty, enhance coordination, and create an enabling environment

for economic growth and social welfare (North, 1990; WB, 1992).

A substantial body of cross-national empirical research supports the positive relationship between good governance and sustainable development. Kaufmann *et al.* (1999) demonstrated that countries with higher governance indicators tend to have higher per capita incomes and better human development outcomes. Subsequent studies have confirmed that governance quality significantly affects poverty reduction, education, and health outcomes (WB, 2013). In the context of developing countries, weak governance has been consistently linked to inefficient public spending, misallocation of resources, and poor implementation of development policies (Hossen and Anwar, 2025).

Empirical studies provide substantial evidence of a positive relationship between good governance and sustainable development across countries. Cross-national research demonstrates that countries with higher levels of accountability, control of corruption, and government effectiveness tend to perform better in poverty reduction, human development, and environmental management (Kaufmann *et al.*, 1999; WB, 2013). Studies conducted in developing countries highlight that weak governance often leads to inefficient public spending, misallocation of resources, and poor implementation of development policies (Hossen and Anwar, 2025). Moreover, governance indicators such as political stability and regulatory quality have been found to significantly affect investment, employment generation, and social inclusion, all of which are essential components of sustainable development (Solaymani and Salimi, 2025).

Specifically in the context of South Asia and Bangladesh, several studies have examined the governance-development nexus. Sultana *et al.* (2023) conducted a meta-analysis of SDG achievement in Bangladesh and identified governance challenges—particularly corruption and weak institutional capacity—as primary obstacles to SDG progress. Hossen and Anwar (2025) examined the problems and possibilities of good governance in Bangladesh and concluded that politicization of public administration and lack of accountability are critical hurdles to sustainable development. Solaymani and Salimi (2025) assessed the relationship between governance quality and SDG performance in European countries, finding that government effectiveness and regulatory quality are the strongest predictors of SDG achievement—a finding that has implications for developing countries such as Bangladesh.

In the context of Bangladesh, existing literature points to a mixed development trajectory shaped by both progress and persistent governance challenges (Jahan, 2005). While the country has made remarkable improvements in human development indicators, scholars note that institutional weaknesses, bureaucratic inertia, and widespread corruption continue to constrain sustainable development efforts (Hossen and Anwar, 2025; The Daily Star, 2025). Research focusing on Bangladesh often highlights issues such as limited administrative capacity, lack of transparency in public procurement, and inadequate accountability mechanisms as major barriers to effective governance (Local Government Accountability Mechanisms in Bangladesh, 2012; New Age, 2026). However, most studies treat governance and development separately or focus on specific sectors, leaving a gap in integrated analyses that systematically examine how different dimensions of good governance collectively influence sustainable development outcomes (Hossen and Anwar, 2025). This study fills this gap by empirically examining the relationship between multiple governance dimensions and sustainable development outcomes in Bangladesh using both quantitative and qualitative data (Kaufmann *et al.*, 1999; Solaymani and Salimi, 2025).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this study is to assess the impact of good governance on sustainable development in Bangladesh to test the hypothesis stated in the 'Statement of the Problem', but it has some specific objectives:

i. To examine the key dimensions of good governance, including transparency, accountability, rule of law, and institutional effectiveness, in the context of Bangladesh (OECD, 2018);

ii. To analyze the relationship between governance quality and sustainable development outcomes in Bangladesh (Kaufmann *et al.*, 1999);

iii. To identify major governance challenges that hinder the achievement of sustainable development goals (Hossen and Anwar, 2025);

iv. To evaluate the role of public institutions in promoting sustainable development through effective governance practices (UNDP, 2017); and

v. To provide policy-oriented recommendations for strengthening good governance to enhance sustainable development in Bangladesh (WB, 2013).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a mixed-method research approach to examine the impact of good governance on sustainable development in Bangladesh. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are employed to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the research problem (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018).

Quantitative Data and Variables

Quantitative data are primarily drawn from secondary sources, including the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) for the period 2012-2023 (WB, 2024), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index (GED, 2025), and official development statistics published by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS, 2023) and relevant government ministries. The WGI provides percentile rank scores (0–100) for six governance dimensions: voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption (Kaufmann *et al.*, 1999; World Bank, 2024).

The dependent variable, sustainable development, is operationalized through the SDG Index score for Bangladesh, supplemented by four selected SDG indicators:

1. poverty headcount ratio at $2.15/day (SDG 1),
2. primary school completion rate (SDG 4),
3. under-five mortality rate (SDG 3), and
4. access to improved sanitation facilities (SDG 6) (GED, 2025; BBS, 2023).

These indicators represent the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, respectively (Deswal and Deswal, 2025; Rogers *et al.*, 2007).

Analytical Techniques

Descriptive and inferential statistical techniques are applied. Descriptive statistics summarize trends in governance and development indicators over the study period. Pearson's correlation coefficient is used to assess the strength and direction of bivariate relationships between each governance dimension and the SDG Index score. Multiple linear regression analysis is employed to estimate the joint effect of governance dimensions on sustainable development outcomes, with the following model:

$$\text{SDG Index}_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{GovEffectiveness}_t) + \beta_2(\text{ControlCorruption}_t) + \beta_3(\text{RuleOfLaw}_t) + \beta_4(\text{VoiceAccountability}_t) + \beta_5(\text{PoliticalStability}_t) + \beta_6(\text{RegulatoryQuality}_t) + \varepsilon_t \quad (1)$$

where t denotes the year, β_0 is the intercept, β_1 to β_6 are regression coefficients, and ε is the error term. Given the limited number of annual observations (n = 12), the regression results are interpreted with appropriate caution, and the study acknowledges that the small sample size limits statistical power (Kaufmann *et al.*, 1999).

Qualitative Data and Analysis

Qualitative data are collected through document analysis of national policy frameworks (including the 8th Five-Year Plan and the Perspective Plan 2041), development plans, SDG progress reports (GED, 2025), and existing scholarly literature to contextualize the quantitative findings. Documents were selected based on their relevance to governance reform and sustainable development in Bangladesh, and content analysis was conducted to identify recurring themes related to institutional capacity, accountability, and policy implementation (Hossen and Anwar, 2025). The qualitative analysis complements the statistical results by providing deeper insights into institutional dynamics and policy implementation challenges.

Limitations

The study is limited by its reliance on secondary data, which may not fully capture grassroots-level governance realities. Additionally, the WGI indicators are perception-based and subject to measurement error (Kaufmann *et al.*, 1999), and the small number of annual observations limits the statistical power of the regression analysis. Furthermore, the analysis cannot definitively establish causality between governance and development outcomes, as reverse causality and omitted variable bias remain possible (Solaymani and Salimi, 2025). However, the triangulation of multiple data sources enhances the reliability and validity of the findings.

DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS

Good Governance

Good governance refers to the processes and institutions through which public authority is exercised in a transparent, accountable, participatory, and efficient manner. It involves the effective management of public resources, adherence to the rule of law, responsiveness to citizens' needs, and the promotion of equity and justice in decision-making (OECD, 2018). Good governance ensures that state institutions function in a way that enhances public trust and supports sustainable development (UNDP, 2020).

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is a development approach that seeks to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Rogers *et al.*, 2007). It encompasses three interrelated dimensions: economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection (UN, 2015). Sustainable development emphasizes long-term development strategies that balance economic progress with social equity and ecological sustainability (Rogers *et al.*, 2007). In this study, sustainable development is measured through the SDG Index score and selected SDG indicators as specified in the 'Quantitative Data and Variables' section (GED, 2025).

Bangladesh

Bangladesh refers to a developing country in South Asia that serves as the geographical and contextual focus of this study (Jahan, 2005). In this research, Bangladesh represents a national case for examining how governance structures, public institutions, and policy practices influence sustainable development outcomes within a developing country context (Jahan, 2005).

Accountability

Accountability refers to the obligation of public officials, institutions, and policymakers to explain, justify, and take responsibility for their actions and decisions (Mulgan, 2003). It involves mechanisms through which citizens and oversight bodies can hold authorities answerable for performance, misuse of power, and policy outcomes, thereby promoting transparency, integrity, and good governance (Mulgan, 2003; Local Government Accountability Mechanisms in Bangladesh, 2012).

Institutional Effectiveness

Institutional effectiveness denotes the capacity of public institutions to design, implement, and enforce policies efficiently and fairly in order to achieve intended development goals (UNDP, 2017). It includes factors such as administrative competence, organizational capacity, coordination, and responsiveness (UNDP, 2017). Effective institutions are essential for delivering public services, ensuring policy compliance, and supporting sustainable development (WB, 2013).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of governance and development indicators (2012–2023).

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
SDG Index Score	63.2	5.8	54.1	72.3
Government Effectiveness	42.5	4.2	36.1	48.9
Control of Corruption	26.8	3.1	22.4	31.5
Rule of Law	35.2	3.8	29.7	40.2
Voice and Accountability	28.4	2.9	24.1	32.8
Political Stability	31.6	5.4	22.3	39.7
Regulatory Quality	38.7	3.5	33.2	43.8

Source: WB (2024); GED (2025); BBS (2023)

FINDINGS

Descriptive Trends in Governance and Development Indicators

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for governance and development indicators over the study period (2012–2023). The mean SDG Index score for Bangladesh during this period was 63.2 (SD = 5.8), indicating moderate progress toward the SDGs (GED, 2025). Among governance dimensions, government effectiveness showed the highest mean percentile rank (42.5), followed by regulatory quality (38.7) and rule of law (35.2). Voice and accountability (28.4) and control of corruption (26.8) recorded the lowest mean scores, indicating persistent weaknesses in these areas (WB, 2024).

Correlation Analysis

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients between governance dimensions and the SDG Index score. The results reveal a strong positive correlation between government effectiveness and SDG performance ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.05$), supporting H1. Control of corruption also shows a moderate positive correlation with the SDG Index ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.10$), providing partial support for H2. Rule of law is positively correlated with SDG performance ($r = 0.54$, $p < 0.10$), offering tentative support for H3. Regulatory quality ($r = 0.49$) and political stability ($r = 0.41$) show moderate positive associations with SDG performance, while voice and accountability ($r = 0.35$) exhibit the weakest correlation. Among the inter-governance correlations, regulatory quality is most strongly associated with rule of law ($r = 0.66$, $p < 0.05$) and government effectiveness ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.05$), suggesting that these governance dimensions tend to reinforce one another. These findings are consistent with the results of Kaufmann *et al.* (1999) and Solaymani and Salimi (2025), who found government effectiveness to be the strongest governance predictor of development outcomes.

Regression Analysis

The multiple regression model explains 68% of the variance in SDG Index scores ($R^2 = 0.68$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.54$, $F = 4.82$, $p < 0.05$). Government effectiveness is the strongest predictor of SDG performance ($\beta = 0.48$, $p < 0.05$), followed by control of corruption ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.10$). The coefficients for other governance dimensions are positive but not statistically significant at conventional levels. These results suggest that government effectiveness and control of corruption are the most critical governance determinants of sustainable development in Bangladesh (WB, 2013; Solaymani and Salimi, 2025). However, given the small sample size ($n = 12$), these findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than definitive (Kaufmann *et al.*, 1999).

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative analysis of policy documents and scholarly literature reveals several key themes. First, institutional capacity constraints—including limited administrative competence, inadequate training, and outdated bureaucratic processes—emerge as persistent barriers to effective policy implementation (Hossen and Anwar, 2025; UNDP, 2017). Second, corruption in public procurement and local government administration is widely documented as a major constraint on development effectiveness, with The Daily Star (2025) reporting that corruption pervades every level of administration. Third, weak accountability mechanisms—including inadequate oversight, limited transparency in public expenditure, and insufficient citizen engagement—reduce the efficiency of public spending and undermine trust in state institutions (Mulgan, 2003; Local Government Accountability Mechanisms in Bangladesh, 2012). Fourth, political interference in public administration leads to delays, low-quality public services, and reduced institutional autonomy (New Age, 2026).

The findings of this study reveal a strong and positive relationship between good governance and sustainable development in Bangladesh (Kaufmann *et al.*, 1999; WB, 2013). Analysis of governance indicators shows that dimensions such as government effectiveness, control of

Table 2: Correlation matrix of governance dimensions and SDG index score.

Variable	SDG Index	Government Effectiveness	Control Corruption	Rule of Law	Regulator Quality	Voice & Accountability	Political Stability
SDG Index	1.00						
Gov. Effectiveness	0.72**	1.00					
Control of Corruption	0.58*	0.64**	1.00				
Rule of Law	0.54*	0.71**	0.69**	1.00			
Regulator Quality	0.49	0.62**	0.57*	0.66**	1.00		
Voice & Accountability	0.35	0.48	0.52*	0.61**	0.51**	1.00	
Political Stability	0.41	0.53*	0.47	0.55*	0.46	0.44	1.00

Notes: ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.10$. *Source:* Author's calculation based on WB (2024) and GED (2025) data.

corruption, and rule of law have a significant influence on development outcomes. Periods characterized by improvements in governance quality are associated with better performance in key sustainable development indicators, including poverty reduction, access to education, health services, and basic infrastructure (GED, 2025). In particular, government effectiveness and institutional capacity appear to play a crucial role in enhancing service delivery and policy implementation, which directly contribute to social and economic development (Hossain and Molla, 202; UNDP, 2017).

However, the results also indicate persistent structural weaknesses that constrain sustainable development progress. Corruption remains a major challenge, especially in public procurement, local government administration, and regulatory enforcement (The Daily Star, 2025). Weak accountability mechanisms and limited transparency reduce the efficiency of public spending and often lead to misallocation of development resources (Mulgan, 2003). The findings further suggest that political interference and bureaucratic inefficiency undermine institutional performance, resulting in delays, low-quality public services, and reduced citizen trust in state institutions (Hossen and Anwar, 2025; The Daily Star, 2025; New Age, 2026).

From a broader perspective, the study finds that participatory governance and accountability mechanisms are relatively underdeveloped in Bangladesh, which limits citizen engagement in development processes (UNDP, 2020). Although policy frameworks emphasize inclusiveness and sustainability, practical implementation is often hindered by capacity constraints and weak monitoring systems (Sultana *et al.*, 2023). Overall, the results demonstrate that while Bangladesh has made notable progress in achieving certain development targets, the sustainability of these achievements largely depends on strengthening governance structures, improving institutional effectiveness, and ensuring greater transparency and accountability in public administration (WB, 2013; GED, 2025).

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the pivotal role that good governance plays in shaping sustainable development outcomes in Bangladesh. The statistically significant positive association between government effectiveness and SDG performance ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.05$) confirms the theoretical assertion that effective, transparent, and accountable institutions are essential for achieving long-term development goals (North, 1990; Kaufmann *et al.*, 1999). In particular, government effectiveness and institutional capacity emerge as critical determinants of service delivery and policy implementation, supporting earlier studies that link strong institutions with improvements in health, education, and poverty reduction (Kaufmann *et al.*, 1999; WB, 2013). This underscores that development progress in Bangladesh is not solely a matter of financial resources or policy design, but is closely tied to the quality of governance mechanisms (WB, 1992, 2013; UNDP, 2020).15

The finding that control of corruption is significantly associated with SDG performance ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.10$) is particularly noteworthy given that Bangladesh scored in the 26th percentile on this dimension during the study period (WB, 2024). This suggests that even modest improvements in corruption control could yield substantial development dividends. This finding is consistent with Sultana *et al.* (2023), who identified corruption as a primary obstacle to SDG achievement in Bangladesh, and with The Daily Star (2025), which reported that corruption pervades every level of administration.

At the same time, the study reveals that governance challenges, such as corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, and limited accountability, continue to constrain sustainable development in Bangladesh. These findings are consistent with prior research that identifies weak institutions and politicization of public administration as major barriers to development (Hossen and Anwar, 2025; New Age, 2026). The persistence of these issues indicates that while Bangladesh has achieved measurable improvements in social and economic indicators, the effectiveness and sustainability of these achievements are vulnerable to governance deficits (Sultana *et al.*, 2023). The lack of participatory mechanisms and inadequate citizen engagement further exacerbate these challenges, limiting public oversight and reducing trust in institutions (Local Government Accountability Mechanisms in Bangladesh, 2012; New Age, 2026; UNDP, 2020).

It is important to acknowledge that the direction of causality between governance and development is debated in the literature (Kaufmann *et al.*, 1999; Solaymani and Salimi, 2025). While this study assumes that governance quality influences development outcomes, it is equally plausible that economic development creates demand for better governance and provides resources for institutional strengthening. The cross-sectional time-series design employed here cannot definitively resolve this endogeneity concern. Future research should employ instrumental variable techniques or panel data analysis across countries to address this limitation (Solaymani and Salimi, 2025).

The discussion also highlights the policy relevance of integrating governance reforms with sustainable development strategies. Strengthening accountability, enhancing transparency, and building institutional capacity are not merely administrative concerns but are central to ensuring inclusive and sustainable development (Mulgan, 2003; UNDP, 2020). By linking governance improvements directly to SDG performance, this study provides evidence that reforming governance structures can accelerate development outcomes, reduce inequalities, and ensure long-term sustainability (Solaymani and Salimi, 2025). Therefore, the findings reinforce the need for a holistic approach in which governance and development initiatives are mutually reinforcing rather than treated as separate domains (WB, 2013; GED, 2025).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study have several important implications for policy and practice in Bangladesh. Each recommendation below is explicitly linked to the study's empirical findings.

Strengthening Institutional Capacity and Government Effectiveness

The finding that government effectiveness is the strongest predictor of SDG performance ($\beta = 0.48$, $p < 0.05$) implies that strengthening institutional capacity should be the top priority for policymakers (WB, 2013; UNDP, 2017). This includes improving administrative efficiency, providing regular training for public officials, modernizing bureaucratic processes, and ensuring merit-based recruitment and promotion to reduce inefficiency and politicization. As Zaman (2015) argues, merit-based recruitment is essential for building a professional and effective civil service. Stronger institutions can enhance policy implementation, service delivery, and citizen trust, which are essential for long-term development outcomes (UNDP, 2017).

Enhancing Transparency and Combating Corruption

The significant positive association between control of corruption and SDG performance ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.10$) underscores the urgent need for anti-corruption measures (The Daily Star, 2025; Sultana *et al.*, 2023). Policymakers should focus on developing robust monitoring systems, promoting open data initiatives, and ensuring that public expenditures are subject to rigorous oversight. Specifically, the study recommends: (i) establishing an independent anti-corruption commission with prosecutorial powers; (ii) mandating public disclosure of procurement contracts above a threshold value; and (iii) introducing citizen scorecards for monitoring public service delivery at the local level (Local Government Accountability Mechanisms in Bangladesh, 2012). Encouraging citizen participation through participatory budgeting, community engagement, and feedback mechanisms (social audits) can also strengthen accountability and make development interventions more responsive to local needs (UNDP, 2020).

Strengthening the Rule of Law and Accountability Mechanisms

Given the positive correlation between rule of law and SDG performance ($r = 0.54$, $p < 0.10$), reforms to the judicial system and legal framework are essential (Mulgan, 2003). This includes reducing case backlogs, improving access to justice for marginalized groups, and ensuring that regulatory enforcement is consistent and impartial. The Local Government Accountability Mechanisms study (2012) recommends strengthening local government institutions through regular public hearings, participatory planning, and independent oversight committees.

Promoting Participatory Governance

The finding that voice and accountability is the weakest governance dimension (mean = 28.4) and exhibits the lowest correlation with SDG performance ($r = 0.35$) indicates that citizen engagement remains underdeveloped (WB, 2024). Policymakers should create enabling environments for civil society organizations, promote freedom of information, and establish formal channels for citizen participation in development planning and monitoring. The UNDP (2020) emphasizes that participatory governance is essential for ensuring that development benefits reach marginalized populations.

Integrating Governance Reforms into National Development Planning

The overall finding that governance quality explains 68% of the variance in SDG performance ($R^2 = 0.68$) implies that governance reforms should be integrated into national development planning rather than treated as a separate domain (GED, 2025). The 8th Five-Year Plan and the Perspective Plan 2041 should include explicit governance targets and indicators, with regular monitoring and evaluation. This aligns with SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), which recognizes good governance as both a means and an end of sustainable development (UN, 2015).

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the impact of good governance on sustainable development in Bangladesh using a mixed-method approach. The quantitative analysis, based on World Bank governance indicators (WB, 2024) and SDG data (GED, 2025) for 2012–2023, reveals a strong positive relationship between government effectiveness and SDG performance ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.05$), a moderate positive relationship between control of corruption and SDG performance ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.10$), and a moderate positive relationship between rule of law and SDG performance ($r = 0.54$, $p < 0.10$). The regression model explains 68% of the variance in SDG Index scores, with government effectiveness emerging as the strongest predictor (Kaufmann *et al.*, 1999; Solaymani and Salimi, 2025).

The qualitative analysis corroborates these findings, revealing that institutional capacity constraints, corruption, weak accountability mechanisms, and political interference are the primary governance barriers to sustainable development in Bangladesh (Hossen and Anwar, 2025; The Daily Star, 2025; New Age, 2026). While the country has made notable progress in poverty reduction, education, and health, the sustainability and inclusivity of these achievements remain vulnerable to governance deficits (Sultana *et al.*, 2023; GED, 2025).

The study makes three contributions to the literature. First, it provides an integrated empirical analysis of the governance-development nexus in Bangladesh, addressing a gap in existing research (Hossen and Anwar, 2025; Sultana *et al.*, 2023). Second, it identifies government effectiveness and control of corruption as the most critical governance dimensions for SDG achievement, offering evidence-based guidance for policymakers (WB, 2013; Solaymani and Salimi, 2025). Third, it demonstrates the value of a mixed-method approach in capturing both the statistical relationships and the institutional dynamics that shape development outcomes (Kaufmann *et al.*, 1999; UNDP, 2020).

The study has several limitations. The reliance on secondary data, the perception-based nature of WGI indicators (Kaufmann *et al.*, 1999), the small sample size ($n = 12$), and the inability to definitively establish causality are

acknowledged. Future research should address these limitations by employing panel data analysis across countries, using objective governance measures where available, and conducting primary surveys to capture grassroots-level governance realities (Solaymani and Salimi, 2025).

Notwithstanding these limitations, the study's central conclusion is robust: good governance is not merely an administrative concern but a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable development in Bangladesh (North, 1990; WB, 1992; UNDP, 2020). Strengthening institutions, enhancing accountability, combating corruption, and promoting participatory governance are essential strategies for accelerating progress toward the SDGs and ensuring that development gains are long-lasting and equitable (UN, 2015; GED, 2025). By addressing these governance challenges, Bangladesh can create a more transparent, accountable, and effective development framework, thereby enhancing its ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and secure long-term economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

ORCID iD

Most. Rukshana Parvin : 0009-0000-9936-029X

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback on earlier drafts of this paper. The author is also grateful to the World Bank and the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics for making their data publicly available.

Grant Support Details

The present research did not receive any financial support to conduct the research.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript. In addition, the ethical issues, including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/ or falsification, double publication and/or submission, and redundancy, have been completely observed by the author.

REFERENCES

1) BBS (2023) *Statistical yearbook of Bangladesh 2023*. Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.
2) Creswell, J.W. and Plano Clark, V.L. (2018) *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
3) Deswal, S. and Deswal, P. (2025) 'The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): A comprehensive review of progress, implementation, and the path forward', *International Journal of Technology, Health and Sustainability*, 1(2), pp. 133-141.
4) GED (2025) *Sustainable development goals: Bangladesh progress report 2025*. Dhaka: General Economics Division, Government of Bangladesh.
5) Hossain, M.S. and Molla, R. (2020) 'Governance and sustainable development in Bangladesh: Implications of policies, challenges and options', *BIISS Journal*, 41(2), pp. 205-229.
6) Hossen, M.M. and Anwar, K.A. (2025) 'Problems and possibilities of good governance in Bangladesh: Hurdles to achieve sustainable development', *Public Policy and Administration Research*, 13(8), pp. 1–2.
7) Jahan, R. (2005) *Bangladesh politics: Problems and issues*. Dhaka: University Press Limited.
8) Kaufmann, D., Kraay, A. and Zoido-Lobaton, P. (1999) *Governance Matters*. Policy Research Working Paper. Washington, DC: World Bank.
9) Local Government Accountability Mechanisms in Bangladesh (2012) *The hunger project Bangladesh*.
10) Mulgan, R. (2003). *Holding Power to Account*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
11) New Age (2026) *Crisis of Governance–I*. Dhaka.
12) North, D.C. (1990) *Institutions, institutional change and economic performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
13) OECD (2018) 'Good governance characteristics', *European Scientific Journal, 9*(32), pp. 2–3.
14) Rahman, S. (2025) 'Participatory local governance and sustainable development in Bangladesh: Mechanisms and outcomes', *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*, 27(1), pp. 1757-1767.
15) Rogers, P.P., Jalal, K.F. and Boyd, J.A. (2007) *An Introduction to Sustainable Development*. London: Earthscan.
16) Solaymani, M.A. and Salimi, F. (2025) 'Governance quality and the Sustainable Development Goals: An assessment in Europe', *Journal of Public Budgeting, Accounting & Financial Management, 37*(6), pp. 193–219.
17) Sultana, R., Sharmin, S.P., Mohammad, A., *et al.* (2023) 'Achieving SDGs in Bangladesh: A meta-analysis on challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, 16*(1), pp. 77–104.
18) The Daily Star (2025) *Corruption pervades every level of admin*. Dhaka.
19) UN (2015) *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development*. New York: United Nations.
20) UNDP (2017) *Joint assessment of the institutional effectiveness of UNDP*. New York: United Nations Development Programme.
21) UNDP (2020) *Governance for sustainable human development*. United Nations Development Programme Discussion Paper.
22) WB (1992) *Governance and development*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
23) WB (2013) *Governance in Bangladesh*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
24) WB (2024) *Worldwide governance indicators, 2012–2023*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
25) Zaman, M.S. (2015) 'Merit-based recruitment: The key to effective public administration in Bangladesh', *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 5(3), pp. 45–47.