

# **GRIEVANCE REDRESS SYSTEM IN BANGLADESH:**

## **EXPERIENCE OF SERVICE SEEKERS OF FIELD-LEVEL OFFICES**

**Md. Morshed Alom, Ph.D.**



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Savar, Dhaka**

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This research report is submitted to the BPATC authority to fulfil the researcher's professional obligation to meet a decision taken by its research committee in its 56<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 10 May 2020.



**Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre  
Savar, Dhaka**

## ABSTRACT

Addressing the grievances of the service seekers of public offices in Bangladesh through an institutional mechanism is a recent phenomenon. The initiatives taken in 2007 for institutionalizing a grievance redress system (GRS) gradually developed into the publication of GRS guidelines in 2018 in an amended version. In this backdrop, the current study was taken with the objectives of (a) outlining the programme theory of the GRS implementation and (b) assessing the part of the programme theory that relates to the field-level offices. The revealed idea of the programme theory helped further specifying the second objective into four component parts which included examining the activities about publicity by relevant public offices about the GRS, the immediate result of this publicity in the form of knowledge of the service seekers about the GRS, their experience of public services including quality and satisfaction, and their actual behaviour about complaining.

Service seekers of Upazila level offices participated in a questionnaire survey and have given qualitative interviews. Four Upazilas from four districts of four divisions were chosen for the study purposively to have geographical representation. One hundred service seekers from each selected Upazila participated in the survey, out of which twenty had given interviews. In total, 400 service seekers took part in the survey and 77 in the interviews. The service seekers of three land-related offices (settlement office, sub-register's office, and land office), health complex, election office, rural electrification office, accounts office, and education office, among others, were covered by the study on the assumption that grievances occur in these field-level offices the most.

The research followed the grounded theory approach and used mixed methods in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. As per the grounded theory tradition, data collection and data processing went on concurrently. The thematic approach was applied to the interview data for processing and analysis. In contrast, the survey data were processed through the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) and used both descriptive and inferential statistics such as regression analysis.

The revealed programme theory of the GRS implementation starts with an assumption of publicity of the GRS. The Upazila level service seekers are in darkness about the complaints mechanism as it is a new initiative of the government. Without publicity of the mechanism, service seekers will not lodge complaints. The lodging of complaints by aggrieved service seekers and processing the complaints are the next two steps in the programme theory. From publicity to processing of complaints, the relevant authority needs supervision and monitoring, which is considered the fourth step. The final component of the programme theory is the ultimate result of the GRS, and that is the satisfaction of the service seekers.

The findings show poor publicity about the GRS by the relevant public officials. The result is empty knowledge of the field-level service seekers about the complaining mechanism of the GRS. The service experience of the field-level service seekers incorporates an abundance of harassment by their providers in the form of showing apathy to the needs of the service seekers, giving them recurring dates for a single service, extracting money from them much above the government rates, and remaining absent in office during service providing hours. This behaviour of the service providers results in the service seekers' mediocre satisfaction with the service they receive.

This service experience is not reflected in the expected complaining behaviour of the service seekers. Despite being aggrieved, none is willing to lodge complaints against public officials. One prominent reason is the lack of trust in the systems. No one was found to believe in the functionality of the GRS-induced complaints mechanism. Secondly, the service seekers widely believed that complaints would return with retaliation from the service providers in the form of putting them into more harassment. Thirdly, but to a lesser extent, the perceived incapacity emanating from poverty and illiteracy or lower level of education, and the mentality of a high level of tolerance of harassment refrain the service seekers from complaining against their service providers.

The study recommends massive awareness-building efforts that should inform the service seekers about the existence of the GRS; remove their fear of reprisal from their service providers; and bring their trust in public offices about the functionality of systems. Secondly, a user-friendly system of complaining using mobile phones, especially for complaining against the service providers of the Upazila-level offices, is necessary. Finally, future researchers can undertake similar studies on district, department, agency, and ministry level offices about complaining behaviour of service users, processing of complaints, and the supervision and monitoring roles of the relevant agencies in implementing the GRS guidelines.

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The Researcher

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT . . . . .	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT . . . . .	v
ABBREVIATIONS . . . . .	xi
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION . . . . .</b>	<b>01</b>
1.1 Background . . . . .	01
1.2 Objective. . . . .	03
1.3 Rationale. . . . .	03
1.4 Scope and Limitations . . . . .	04
1.5 Organization of the Report . . . . .	04
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW. . . . .</b>	<b>05</b>
2.1 Programme Theory. . . . .	05
2.2 Justice . . . . .	06
2.3 Administrative Justice . . . . .	06
2.4 Design Principles of Redress Mechanisms . . . . .	07
2.5 Redress Mechanisms as Accountability Forums. . . . .	09
2.6 Complaining Behaviour . . . . .	09
<b>CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY . . . . .</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1 Introduction . . . . .	11
3.2 Approach . . . . .	11
3.3 Data Collection . . . . .	11
3.4 Sample and Sample Size . . . . .	13
3.5 Data Processing and Analysis . . . . .	16
<b>CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS . . . . .</b>	<b>17</b>
4.1 GRS Guidelines and Upazila-Level Service Seekers . . . . .	17
4.2 GRS Programme Theory . . . . .	18
4.3 Publicity of the GRS . . . . .	21
4.4 Knowledge about Complaints Mechanism. . . . .	22
4.4.1 Misconception . . . . .	22



4.4.2 Source of Information . . . . .	25
4.5 Service Experience . . . . .	25
4.5.1 Apathetic Responsibility . . . . .	25
4.5.2 Recurring Visits . . . . .	27
4.5.3 Moneymaking . . . . .	29
4.5.4 Absenteeism . . . . .	32
4.5.5 Quality and Satisfaction . . . . .	34
4.6 Complaining Behaviour . . . . .	39
4.6.1 Trust . . . . .	41
4.6.2 Fear of Reprisal . . . . .	44
4.6.3 Incapacity . . . . .	45
4.6.4 Tolerance . . . . .	47
4.6.5 Preferred Mode of (future) Complaining . . . . .	48
<b>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION . . . . .</b>	<b>51</b>
REFERENCE . . . . .	55
APPENDICES . . . . .	59

## LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 3:1 Study Areas . . . . .	13
Table 3:2 Demographic Information of Survey Respondents . . . . .	13
Table 3:3 Demographic Information of Interview Respondents. . . . .	15
Table 4:1 Respondents Knowledge about Complaints Mechanism . . . . .	22
Table 4:2 Occupation, Education and Knowledge on Complaints Mechanism. . . . .	23
Table 4:3 SERVQUAL Items Analysis Results. . . . .	35
Table 4:4 SERVQUAL Dimension Scores across Offices . . . . .	36
Table 4:5 Correlation Matrix . . . . .	38
Table 4:6 Relative Importance of the Five Dimensions in Predicting Satisfaction . . . . .	39
Table 4:7 Complaints Against Service Providers . . . . .	40
Table 4:8 Knowledge on Complaints Mechanism and Having a Complaint . . . . .	40
Table 4:9 Occupation-wise Respondents' Knowledge about GRS Issues . . . . .	40
Figure 1: Programme Theory of GRS . . . . .	21



## ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Assistant Commissioner
ACC	Anti-Corruption Commission
BPATC	Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre
BRC	BPATC Research Committee
DPEO	District Primary Education Officer
GMC	Grievance Management Cell
GMSC	Grievance Management Steering Committee
GOB	Government of Bangladesh
GRS	Grievance Redress System
GSO	Grievance Settlement Officer
HSC	Higher Secondary Certificate
KII	Key Informant Interview
MBA	Master of Business Administration
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NID	National Identity
SMS	Short Message Service
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SSC	Senior Staff Course
	Secondary School Certificate
UNO	Upazila Nirbahi Officer



# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

The grievance redress system (GRS) is a vital part of the public administration mechanism of a country for enhancing its administrative justice. Administrative justice refers to the qualities of a decision-making process that justifies its decisions (Mashaw 1983). It is unusual that every decision of every public administration authority will be perfect and satisfy the citizens who are affected by the decisions. The GRS provides the aggrieved citizens an opportunity to lodge their complaints. Despite having such systems, very few aggrieved citizens go to the GRS forum for complaints (Ison 1999, Felstiner et al. 1980-1981). Research studies report the existence of complexity and duplicity in the GRS practiced worldwide (Bondy and Le Sueur 2012). In their study, Bondy and Le Sueur (2012) found that these systems are sprawling but are lightly and sporadically coordinated by governments. Therefore, the design of the GRS should be a joined-up and constitutionally significant activity that is insufficiently recognized (Sueur 2012). Other researchers suggested that, for understanding the effectiveness of the GRS, the accountability regimes of a country may provide a helpful framework (Robinson 2013).

As a part of its ongoing reform initiatives, the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) introduced its GRS. The first initiative was taken in 2007 by the caretaker government. At that time, the Cabinet Division (2007) issued a circular asking each ministry and division to appoint a focal point of the rank of a secretary or an officer selected by him. This same circular also asked the ministries and divisions to select focal points in their subordinate offices, asking them to adopt measures to receive complaints from service seekers and resolve them in the way their ministries and divisions do. The objective of appointing such focal points was to resolve various complaints made against officials by service seekers effectively. This initiative was expected to contribute to enhancing the standard of public services in the administration by bringing in transparency and accountability in public administration and preventing corruption.

The circular (Cabinet Division 2007) stated six specific responsibilities of the focal point. First, it was the responsibility of the focal point to keep the officials of the ministry and its service seekers abreast of the prevailing grievance redress system. However, the circular did not detail out any system for addressing the complaints from service-seekers. The other responsibilities of the focal point included resolving the grievances impartially and transparently; making a recommendation if the complaints needed quick disposal or arbitration; placing the complaints, considering their importance, at the appropriate authorities; informing complainants, considering the importance of complaints, about the reception of their complaints, redress system, and the final decision of the authorities about the complaints; keeping complete records of reception of all complaints and their disposal.

Following the development made by the caretaker government regarding the introduction of the GRS, a second circular was issued by the Cabinet Division on 30 April 2008. This was an endorsement by the elected government of the GRS introduced by the caretaker government. This second circular emphasized establishing an effective internal controlling mechanism in each office for redressing complaints from service seekers about corruption and other irregularities. This time the

government asked the offices to make public on the websites of the ministries and divisions information about the process of grievance redress and detailed contact information of the focal points. The circular (Cabinet Division 2008) asked to make a database of complaints and their status and send up-to-date information about this to the Cabinet Division every month. In addition, the ministries and divisions were asked to publicize among citizens about the process of complaining and their disposal.

The Cabinet Division issued a third circular on 19 July 2009 after more than one year of the issuance of the second one where it reminded the ministries and divisions of the previous two circulars. This new circular noted that some ministries and divisions were not sending their up-to-date information about the reception of complaints and their disposal to the Cabinet Division regularly. Therefore, it asked for taking appropriate measures by the ministries for fulfilling the requirements as were stated in the previous two circulars and compulsorily sending information to the Cabinet Division by the tenth day of each month following a prescribed format.

After three years of publication of the third circular, the Cabinet Division again issued the fourth circular on 23 September 2012. It urged the ministries and divisions to follow the directives given in the previous three circulars. In addition, this new circular (Cabinet Division 2012) asked the ministries and divisions to introduce awards for competent officials involved in the reception and disposal of complaints. Moreover, this circular directed the ministries and divisions to publicize in the electronic and print media about the current system of complaints reception and their disposal to enhance awareness among the service seekers about the GRS. Finally, it asked the ministries and divisions to make public in their websites year-wise complete information about complaints reception and disposal.

The GOB formulated and published detailed guidelines for implementing a GRS in the public offices in 2015, which was later modified in 2018 (Cabinet Division 2018). These guidelines defined the concept of the complaint as electronically or traditionally submitted applications by service seekers about dissatisfaction about committed services, goods, and service delivery process of a public office, about unlawful actions regarding services, about non-compliance of public officials with entertaining lawful rights of service seekers. Grievances were classified into public, staff, and official categories. In addition, the guidelines detailed out processes and the roles of different officials involved in the GRS.

The general objective of the GRS is to enhance the satisfaction of the service seekers of public offices. However, there is no study on how the public offices are functioning regarding implementing the GRS policy guidelines to enhance the satisfaction of service seekers. In other words, whether the GRS implementation has been able to address the grievances faced by service seekers has remained unexplored. This research intends to address this gap in the literature about assessing the implementation of the GRS guidelines. It focuses on the implementation of the GRS in the frontline public offices in Bangladesh. Although the concept of frontline offices refers to the field administration of the GOB, i.e., district and sub-district (Upazila) offices, this study focuses on the experiences of the service seekers of the Upazila level offices. The study findings are expected to contribute to policymaking regarding the GRS implementation in Bangladesh.

## 1.2 OBJECTIVE

The modified GRS guidelines (Cabinet Division 2018) of the government stated that the general purpose of the introduction of the GRS was to ensure the delivery of sufferings-free public services to the citizens. A robust accountability mechanism can help the attainment of this purpose. Therefore, the GRS was thought to strengthen the service providers' accountability to the citizens, which, in turn, can help improve the quality of services and consolidate good governance. In addition to the general purpose, the modified GRS guidelines (Cabinet Division 2018) stated two broad objectives of the GRS: (a) to enhance the quality of services and (b) to institutionalize the GRS in every public office. Thus, improving the quality of public services appears to be the result of the introduction of the GRS. This study aimed to evaluate the implementation of the GRS guidelines partially. In doing so, it focused its attention on two issues of the GRS—first, the inherent mechanism of the GRS; and, second, the experiences of the service seekers of the frontline public offices regarding their grievances. In other words, it addressed the explication of the programme theory of the GRS and its implementation status that relates to the field-level offices. The specific objectives are—

- (i) To outline the programme theory of the GRS implementation;
- (ii) To assess the programme theory related to the frontline public offices.

The objective of identifying the programme theory of the GRS implementation refers to the explication of the logic model—the way the GRS is intended to bring the desired result, i.e., the satisfaction of service seekers. The objective of assessing the part of the programme theory related to the frontline public offices needs elaboration. Therefore, the second objective needs specification. As the chapter on findings reveals the programme theory, publicity about the GRS is traced as the starting point of implementing the GRS guidelines. If the citizens are not aware of the complaining mechanism, they would never attempt to use it. Therefore, knowing about the efforts from the government side about the publicity of GRS to increase the awareness of the service seekers and the actual knowledge of the service seekers about the GRS mechanism are included in the second objective. Another issue that is pertinent to the understanding of the complaining behavior of the service seekers is their service experience. In other words, what the service seekers experience when they go to the public service providers at the Upazila level for getting their desired services. This includes their perception of the quality of the services and their overall satisfaction with the services. The final issue in the second objective is the complaining behaviour of the service seekers, i.e., their tendency to use the GRS when they are aggrieved. Therefore, inherent in the second specific objectives are four issues—(a) publicity of the GRS reform, (b) service seekers' knowledge about the GRS, (c) service seekers' experience about public services, and (d) their complaining behaviour.

## 1.3 RATIONALE

This study is expected to contribute to the assessment of the GRS guidelines of 2018 of the GOB. The GRS is a vital tool to improve public services. Its proper implementation can remove many of the diseases that infect public service delivery. Therefore, an assessment of the GRS, which was first introduced in 2007 in Bangladesh, has become imperative to know its effectiveness. The findings of this study will help in modifying the GRS policy where applicable.



Moreover, BPATC conducts a Senior Staff Course (SSC) where public policy evaluation is a significant component. The participants in the SSC suffer from the absence of a model policy evaluation paper of BPATC that may enhance their understanding in preparing their papers. The report of this study might help address this need.

## **1.4 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS**

The grievance redress system is a giant field of study. This study focuses on one of the perspectives of the issue. It outlines the programme theory of the GRS guidelines implementation and assesses a part of the programme theory related to the Upazila level offices. These offices included land office, settlement office, sub-registrar's office, health complex, rural electrification office, education office, election office, and accounts office. These offices were considered to have the most interaction with their service seekers.

An Upazila administration has, on average, around twenty-five public offices. This study covers only a part of these offices at the Upazila level. The vast field of public offices at the district, department, agency, and ministry levels has remained outside the study's purview. Although the current study has dealt with a part of the Upazila level offices, these offices are considered, by observers and experts, the loci of the most grievances that happen at the field level offices. Therefore, the findings of the study can be considered a representation of the reality of the GRS implementation at the Upazila level offices.

## **1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT**

The second chapter discusses the literature relevant to the issues of this study. It starts with a discussion of the programme theory and its importance in implementation evaluation research. Then it discusses the concepts of justice and administrative justice. These two issues are the basis from where the grievance redress system originates. The literature on the principles of the design issue of GRS and the importance of the GRS as an accountability forum is also discussed. Finally, the chapter in its last section focuses on the literature on complaining behaviour. The third chapter expounds on the methodological issues followed in the study. The fourth chapter presents the findings. The fifth chapter offers a discussion on the findings and draws a conclusion.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Frontline bureaucracies, in the course of implementation of public policies, routinely make initial decisions. It is unlikely that these first-instance decisions of all bureaucracies will be just all the time. This means that the first-instance decisions, sometimes, may appear unacceptable, morally or legally, to the parties for whom such decisions are made. Not only decisions of bureaucracies may affect the parties adversely, but also behaviours of bureaucrats may be considered by citizens unjust. By being unjust here, we mean being unnatural, where being natural refers to being moral. By nature, people in society develop their understanding of good and evil and right and wrong based on the acceptability of actions in society. Just actions in society follow laws and social norms (Solum 2006). The public administration literature has introduced concepts for explaining bureaucratic actions, whether such actions fall within the ambit of laws and social norms, and how unjust bureaucratic actions can be addressed through developing appropriate mechanisms. This literature review provides a theoretical framework that helps enhance our understanding of the necessity and design of mechanisms for redressing grievances. The review starts with a discussion of the literature on programme theory and its use in evaluation research. This is followed by an elucidation of the concepts of justice and administrative justice. Then brief reviews of design principles of redress mechanisms, use of redress mechanisms as accountability forums, and complaining to redress mechanisms are presented.

### 2.1 PROGRAMME THEORY

Although programme theory is considered necessary in evaluation research, it has been neglected (Bickman 1987). The programme theory of a policy or a programme refers to the underpinning assumptions of it. It describes the model of how the policy or programme is intended to bring about the expected outcomes. It shows how a programme will work (Bickman 1987). According to Rogers et al. (2000), a programme theory has two essential components: conceptual and empirical. Typically, policy and programmes are complex, and their goals and objectives are poorly defined (Wholey 2010). To evaluate such policies and programmes, the evaluators need to make the underlying goals and assumptions explicit. The conceptual programme theory looks at what the policy designers had thought at the design stage. The empirical version of the programme theory looks at what happened and how did that happen.

Other scholars have described the same concept as logic models. McLaughlin and Jordan (2010) argued that a programme could be seen as a hypothesis. The logic model unpacks this hypothesis, looks for the underlying assumptions, and makes them testable. Any evaluation of a programme that goes without a clear understanding of these things will result in fruitless and costly exercise. The logic model outlines the framework of a programme by specifying its different elements and their causal relationships. The different elements of a programme that constitute the logic model include resources, activities, outputs, short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes. Rogers et al. (2000) have found some other concept names that include outcomes hierarchies, theory of action, theory-based evaluation, and programme logic.

A well-defined programme theory helps not only in implementing a policy or a programme; it also

helps in the evaluation of it. In fact, without explicating the programme theory, and evaluation becomes misleading. The explication of a programme theory requires an evaluator to apply different methods, including an extensive review of programme documents and talking to the stakeholders. Rosas (2005) used brainstorming with stakeholders, which he called 'concept mapping', to develop the programme theory of a family support programme for its evaluation. According to him, this technique is helpful to an evaluation in three ways: it provides the idea of what to be measured, captures the complexity of the programme juxtaposing its context, and develops the evaluator-stakeholders relationships. The use of document analysis, interviews, and focus group discussions lead to the development of fundamental understanding among stakeholders about programme goals and design features (Chandler and Williamson 2013). Munter et al. (2016) concluded that despite the call for outlining the programme theory before undertaking an evaluation, its use had been limited in evaluation research.

## **2.2 JUSTICE**

The concept that appears most in the literature about addressing grievances that arise from administrative actions is justice. Justice is a general term used in many contexts of public administration. The intelligibility of this concept can be argued as the starting point for understanding the redress of grievance. In his discussion of justice, Solum (2006) brings before us two dimensions of the concept—justice as fairness and justice as lawfulness. While discussing the fairness dimension, he argues that being just and being lawful are separate and distinct. Without elaborating the content of fairness, he argues that the fairness conception of justice requires a decision-maker to apply his private judgment about what is fair. The application of private judgment to the fairness conception of justice allows for using the all-things-considered criterion to arrive at the private judgment of the decision-maker. If fairness is understood in this way, the same administrative action may lead different decision-makers to make different conclusions. Disagreements in private judgments regarding the fairness conception may result in officials' undermining of the rule of law and exercise of arbitrary and self-interested actions. In the lawfulness conception of justice, the decision-maker depends on the public judgment in contradiction to private judgment. Public judgments are the use of the laws and the accepted norms of society. The officials internalize the laws of the land and its shared norms and make decisions on the basis of these laws and norms. Solum (2006) views justice as lawfulness.

## **2.3 ADMINISTRATIVE JUSTICE**

The concept that is more relevant in the discussion of redressing grievances is administrative justice. According to Sainsbury (2008), the meaning of administrative justice is contested, and considerable disagreement remains over it. It also remains unresolved whether administrative justice should apply to the first instance decision-makers (Sainsbury 2008). Despite this disagreement, the relevance of administrative justice to the first instance decision-makers carries importance because this affects the lives of the service seekers, and their number is enormous. The concept involves administrative decision-making and the mechanism for challenging the decisions made by the decision-making processes (Thomas and Tomlinson 2017). Such mechanisms can be aligned vertically along with policy

or functional lines and horizontally for dealing with cross-cutting issues. Thomas and Tomlinson (2017) find two broad perspectives of administrative justice—governmental and legal. The governmental perspective focuses upon the entire cases of grievances with the limited resources. The legal perspective focuses on the individual cases brought to the system with justice and fairness.

Adler (2003) defines *administrative justice* as the principles used to assess justice in administrative decisions. According to Mashaw (1983), administrative justice is the qualities of the decision-making process of bureaus that show the logic for the acceptability of their decisions. Decisions become acceptable when they are legitimate. Public administration needs to have mechanisms for enhancing administrative justice where public officials' initial unjust decisions or behaviour towards service claimants could be rectified. The necessity of a grievance redress system originates in the requirement of securing administrative justice. In his conception, Adler (2003) dichotomizes the content of administrative justice into two components—procedural fairness and substantive justice. Procedural fairness implies how decisions for individual service claimants are made, and substantive justice refers to the actual benefits or burdens that are conferred on them. A service claimant may become aggrieved either by the process he is treated or by the decisions conferred on him or by both. Both contexts need care for a redress of grievances.

Citizens develop legitimate expectations from public officials following existing laws and accepted norms of their country. This is not to say that the legitimate expectations remain static over time. There remains considerable debate over what is just and what is unjust, which changes over time. These changes affect administrative decision-making. Public officials make a corpus of administrative decisions which affect the lives of the citizens. Injustice may result from their maladministration, including bias, neglect, inattention, delay, incompetence, ineptitude, perversity, turpitude, and arbitrariness (Adler 2003).

## **2.4 DESIGN PRINCIPLES OF REDRESS MECHANISMS**

Mashaw (1983) argues for variable principles of redress mechanisms for bureaus considering the nature of their function. Reviewing the literature relating to bureaucratic justice, he finds three strands of them that focus on a) the failure of the bureaus to provide adequate services, b) capacity of individual claimants to materialize their rights, and c) inadequate management control of the bureaus. He suggests three models for structuring redress mechanisms: bureaucratic rationality, professional treatment, and moral judgment. He argues that a uniform set of procedural principles for a redress of grievances is not applicable across the board. Instead, the nature of responsibilities of the bureaus needs models with appropriate procedural principles. According to his first model, bureaucratic rationality, decisions of bureaus should be made following principles that give accurate and cost-effective decisions. Such decisions are based on facts, and they are technocratic. They do not entertain the question of value and preference. This administrative justice for them is accurate decision-making at the least cost.

The professional treatment model of administrative justice of Mashaw (1983) argues for decision-making to be based on understanding the need of the clients by the decision-makers applying their professional knowledge. This conception of administrative justice subordinates procedural rules, hierarchical controls, and efficiency considerations to the norms of professional culture. Here the

professionals apply their arcane body of knowledge in decision-making. Comparing this model with the bureaucratic rationality one, he argues that bureaucrats' use of procedural rules is transparent, whereas professionals' use of art is opaque. Thomas and Tomlinson (2017) mention two types of decision-making: a rule-based and mechanical model and an evaluative and judgmental model. Mashaw's (1983) bureaucratic model is rule-based and mechanical, while his professional treatment model is evaluative and judgmental. His third model—moral judgment—follows the adjudicatory process, which is value-defining, maintains fairness and neutrality. It explores the deservingness of the claimants by inquiring into the moral desert.

Mashaw's (1983) relativistic views on administrative justice have come under criticism. For example, Adler (2003) criticizes that Mashaw (1983) has challenged that administrative justice has a single set of principles applicable to all bureaus. Moreover, the external model of administrative justice gives an impression of redress, which is different from the internal arrangement.

Adler (2003) points out two types of mechanisms for addressing grievances—external and internal. The external mechanisms include mainly courts, tribunals, and ombudsmen. These agencies are external to the government departments that make the initial first-instance decisions. Aggrieved citizens can go to these external agencies, which are independent of the government departments. These agencies have limitations in terms of dealing with the number of cases. They follow the adjudicatory process and can address only a handful of cases. The internal mechanisms are situated within the government departments. A particular set of principles are imposed on them to review the initial decisions. These are internal mechanisms of the departments for monitoring their own decisions. These mechanisms can deal with a large number of cases. The external mechanisms follow the principles of openness, fairness, and impartiality because they are independent of the government departments, but these are costly mechanisms. The internal mechanisms suffer from the limitation of these qualities, but they are less costly.

In the conception of Thomas and Tomlinson (2017), the most practiced internal redress mechanism is the mechanism of administrative review. It is a process that individuals can use for a review of the initial decisions conferred on them. The review is administrative because officials from within the government departments examine their earlier decisions. In some countries, this internal review is a mandatory step for citizens aggrieved with decisions of government departments to go through before going to the tribunals. An internal administrative review mechanism looks for errors in case-working and examines additional evidence when submitted. It does not follow the adjudicatory process. Arguments in favour of administrative review include cheaper processes less time-consuming compared to tribunals.

Concerns about frontline decision-making are much. The frontline bureaus are equipped with untrained staff and political influence, contributing to their substandard decision-making (Thomas and Tomlinson 2017). The number of the claimant in the frontline bureaus is very high compared to the number of decision-makers. They have resource constraints that put restraints on their evidence-gathering role. Administrative justice in these bureaus is an internal mechanism that allows them to review and monitor their decisions. This internal mechanism is not an alternative to the external one that follows the adjudicatory process but complements it. It is considered an internal quality control of the government departments, which provides a weak form of redress mechanism only from the citizen's perspective (Sainsbury 2008). Sainsbury (2008) argues that bureaucrats do not enjoy as much trust and respect as professionals do.

## 2.5 REDRESS MECHANISMS AS ACCOUNTABILITY FORUMS

Redress mechanisms are designed as tools operated internally for enhancing quality. These mechanisms can contribute to the greater accountability forums if they are effectively designed (Post and Agarwal 2012). According to Post and Agarwal (2012), three related factors affect the effectiveness of redress mechanisms. Firstly, an organization has to be truly committed to the functionality of the redress mechanism. Secondly, the internal design of the redress mechanism should be able to process and redress the grievances brought to its notice. Thirdly, the design of the redress mechanism should suit the environmental needs of the local context. Such designs of redress mechanisms help empower the vulnerable groups by communicating their unheard voices of grievances. Redress is an *ex-post* review of individual cases of service delivery that improve accountability relations «by empowering clients and providing information to policymakers» (Gauri 2013, p. 110). Redress mechanisms work as a backward-looking tool where individual harms are corrected. In contrast, other means of accountability, such as auditing, are forward-looking where future harms are prevented from happening.

Redress mechanisms are internal forms of accountability. They work for the enhancement of administrative justice by redressing maladministration. Redress mechanisms set standards for service providers' behaviors, but they also assess such behaviours against the set standards through internal processes (Bondi 2012). Furthermore, well-designed redress procedures require the service providers to explain their behaviours to the service seekers. Therefore, the success of a redress mechanism as an accountability forum will depend mainly on the knowledge of the law and the redress procedures of the service seekers and their willingness to challenge harms made to them.

## 2.6 COMPLAINING BEHAVIOUR

Complaining to redress mechanisms against first-instance decision-making authority is not straight forward action. According to Felstiner et al. (1980-1981), a complaint is a social construct; and it mostly remains in the complainant's mind. A complaint starts with the experience of a complainant, which gives birth to a feeling of grievance. Then a grievance becomes a complaint when the complainant takes it to a forum. Many aggrieved citizens do not complain to redress forums due to disparate reasons. Ison (1999), as cited in Adler (2003), and Felstiner et al. (1980-1981) indicate that the volume of injustice might be much higher than what could be known from complaints or appeal mechanisms. Lens (2007) finds few studies on the complaining behaviour of citizens. She comes across a sociolegal theory developed by Felstiner et al. (1980-1981) called naming, blaming, and claiming. The theory claims that a grievance has to fulfill three stages before it becomes a complaint. First, the victim has to recognize that an injury has happened to him. This stage is called naming. Second, the victim has to believe that someone else, and not he, has caused this injury. This stage is named blaming. Third, the victim has to seek a remedy to correct his injury. This is called claiming.

Lens (2007), in her study, applied the naming, blaming, and claiming theory. She found that all participants of her study of the recipients of an American social security programme had reached the blaming stage, but all did not go for claiming. Those who did not complain and those who complained were influenced by distinct individual and contextual variables identified by past studies. Ignorance of their right to complaining, lack of trust in the bureaucracy, and fear of reprisal from the bureaucrats

were significant for the non-complainants for not using the redress mechanism. For the complainants, firm determination of revealing bureaucratic foul-ups and availability of supportive individuals and agencies in the form of an antidote contributed to claiming. In this connection, Lens (2007) claims that the theory of organizational silence of Morrison and Milliken (2000) can be used to explain citizen's complaining behaviour. According to Lens (2007), factors identified by Morrison and Milliken (2000), which were primarily responsible for silencing employees of an organization, may be equally applicable to explaining an organization's efforts to silence its clients by making and transmitting a collective sense and organizational climate to the clients.

To sum up, this literature review reveals the following theoretical framework. Outlining the hidden programme theory of any policy or programme intervention precedes its evaluation. Administrative decisions give birth to grievances sometimes. To redress these grievances, organizations establish redress mechanisms as internal administrative tools to review the first instance decisions if citizens lodge complaints. These mechanisms upheld justice by making organizations lawful in making decisions. This type of justice is called administrative justice. It focuses on maintaining procedural fairness and substantive justice. A grievance redress system examines whether government rules and regulations have been followed in a first instance decision. This design of the redress system is called the bureaucratic rationality model. When such a redress model operates, it functions as an accountability forum because it reviews individual complaints and provides explanations to the complainants. However, service seekers may recognize (naming) a grievance, held (blaming) others responsible for its occurrence, and yet may not complain (claiming) because of contextual variables. The current research uses this theoretical framework to fulfil its stated objectives.

# CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to outline the programme theory of the implementation of the grievance redress system (GRS) guidelines of the government of Bangladesh and assess the part of the programme theory that relates to the frontline public offices. Fulfilling both objectives required the employment of multiple methods of data collection and analysis. The study employed a grounded theory approach where mixed-method techniques of data collection and analysis were used. This chapter expounds on the methodological issues involved in the study.

## 3.2 APPROACH

It used a grounded theory approach. One of the distinguishing characteristics of the grounded theory approach is that it allows the researcher to collect and analyze data concurrently. The objectives of the study needed the researcher to work out the programme theory first. This required analyzing the programme theory-related data in the first phase. Based on the programme theory, data collection techniques for the Upazila level offices were designed. The checklist for qualitative interviews was revised after analysis of the initial data.

## 3.3 DATA COLLECTION

The study required multiple methods of data collection. It used a review of government documents, qualitative interviews, and a survey questionnaire for collecting first-hand data. In addition, an extensive review of the policy documents and one key informant interview (KII) with a senior bureaucrat who was involved in designing the GRS guidelines were used to outline and express the programme theory behind the implementation of the GRS guidelines of 2018.

As is outlined in the first chapter, the second objective of the research involved four components. An assessment of these components required mixed methods, which included a survey and qualitative interviews. For the first component of publicity of the GRS reform, qualitative interviews were needed. A KII with a senior bureaucrat and another seven interviews with Upazila and district-level officials were conducted to know about the status of publicity about the GRS. The second component—service seekers' knowledge about the GRS—also required qualitative interviews. To understand the third component, i.e., service seekers' experience about public services, qualitative interviews and a survey instrument were applied. Qualitative interviews were used to understand the service seekers' experience while seeking their desired public services. Secondly, the service seekers' perceptions about the quality of the services and their overall satisfaction with the public services were quantitatively measured using a survey questionnaire. A brief discussion on the survey questionnaire is given below.



Most departments of the government provide intangible services. While goods quality can be measured objectively in terms of their durability and defects, service quality can only be measured in terms of perceptions of quality by the consumers of services (Parasuraman et al. 1985). Parasuraman et al. (1988) developed a 22-item scale to measure service quality, which they called SERVQUAL. They argued that service quality is perceived. This perception of quality relates to the attitude of the service consumers towards the service process, and it results from a mixed feeling of what is expected from the performance of the service providers and what is perceived as their actual performance. This perception is not equivalent to satisfaction but is related to it. Parasuraman et al. (1988) also discussed objective quality in developing a precise understanding of service quality. They argued that the former is mechanistic quality and the latter is humanistic. The humanistic quality is highly relativistic, which might differ from person to person. They argued that service quality and satisfaction are not the same, but both are related. Satisfaction relates to a specific transaction of a service-providing agency, and service quality relates to the attitude towards the superiority of the service provided. They continued that “incidents of satisfaction over time result in perceptions of service quality” (Parasuraman et al. 1988, p. 16). Parasuraman et al. (1988) developed their 22-item SERVQUAL measurement tool based on their study of 1985 and later in 1991, through another study, refined it. They found five dimensions of service quality—tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy—which are represented in the measurement items.

Tangibles are physical facilities, technologies, and outfits of the employees of a service-providing agency. Parasuraman et al. (1988) identified four items to measure tangibles. These items measure the objective appearance of the service-providing agency. Reliability refers to how the employees are capable of serving their clients reliably and precisely. Five items measure this. The third dimension of service quality—responsiveness—refers to the willingness of the service providers to provide the desired service of the service seeker promptly. Four items measure this dimension. The fourth dimension—assurance—indicates civility, trustworthiness, and knowledge of the employees. Again, four items measure these qualities. The fifth dimension—empathy—implies the degree to which the agency’s employees pay personal attention to and care for the service seekers. Five items measure this dimension. They argued that the relative importance of the five dimensions might differ depending on the nature of the service of an agency.

To measure service quality by a respondent, he has to show his level on the scale set against each item of two sets of the 22-item measurement tool. One set of the measurement tool focuses on the expectation of a service consumer—the normative state—about services. The other set takes care of the actual perceived state of quality of the service he has experienced. The difference between the scores of each item and their direction, i.e., the discrepancy between a respondent’s perceptions of what he has received against his expectations, constitutes his service quality score. Parasuraman et al. (1988) had used seven points in the scale—with 7 indicating ‘strongly agree’ and 1 indicating ‘strongly disagree’. They did not use verbal labels for 2 through 6. This study has used a 4-point scale where 1 indicated ‘completely disagree’, 2 indicated ‘somewhat disagree’, 3 indicated ‘somewhat agree’, and 4 indicated ‘completely agree’.

The survey questionnaire also asked the respondents to indicate their satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 10. The questionnaire had another two items that asked the respondents whether they had any complaints against any service providers and their knowledge about the existence of any complaint

mechanism. These two items had dichotomous answer categories as yes or no. Besides this, the questionnaire had items to know respondents' demographic information such as occupation, age, sex, and education.

Four students were recruited for data collection. They had completed their bachelor's degrees and were doing their masters at Dhaka University, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, and Jashore University of Science and Technology at the time of data collection for this research. They were given training before they started data collection. These students were chosen based on their being native to the four Upazilas selected for data collection. They used the survey questionnaire and a checklist for interviewing. Data were collected from July to October of 2020.

### 3.4 SAMPLE AND SAMPLE SIZE

Few field-level offices were chosen for the study. These offices were thought to have the most interfaces with the people. The offices are land office, settlement office, sub-registrar's office, health complex, rural electrification office, education office, election office, and accounts office at the Upazila level. These offices were chosen following theoretical sampling. Service seekers from these offices were requested to fill out the survey questionnaire and be interviewed. The data collectors went to the Upazila offices and selected the service seekers in the office premises randomly. Four Upazilas were purposively selected from four divisions to cover the geographic spread of the country.

**Table 3:1 Study Areas**

Upazila	District	Division
Kishoregonj	Nilphamary	Rangpur
Bagerhat Sadar	Bagerhat	Khulna
Chatak	Sunamgonj	Sylhet
Lohagara	Chattogram	Chattogram

**Table 3:2 Demographic Information of Survey Respondents**

Items of Information	Category	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Sex of respondents</b> N=400	Male	333	83.3
	Female	67	16.8
<b>Age of Respondents</b> Mean=38.70 N=400	Up to 25 Years	45	11.3
	26 to 35 Years	122	30.5
	36 to 45 Years	134	33.5
	46 to 55 Years	67	16.8

Items of Information	Category	Frequency	Percentage
	56 to 65 Years	30	7.5
	66 to 75 Years	2	.5
<b>Education of respondents</b>	No formal education	56	14.0
N=400	Up to class five	64	16.0
	Up to class eight	37	9.3
	SSC	79	19.8
	HSC	62	15.5
	Graduate	61	15.3
	Post-graduate	41	10.3
<b>Occupation of respondents</b>	Farmer	86	21.5
N=400	Service	104	26.0
	Labourer	38	9.5
	Business	72	18.0
	Homemaker	60	15.0
	Student	34	8.5
	Others	6	1.5
<b>Office of experience</b>	Land	88	22.0
N=400	Sub-Registrar	68	17.0
	Settlement	29	7.2
	Health Complex	80	20.0
	Rural Electrification	72	18.0
	Education	13	3.3
	Election	24	6.0
	Accounts	10	2.5
	Others	16	4.0

The study areas including the names of the Upazilas, their districts, and divisions are given in table 3.1. Besides the service seekers of the selected Upazilas, the officials of the selected office and those of their line districts were interviewed. The officials were interviewed to know about their roles in implementing the GRS guidelines at the field level offices. From each of the Upazilas, 100 service seekers were surveyed, and out of them, twenty were qualitatively interviewed. Thus, 400 service seekers filled out the survey questionnaire, and seventy-seven of them were interviewed. The demographic information of the survey respondents are shown in table 3.2 and those of the interview respondents are shown in table 3.3.

**Table 3:3 Demographic Information of Interview Respondents**

Items of Information	Category	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Sex of respondents</b> N=77	Male	70	90.9
	Female	7	9.1
<b>Age of Respondents</b> Mean=40.87 N=77	Up to 25 Years	7	9.1
	26 to 35 Years	20	26.0
	36 to 45 Years	25	32.5
	46 to 55 Years	14	18.2
	56 to 65 Years	11	14.3
<b>Education of respondents</b> N=77	No formal education	8	10.4
	Up to class five	17	22.1
	Up to class eight	5	6.5
	SSC	10	13.0
	HSC	15	19.5
	Graduate	8	10.4
	Post-graduate	14	18.2
<b>Occupation of respondents</b> N=77	Farmer	17	22.5
	Service	21	27.3
	Labourer	6	7.8
	Business	19	24.7
	Homemaker	7	9.1
	Student	6	7.8
	Others	1	1.3
<b>Office of experience</b> N=77	Land	17	22.1
	Sub-Registrar	14	18.2
	Settlement	6	7.8
	Health Complex	14	18.2
	Rural Electrification	15	19.5
	Education	1	1.3
	Election	5	6.5
	Accounts	2	2.6
Others	3	3.9	

### **3.5 DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS**

The survey data were processed through the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive and inferential statistics have been presented in tables. Statistical findings on the dimensions of service quality have been presented in two tables. One table shows the scale items statistics along the dimensions of service quality. The other table shows the descriptive statistics of the overall service quality and the dimensions of the offices covered in the study. The satisfaction variable was regressed on the five dimensions of service quality. The related correlation matrix and regression results have been presented in two tables. Several other tables show descriptive statistics about the respondents' knowledge about the GRS issues and their complaining status across their occupational and educational variations.

The interview data have been arranged in the order of the specific objectives of the study. First, the interviews were transcribed and coded. Each of the 77 transcriptions of the interviews with the service seekers consisted of 794 words on average. After developing codes from the transcripts, a thematic analysis was applied to arrange the codes according to their patterns. At this stage, the patterns were further coded. These pattern coding became the subtheme titles that are arranged under the major themes. The broad themes more or less represent the specific objectives of the study.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the study in the following order. It first reviews the GRS guidelines and presents some constraints for the Upazila-level service seekers apparent in the mechanism. The next section reviews the relevant policy documents and develops the programme theory that can be discerned from the review. The following section looks at the publicity of the GRS among the service seekers. Then the following three sections present the findings of the survey and the qualitative interviews. In doing this, the third section presents findings on the knowledge of the service seekers about the complaining mechanism of the GRS. This section looks at the perception of the complaints mechanism and the sources of the perceptions. The fourth section presents findings on the experiences of the service seekers in their endeavour to get their desired services. This section is divided into five subsections. The first four subsections summarize the interview data under the categories of apathetic responsibility, recurring visits, moneymaking, and absenteeism. The fifth subsection presents survey data on service quality and satisfaction as are perceived by service seekers. The fifth section is focused on the complaining behaviour of the service seekers. Here the interview data have been presented under five subcategories of trust, fear of reprisal, incapacity, tolerance, and preferred mode of future complaining.

### 4.1 GRS GUIDELINES AND UPAZILA-LEVEL SERVICE SEEKERS

The guidelines define a *grievance* as an application submitted electronically or using conventional methods regarding (a) the dissatisfaction of a service seeker about the committed or delivered services or goods of a public office or any service providing organization established under the law; (b) the dissatisfaction about the process of service delivery; (c) the unlawful act of service providers relating to the given or to be given services or goods; (d) the denial of the legal rights of service seekers. A grievance is classified into three categories based on who applies. If a citizen applies, it becomes a *public grievance*. If submitted by a current or retired employee of an organization to its authority, it becomes a *staff grievance*. Finally, if a public office submits such an application to another public office, it is named an official grievance.

The guidelines provide the appointment of a grievance settlement officer (GSO) and an appeal officer. It also provides a grievance management cell (GMC) and a grievance management steering committee (GMSC). The GSO of an Upazila- or Union-level office is to be an officer of its district office. The GSO of a district, divisional, regional office, or a directorate, an agency or an autonomous body, is to be the head of that office or a senior officer nominated by him. The GSO of a ministry or a department is to be a joint secretary at the least. A ministry or a division's appeal officer is an Additional Secretary or a Joint Secretary senior to its GSO. The GSO of the ministry or the division is the appeal officer of its directly related office or agency. For the other offices, an appeal officer is the GSOs of their higher offices.

An aggrieved service seeker needs to apply, using a prescribed form, to the GSO of the relevant office through any of the three means—the dedicated webpage, i.e., [www.grs.gov.bd](http://www.grs.gov.bd), directly going to the front desk, and using the postal service. A representative of an aggrieved person or office is

allowed to lodge a grievance. In the case of a person, a close relative of the aggrieved person such as father, mother, husband, wife, and son can apply. In the case of an office, the office head or his nominated officer can apply. In an application submitted through the website, the applicant receives a tracking number through a cell phone short message service (SMS) or an email. If the website is not in operation, the applicant is to receive a receipt of the submission of his application through SMS, email, or the postal service.

An Upazila-level service seeker, like all other service seekers, can avail of the three modes of lodging a grievance. However, due to his location problem, he has to face some constraints to lodge a grievance, which might limit his efforts. Firstly, the Upazilas are remote areas in the country. Internet facility is limited in these areas. Moreover, using the internet needs devices and skills to use the devices. Most Upazila level service seekers have a shortfall in both devices and required skills. Secondly, the district office is located very far, in some contexts, from the Upazila office. To avail of the front desk service of the district office, an Upazila-level service seeker needs to go to the district office physically, which may be a discouraging factor for him. The third option for lodging a grievance is a postal service, which appears feasible for the Upazila level service seekers. Nevertheless, these service seekers are mostly uneducated or less educated. They also need to collect the prescribed form from somewhere or download it from the internet, returning to the first constraint. Therefore, lodging a grievance by an Upazila level service seeker has some limitations.

## **4.2 GRS PROGRAMME THEORY**

One rationale for developing the programme theory of any programme or policy is its use in evaluating the programme or policy. In many cases of programme or policy undertaking, the programme theory remains implicit. Therefore, a researcher needs to explicit the implicit programme theory before undertaking an evaluation work. Several methods can be used individually or in combination to develop the programme theory. A general reading of the documents on the introduction of the GRS in Bangladesh would reveal an opaque picture about its programme theory. However, one can discern from the documents that the government has issued from the 2007 circular of the cabinet division to the amended version of the GRS guidelines in 2018 a common concern for dissatisfaction of service seekers over the poor quality of public services. This concern has dominated in setting an objective of increasing satisfaction of the service seekers of public offices by increasing public services quality. The quality of service is expected to increase through increased accountability of service providers. Accountability is expected to increase through the function of the GRS, which starts with lodging and settlement of complaints. In this sense, the GRS model should start with citizen's lodging of complaints. However, as the citizens are not aware of the complaints mechanism, the policy guidelines' imperative has been to make the citizens aware of the complaining system. Accordingly, the GRS policy guidelines made it a responsibility of the public offices to undertake some publicity activities. Thus, the starting point of the GRS programme theory starts with activities relating to publicity about the GRS.

The first circular (Cabinet Division 2007) issued on redress of grievances was during the caretaker administration in 2007. It pointed to the initiatives taken in the country's public administration to establish good governance by bringing in transparency, accountability, and preventing corruption.

The circular emphasized appointing focal points in the ministries and divisions to settle complaints effectively. The result of such an initiative was expected to be the enhanced quality of services in the public administration. The focal points were asked to receive, monitor, and settle complaints. Directions were given to perform such functions transparently and impartially. The circular also described the internal mechanism of dealing with complaints. The focal points were asked to make recommendations to appropriate authorities if needed. The focal points were needed to maintain complete records of all receipts and disposal of complaints. One crucial function that was assigned to the focal points was related to the complaints. In the context of Bangladesh, citizens are less aware of the existence of the grievance redress mechanism. The introduction of this mechanism was a new reform initiative. The citizens were needed to be made aware of this new initiative. The circular from the caretaker government rightly asked the focal points to make citizens aware of the current process of settlement of complaints and acknowledge the receipt of complaints, and informing the complainants about the final decisions.

The second circular (Cabinet Division 2008) emphasized the points described in the previous one and added some features of the emerging redress system. It mentioned two types of complaints—external and internal—without elaborating them. It asked the ministries, divisions, and agencies to publish on their websites the current process of complaint disposal; the name, designation, contact details, including phone number, fax number, email address, and complete address of their respective focal points. In addition, the circular asked the authorities to take measures for publicity of the current status of receipt and disposal of complaints to keep citizens informed. The circular required each recipient of it to send a report to the cabinet division by a specified date using a prescribed format focusing on the number of complaints received and the number of complaints disposed of so far. The third circular (Cabinet Division 2009) expressed dissatisfaction over non-compliance by some ministries and divisions in sending reports to the cabinet division regarding complaint handling. It added that the ministries and divisions needed to send such reports every month.

The cabinet division (2012) issued its fourth circular on the GRS issue, adding some more features to its institutionalization. It asked for the disclosure of the identity details and contact details of the focal point officials of the ministries and divisions and detailed reports on the reception and settlement of complaints of the last two years on their respective websites. It directed the authorities to do so by a specified date mentioned in the circular. The circular also asked to send reports to the cabinet division by the 10th date of each month describing the measures taken regarding the reception and disposal of complaints. The circular mentioned some other directions also. One direction was to make the reception and settlement of complaints an agenda of the monthly meetings of the ministries and divisions. Another direction was to introduce awards by the ministries and divisions for excellence in the management of complaints. It directed the ministries and division to publicize in the electronic and print media about the current status of the reception and settlement of complaints to enhance awareness of the citizens about the issue.

The grievance redress guidelines (Cabinet Division 2018) elaborated the general intent of the previous circulars. Although not specific, from the section of objectives of the grievance redress system stated in the guidelines, a careful reading reveals that the main objective was to increase the quality of public service. The guidelines state, “the main objective of introducing the grievance redress system is increasing the quality of public service ...” Cabinet Division 2018, p. 5). It focused on making the



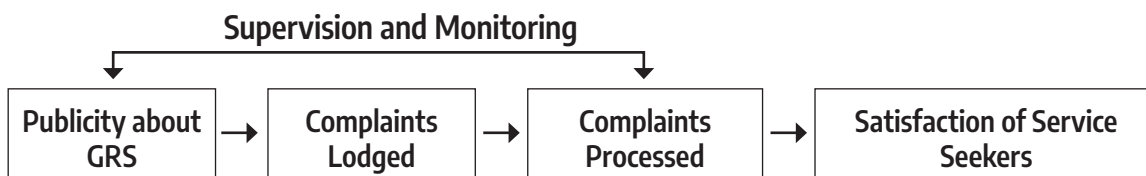
lodging of complaints to authorities universal and easy by introducing an online system. The guidelines intended to introduce a comprehensive, integrated, and user-friendly online platform to facilitate lodging of complaints from all tiers of the public administration to a grievance settlement officer (GSO) appointed to each authority. The GSO for an Upazila-level or a union-level office was fixed to be an officer of its district office. The GSO of a district-level office, a divisional or regional office, a directorate, an agency, or an autonomous body was fixed to be the head of the office or an official nominated by him. A joint secretary, at the minimum, was fixed to be the GSO of a ministry or a division. The GSO's responsibilities included receiving and processing complaints from service seekers. Appeal officers were provisioned to be an additional secretary or a senior officer of the GSO in a ministry or a division. In the other offices, their GSOs were decided to be the appeal officers for their subordinate offices. A grievance management cell (GMC) was introduced in the cabinet division to monitor and coordinate the activities of the GSOs and the appeal officers.

Citizens were allowed to submit complaints through multiple avenues: online, postal service, and in-person. An online platform ([www.grs.gov.bd](http://www.grs.gov.bd)) was readied. The use of a prescribed format was made mandatory to submit any complaint. The GRS guidelines also allowed submission of complaints through e-file and call centres. Any close relative of an aggrieved person such as father, mother, husband, wife, son, daughter, and a representative of any aggrieved institution were allowed to submit complaints on behalf of the aggrieved person or institution. An office where web-based grievance redress was in operation was asked to provide a receipt of complaints to an applicant with a tracking number. Offices, where web-based grievance redress was yet to be in operation, required providing complainants receipts of complaints through mobile phone short messages, emails, or postal services. An appeal against the decision of a GSO could be lodged to an appeal officer. Failing to get justice from an appeal officer, an aggrieved person could further apply to the grievance management cell headed by the secretary of the coordination and reforms wing of the cabinet division, the highest forum for grievance management.

The guidelines (Cabinet Division 2018) outlined some responsibilities of the head of every office regarding promoting the GRS, which included preparing the officials for implementing the provisions of the GRS and making the citizens in general aware of the GRS provisions. In addition, the office heads were asked to publish leaflets and booklets on the GRS for distribution among the citizens. Furthermore, the supervision and monitoring of the activities of grievance management of ministries, divisions, and other agencies were given to the central grievance management steering committee (GMSC) headed by the cabinet secretary. This committee was to sit in a meeting at least every six months to review the complaints made to the grievance management cell. Its role also included taking necessary actions after reviewing the policy-related matters regarding the GRS.

The program theory of the GRS can be summarized in this way. The circulars published since 2007 and the GRS guidelines emphasize the publicity about the grievance redress mechanism among the citizens. In the context of a low level of awareness regarding government policies among the citizens, this publicity role of the public offices could be considered a precondition for implementing the GRS. Without being aware of the policy, service seekers would have no scope to lodge complaints when they are aggrieved. Thus, the programme theory starts with publicity on GRS policy by the public offices. When service seekers would be aware of the GRS provisions, it is expected that they would be lodging complaints to the GSOs if they become aggrieved. The second step in the programme theory

would be complaints lodged by the aggrieved service seekers. When complaints are lodged, they would be processed as per the guidelines stated in the GRS policy. The third step in the programme theory is termed here as complaints processed. This step will also include informing the complainants about the results of their complaints. There is a fourth step in the programme theory called supervision and monitoring by the GMC and the GMSC. It starts from the awareness-building actions and goes through the lodged complaints and their processing and informing the complainants about the result. The ultimate result in the programme theory is the satisfaction of the service seekers. The programme theory is expressed in the following figure. The KII validated the programme theory.



**Figure 1: Programme Theory of GRS**

### 4.3 PUBLICITY OF THE GRS

Bangladesh has a low level of awareness about the introduction of the redress mechanism among the service providers and the service seekers. This level of awareness about the GRS is deficient, particularly in the field-level offices. This kind of reform becomes ineffective when understanding grievance redress is limited (Post and Agarwal 2012). The GRS policy documents recognized this fact and emphasized the wide publicity of the GRS policy reform. Thus the first circular of the Cabinet Division (2007) conferred a specific responsibility to the focal points to keep the ministry’s officials and its service seekers abreast of the prevailing grievance redress system. This emphasis continued in the subsequent circulars of 2008. The circular of 2012 asked the ministries and divisions to publicize in the electronic and print media about the current system of complaints reception and their disposal to enhance awareness among the service seekers about the GRS. The GRS guidelines of 2018 asked the office heads of all public offices to publish and publicize leaflets and booklets to enhance public awareness about the GRS and to make such publicity in print and electronic media.

Interviews with the public officials reveal that the publicity role of the public officials or especially the office head of each office was not undertaken. The office head of a district-level service provider said that the term ‘GRS’ was new to him, and he heard it for the first time when he was asked about his publicity role about the GRS. An Upazila level service provider informed that he knew about GRS from online sources, training programmes, and seniors. Nevertheless, he did not know about any publicity role bestowed on him. The interview findings made it clear that the field-level service providers had never undertaken publicity activities about the GRS among the service seekers. The status of publicity about the GRS became clear from the KII. As the GRS was based on the citizen’s charter, i.e., the GRS was to address grievances that originate from the violation of the service provisions enunciated in the citizen’s charter. As the implementation of the citizen’s charter was still in poor condition, the cabinet division refrained, for the time being, from making wide publicity about the GRS. The cabinet division anticipated problems from such publicity. Making the citizens aware of their right to complain when

the citizen’s charter in every office is not stated clearly may result in legal and management complicity. Therefore, the publicity about the GRS was not implemented.

## 4.4 KNOWLEDGE ABOUT COMPLAINTS MECHANISM

In a context with a low level of awareness of the general mass, publicity about reforms that require people’s participation in terms of their activity becomes a prerequisite to the successful implementation of the reform initiative. Service seekers of the Upazila-level field offices are grassroots-level people in the true sense of the term. The research was interested in knowing what these service seekers knew about the introduction of the GRS and how they knew. Two categories of findings emerged from the interview data—what the respondents claimed to know about the complaint mechanism was a misconception, and there was a lack of source from where they could have a clear conception of the GRS mechanism.

### 4.4.1 *Misconception*

The misconception about the existence of a complaint mechanism arises because a good number of the survey respondents claimed that they knew about the complaining system but actually, what they told during qualitative interviews about their knowledge of the system was not wholly similar to what is designed by the GRS guidelines. For example, very few of them mentioned either the 333 call centre or the higher authority as the points where complaints could be lodged. Others mentioned complaint boxes, police stations, UNO, local elected representatives, ACC, front desk, and the 999 national call center. Some were even surprised to know that complaints could be lodged against public officials. The survey and interview data are presented below.

The survey data shows that a good proportion of the respondents knew the complaints mechanism of the government. Table 4.1 shows the respondents’ knowledge about the existence of a complaint mechanism. More than half of the service-seekers said that they knew about the existence of a complaints mechanism. These quantitative findings appear to be misleading when compared to the findings of qualitative interviews. Qualitative interview data, as discussed below, show that those who claimed to know about the existence of a complaints mechanism actually had a misconception.

**Table 4:1 Respondents Knowledge about Complaints Mechanism**

Items of Information	Category	Frequency	Percentage
A complaints mechanism exists	Know	145	36.3
N=400	Don’t know	255	63.7

**Table 4:2 Occupation, Education and Knowledge on Complaints Mechanism**

Occupation	Complaints Mechanism Exists			Education	Complaints Mechanism Exists		
	Know	Don't Know	100%=		Know	Don't Know	100%=
Farmer	19.8%	80.2%	86	No formal education	7.1	92.9	56
Service	59.6	40.4	104	Up to class five	18.8	81.3	64
Labourer	7.9	92.1	38	Up to class eight	29.7	70.3	37
Business	45.8	54.2	72	SSC	30.4	69.6	79
Homemaker	21.7	78.3	60	HSC	46.8	53.2	62
Student	44.1	55.9	34	Graduate	62.3	37.7	61
Others	33.3	66.7	6	Post-graduate	65.9	34.1	41
Total	36.3	63.7	400	Total	36.3	63.7	400

Table 4.2 shows occupation-wise and education-wise respondents' knowledge about complaints mechanism. Only 20 per cent of the farmers claimed that they were aware of the existence of a complaints mechanism. In the case of the service holders, around 60 per cent claimed to know about the complaints mechanism. Nearly 8 per cent of the labourers knew about the existence of the complaints mechanism. Of the businessmen, 54 per cent did not know about any complaints mechanism. A large portion of the homemakers (78 per cent) did not know about the complaints mechanism. Among the student category, 56 per cent did not know about the complaints mechanism. Quantitative data about the respondents' level of education and their knowledge about the existence of a complaints mechanism appear to be meaningful. A relationship between the respondents' level of education and their knowledge of the existence of a complaints mechanism was detected. A concomitant rise in the percentage of knowing about the existence of a complaints mechanism could be found with the increase of the level of education of the respondents.

Although the survey data show that many of the respondents claimed to know the complaints mechanism, the interview data revealed that not a single respondent had complete knowledge about the complaints mechanism introduced by the GRS guidelines. The vast majority did not know anything about the existence of a complaints mechanism. Some interviewees expressed their surprise when they knew that there was a mechanism for complaining. A fifty-one-year-old farmer, who had higher secondary-level education, visiting an office of the sub-registrar in a northern Upazila, said, after knowing the existence of the GRS mechanism, "can complaints be made" (Interview 22). An illiterate van puller who faced harassment from a rural electrification office expressed his surprise when he knew that complaints could be made against public officials:

People like me do not know about these (complaining) that complaints can be lodged against them (public officials). We knew that they are all (powerful), they are the best, what they do is right. No one is above them. Now I heard for the first time that

complaints can be made against them. ... Let me first understand the good and evil and the benefits and loss (of complaining). Then if it seems all right, I will complain. ... Let me first explore whether others complain or whether people had complained before. ... If they take counter actions, then I will be in trouble (Interview 39).

Many claimed that they knew that complaints could be lodged. When they were asked about what they knew, the revelation proved to be a misconception. One illiterate service seeker of the sub-registrar's office, who was a farmer of 36 years of age, made such claims, "I know complaints can be made. If we go to the office, we can see a complaint box for registering complaints" (Interview 24). A thirty-four years old unemployed man with having secondary school education was found waiting for services in front of a rural electrification office. He said that he knew about the complaints mechanism, and this was, in his eyes, the police station, "You can lodge complaints about anything to a police station" (Interview 33). Referring to the complaint box, another respondent said,

Complaints can be lodged in different ways. There is a complaint box in the office (he visited the sub-registrar's office). Complaints can be dropped there. Nowadays, complaints can be made through telephones. However, no one is found complaining (Interview 37).

Most interviewees who claimed to know about complaining referred to the complaint box as the only complaints mechanism. One respondent knew that complaints against an Upazila office could be lodged in the district office through the complaint box (Interview 42). An SSC qualified service seeker of a sub-registrar's office who was a businessman by occupation showed his confidence in the complaint box, "There is no reason for not knowing about complaining. All know about it. What is more, the complaint box is seen nowadays (Interview 10). Another interviewee told about multiple sources of complaining:

There is a system of complaining. I am a service holder. I know about this matter. I can submit written complaints to the ACC. Moreover, there is a complaint box in the UNO office where I can submit the complaints. I can also tell any problem to the Upazila chairman. But what will be the result of complaining? They will create (account office) more problems (Interview 11).

Few interviewees knew that complaints could be made in writing to higher officials but did not know the details (Interview 43). A teacher who visited an Upazila education office knew that complaints could be lodged to the district office, but he did not trust it. He said, "Complaints against education office (Upazila level) could be made to the DPEO (District Primary Education Officer). Nevertheless, it is not effective. The office receives complaints, but the complaints are not solved" (Interview 48). Some interviewees told some other means of complaining that included the national call centre 999 (Interview 45), police and administration (Interview 3), and front desk (Interview 8). These beliefs existed in persons irrespective of their educational attainments. One NGO official having an MBA degree mentioned the UNO and the OC as the points where complaints are to be made, "The UNO is the administrative chief of an Upazila. So, complaints have to be made to him and, in the case of law and order, to the OC" (Interview 16).

#### **4.4.2 Source of Information**

The few respondents who claimed that they knew about complaints mechanism had known whatever they knew from multiple sources—such as television, newspapers, Facebook, and word of mouth. Some respondents who claimed to know could specify how they knew what they knew. The respondents who knew the complaint box as the point where complaints were to be submitted knew about it through their observation and reading what was written on the box, “Actually these are written near the complaint boxes in many places. Thus, my idea about complaining developed” (Interview 64). He referred to the statement near the complaint box “Here complaints are received” as the source of his knowledge. A service seeker of a land office provided encouraging information, “They (officials) are saying that if you have complaints, please lodge it. They also advised not to give more money than the rates” (Interview 63). He said that he knew the information from Facebook also.

A forty-five-year-old teacher and a service seeker of an Upazila settlement office having higher secondary level education knew that complaints could be made but did not know how to do that. He knew this information from multiple sources, “It can be known from different sources—government offices, anti-corruption office, newspapers, and television” (Interview 26). Another interviewee of 22 years of age and secondary education level also claimed that he knew about the national call centre 333 number from newspaper using which complaints could be lodged (Interview 27). He did not know about the other methods of website and postal service. A respondent of thirty-two years of age having secondary school education said that he heard something about the complaining system from someone but not details, “I only heard that complaints could be made. But no one makes complaints” (Interview 34). An interviewee knew about complaining through telephone from television, but he mentioned the national call centre number 999, “I know that complaints can be made through phone call. I watch it on television” (Interview 45).

### **4.5 SERVICE EXPERIENCE**

The interviews with service seekers were from the following Upazila-level offices: land, sub-registrar, settlement, health complex, rural electrification, education, election, and accounts. None of the seventy-seven service seekers who were interviewed had expressed their satisfaction with their service providers. Their service experience revealed some kinds of harassment either by the providers of the services or by dalals (brokers). The service experience of the service seekers can be broadly labelled as harassment. It subsumes some subcategories. These are discussed below under the labels of apathetic responsibility, recurring visits, moneymaking orientation, and absenteeism. After a brief presentation of the four categories of the harassment experiences of the service seekers, this section ends with a presentation of the survey results under the label of quality and satisfaction.

#### **4.5.1 Apathetic Responsibility**

The service providers appeared to be irresponsive to the needs of the service seekers. Many rural people need to resort to the Upazila offices for various services. Land, health, and electricity services

have almost no alternatives. The situation appears to be like the rural people's becoming hostage to the service providers of the Upazila offices with almost no escape. Despite having feasible solutions to this captivity-like situation, the officials did not appear to apply them in some cases. It seemed to be equal to evading responsibilities by the officials because of their apathetic attitude. A farmer having primary level education was needed to upgrade his land record. He had come to the Upazila land office to pay land tax. This payment was needed for land registration purpose to be done by the sub-registrar's office. The land office informed him that the volume where his land record could be found was not available in the Upazila office. So, the Upazila land office suggested that he go to the district office to collect his land record. As a professionally responsible Upazila land office, its appropriate action would have been to collect the missing record volume from the district office to serve its clients. Suggesting every service seeker go to the district office for a service that is to be delivered by an Upazila office is an apathetic attitude. The missing-volume information can be a trick to get money from the service seeker because the sufferer alleged that the official of the land office wanted money from him:

The land office wanted money for tea and snacks, which I did not give them. I am a poor man. I do not have money. That is why I am selling my land. Now I cannot sell it. I am running here with this woman and being harassed. I have no idea what I can do (Interview 41).

The health professionals had been bereft of compassionate feelings the most. Their behaviour and facilities provided by them to the patients bear the testimony of their being apathetic. "The doctor did not see me even for a minute. I started to tell my problem, and he started to prescribe without checking" (Interview 46). Referring to the rude behaviour of health officials, a patient said, "A patient does not get cured through medicine only but also through the words of mouth. Rebuking makes the patient weak mentally" (Interview 6). She got admitted with severe stomach pain. She was given the slip and was asked to go upstairs. She considered this behaviour short of professional responsibility:

They had a duty to take me to the bed and introduce me to the nurses. It may happen that the patient does not know anything about the hospital. All are not educated. An illiterate cannot know what is written on the slip (Interview 6).

When an emergency patient was taken to the emergency unit of a health facility, the health officials had shown their indifferent attitude to the patient. Sometimes, the emergency unit in the Upazila health complex was found unattended by doctors and other officials. A man took his pregnant sister-in-law, suffering from severe delivery pain, to the emergency unit of an Upazila health complex. He found no doctor there. He requested the nurses to call in a doctor, but they did not do that. The doctor came after two to three hours and advised taking the patient to Sylhet Osmani Medical College. By that time it became night. The service seeker described this behaviour as negligence:

If we were told in the afternoon that delivery would not be possible here, we could have taken my sister-in-law to Sylhet Osmani Medical instantly. They deteriorated the condition of my sister-in-law neglectfully (Interview 44).

Many allegations were in the interviews of keeping the basic amenities such as toilet, light, fan,

dustbin, bed sheet in the health facilities in dilapidated condition. A postgraduate student of 26 years old who was admitted to a health complex alleged that his bedsheet was not changed although he was there for few days. Nevertheless, he noticed that the patients who had a link with the hospital officials got their bedsheet changed every day. This observation did not make him upset as much as he was by the behaviour of the officials, “If we want something, they may say that it is not at their disposal. But they censure us” (Interview 61). A patient in a hospital (Interview 3) admitted three days ago referred to the toilet and invited the interviewee to observe, “Is it in the condition for use by humans”? Then he referred to the lights and fans of the room:

At night, only two lights work on one side, and the other side has none. Last night during giving injection (the doctor) was not finding the vein in darkness. I requested them to bring a hurricane lantern. Furthermore, look at the fans. Few are working. I think the wires of the rest are cut (Interview 3).

There were widespread allegations against the metre readers of the rural electrification office of writing more bills than the actual consumption. A client of the rural electrification office who came to correct his bill alleged, “The metre reader has written 100 more units in electricity bill” (Interview 5). A case of electricity bill payment experience of an illiterate van puller is classic evidence of the apathetic attitude of the public officials:

Now it is 3 pm only. Now they will not receive electricity bills. We have come to pay our electricity bills from very far distances. Now they are returning us without taking the payments. I have come from an 8-9 kilometre distance. When I came, it was 2 pm then—all (officials) were taking lunch. After finishing their launch, they all together did gossiping. We are waiting for them to pay our bills. I have come to pay bills wearing a lungi. I am a lungi-worn man. Do I have value to them? Who will listen to me? We are labourers. I waited for 20 minutes after submitting the bill documents. ... They looked at the watch, and then it was 3:10 pm. Now they will not receive payments. They returned us. Look, we all are returning. Already I have spent 50-100 taka for transportation. I had to buy my lunch too. I will have to come again tomorrow to pay this bill (Interview 39).

#### ***4.5.2 Recurring Visits***

The requirement of recurring visits in some public offices has been identified as a common phenomenon. The service seekers were needed to visit the public offices recurrently as per the wishes of their service providers. The service providers did not give the service seekers an ultimate date for providing a service. Service seekers were given dates again and again. Once a date was met, another was given without providing the desired service. These intermittent visits caused unrecoverable costs to the service seekers. The service seekers made a loss in terms of time, money, and opportunity costs. The service seekers often interpreted the giving of recurring dates by the service providers as pleas to get illegal money from them. This moneymaking attitude of the service providers is discussed in the next section. The recurring visits have been a significant source of the harassment of the service seekers. A service



seeker of an Upazila land office expressed his sufferings:

(The service providers) do not work timely. They consistently devise a ruse to extract money (from service seekers). We are also humans. We live from hand to mouth. If I need to visit this office (for a particular service) repeatedly, how can I do my other works? I have few goats at my home. I need to rear them. If I come here again and again, there is nobody to look after them at home. If I could have to feed them (service providers) some money, my work (service sought from the land office) would have been done many days back ... They do not want to work without money. We come and go again and again for a single service without any results. I have no idea how many days I have to go through such harassment (Interview 21).

Service seekers suffer from land-related problems the most. A man had a land boundary problem with his neighbour. His rich neighbours had occupied his land by force. He needed help from the land office. His frustration grew from the uncertainty he realized, "I need to measure my land. ... I am coming here (land office) for last two months. They are giving me dates one after another" (Interview 35). A service seeker visited the land office for a long time for doing a mutation of his land record. He shared his experience in the following words:

Doing a mutation takes six months ... sometimes more than that. Harassment knows no bound. Much money needs to be spent ... The AC land takes six months or more to sign the mutation document ... The *Tahshilder* may keep the papers with him without signature (Interview 37).

The service seekers suffered from not only recurring visits, but they were also kept waiting in the office premises for a long time of the day. For example, a service seeker who was a retired army soldier with having HSC level of education was waiting in front of a land office. He said, referring to a group of service seekers who were also waiting in front of the land office, "Look at these people. They are here since morning ... now it is going to be evening. None has received any service yet" (Interview 38). According to his observation, influential people got services quickly. Only the general people went through harassment. In his assessment, the previous AC land was a good officer, but the current one had "some problems" (Interview 38). The officials did not want money from him but gave him new dates recurrently.

Besides the land office, service seekers of the election office also suffered from recurring visits. The election office provides national identity (NID) cards. An HSC qualified man had lost the NID cards of him and his wife. He had met all the requirements such as digital birth registration of both of them, death certificates of his father and father-in-law, and deposition of fees in banks. Now he was coming to the election office for a year but did not get the NID cards. He said every day he visited the office incurred the loss of this labour. He said, "It is a great loss for me. ... They do not give importance to the fact that we come here leaving our work. They do not value us" (Interview 75).

### **4.5.3 Moneymaking**

The requirement of recurring visits does not appear to be an isolated action. Instead, it appears to be a deliberate action that has linkage with moneymaking by service providers. Moneymaking here refers to actions of officials that are directed to generate illegal money from service seekers. This money is extra to the official charges. As per the perceptions of the service seekers, moneymaking orientation is the prime objective of giving recurring dates by the service providers to the service seekers. They do not want money directly from the service seekers. Nevertheless, they show indications that money can solve the problem by asking them to come again. Not providing a definite date for a particular service to a service seeker and giving recurring dates are means of harassment. At one point, the service seeker surrenders and offers money to avoid harassment. Giving recurring dates is a strategy to raise the cost of service above what is expected by officials because recurring visits impose a cost on the service seeker in many ways, such as labour cost and travel cost. It seems that the officials of a service providing unit do not ask for money directly from their service seekers. Instead, officials use dalals as mediators.

The most moneymaking technique happens in land-related services. It does not mean that moneymaking is absent in other offices. However, it is pervasive in land-related services. A service seeker of an Upazila land office who was HSC qualified and a small businessman said, “Public office means money. All have to spend (extra) money, more or less, to get a work done. Sometimes, the work is not done even after giving money” (Interview 42). He described his personal experience:

The land office creates harassment in genuine case even. Clerk, peon, surveyor all take money. In a word, money must be given to them; otherwise, no work will be done. Look, I have given money, yet the file is withheld. No one demands money directly. (They) take money in the names of different tasks and through clerks and peons. They do not tell about files if money is not given. The file is archived (without providing services) (Interview 42).

A service seeker of a sub-registrar’s office informed during the interview that he had just paid 300 taka against the government rate of 120 taka, but he had nothing to do with complaining (Interview 24). A primary educated farmer who lost his land records asked for duplicates from the local sub-registrar’s office. He provided clues for his land records. He found that the charges increase as the volume of search increases. His harassment reached the pick, but he was helpless. He did not find any other remedy. Therefore, his frustration resorted to the God:

They give us recurring dates to get money. This is a place for harassment. ... After searching for a little (land records), they tell to come the next day with more money. We provide them with a clue of the probable year of record. They search year by year—the rate increases with the amount of search. ... If you do not believe me, go inside (the office) and tell that you want to search records of 1960 or from 1960 to 1965, and you will see how much they will charge you. Then you will get proof of my words. They will first ask you how many thousands of taka you have brought for them. ... They keep people upon one bamboo and flatten them with another. In the Day of Judgment when

Allah will be The Judge and The Prophet will be The Advocate, these offices will be burned first; they will be blazing (Interview 40).

A service seeker alleged that money could alter the truth. He shared his experience where he also found good officials:

Money can avoid all these (hazards). Money can hide heirs if there exist (in mutation). They will certify that there is no heir. All are captured by money. Money can make the truth a lie and vice versa ... Doing mutation causes the most harassment. A mutation cost thirteen hundred taka. However, that increases to five thousand to seven thousand even up to ten thousand. Sometimes, even ten thousand does not work. Nevertheless, originally it costs twelve to thirteen hundred ... The AC land who served before the previous of the current one told not to give one additional taka than 1230 taka. Good people also exist. Sometimes, one or two good men also are found. However, their number is few. The world exists because there are some excellent people (Interview 37).

Money is not demanded as bribes. Some dubious pretexts are presented before the service seekers. Sometimes officials inform service seekers about unspecified problems that need extra efforts for a solution. Extra efforts require extra money in the name of having tea and snacks. This technique of extracting money is applied to service seekers irrespective of their level of education. The following two excerpts come from a primary educated and a graduated service seeker, respectively (Interviews 47 and 54). A service seeker, who came to the land office for mutation of his land, told that the officials informed him that his papers were 'not okay'. He took it as a pretext which could be corrected only by money:

By doing this, they kept my work (service) hanging. They will not work without money. They said that the land has some problems. If I can make them happy, then the work can progress. They wanted 12 thousand taka, whereas the government rate is about ten to fifteen hundred taka. The rest of the money is theirs (Interview 47).

Sometimes the land tax is calculated highly high so that the service seekers look for a negotiated solution. This negotiation becomes necessary to the service seeker because a mutation cannot be done without clearance of the land tax payment. For selling or buying of land, land tax has to be updated. Dishonest officials find an opportunity in it:

My land tax is 3,965 taka, but the officials have taken six thousand already. Moreover, whenever I come to the office for mutation, they want money for tea and snacks. I am coming here for the last six to seven months for mutation and have already given then ten to twelve thousand for this purpose (Interview 54).

An uneducated farmer told of his experience of a negotiated settlement for fixing his land registration fee, although he knew about the government rate:

I have heard that the government fee for registration is one thousand taka, but the

clerk (muhuri of sub-registrar's office) has taken six thousand from me. He demanded ten thousand, but I negotiated to bring it down to six thousand (Interview 51).

The corrupt officials make money through dalals (brokers). The dalals are people who act on behalf of a service seeker. He makes liaison with the officials. These dalals were believed to be the agents of the service providers. They target the uneducated and unaware service seekers who do not know anything about the service providing procedures. An uneducated service seeker confessed that he did not understand many things because of his lack of education. So, he had to resort to a dalal. When he was asked why he did not go to the officials directly in place of the dalal, he equated the dalals with the officials, "The officials are dalals indeed. Are the dalals from outside? They serve both as dalals and service providers. And the government works in their favour" (Interview 31). An SSC qualified small businessman seeking service from a sub-registrar's office told the following:

No work is done without dalals. If we want to know how to do this, they direct us to them (dalals). If we want to do without dalals, that will not work. We need to pay extra money to the dalals (Interview 10).

The use of dalals by the officials in the office premises seemed to be intentional. The intention is to make money through the dalals. Many respondents had said that the officials did not ask for money directly from them but could understand the officials' intention. The use of dalals is a technique only. A graduate student seeking service from a rural electrification office stated his understanding of the use of dalals:

They (officials) do not give importance to our words. They do not listen to what I want to tell. If we want to talk, they go away showing different reasons. They present themselves as very busy. One refers to another. When we do not understand something, we go to the officials for help. But they do not give importance to us. ... But many dalals are here. If we need to do something or want to understand something, we need to use them. We are spending more money on this (Interview 8).

An HSC qualified small businessman seeking service from the same rural electrification office echoed the voice of the previous service seeker:

If we go to them directly, they do not respond. If we use dalals, they respond quickly. If we go directly, they do not do our work even in five days which should be done in a single day. But if we use dalals, they do it instantly. Therefore, we need to spend two taka in the place of one taka (Interview 17).

A service seeker who came to the office of rural electrification for depositing the fine the service provider imposed on him for being late in paying his electricity bill was interviewed. The linesman cut off the electric line of the service seeker for this late. He requested the official not to cut the electric line and instantly pay the electricity bill on the spot, which he managed by borrowing from one of his relatives. The linesman did not pay heed to the request of the service seeker. Once an electric line is cut, they charge 600 taka as a fine for reconnection. The intention was to get the extra money

as a fine from the client (Interview 23). There are allegations against the rural electrification office of charging extra money whimsically. A day labourer and client of a rural electrification office questioned his electricity bill:

We are being served with bills five or six times more of the normal ones. They do this infrequently. They write more than what the meter reads ... Our normal bills are within Taka 200 to 250. This time they have sent a bill of 1,375 taka. We use only two bulbs and a fan at our home. How can this amount of bill be made (Interview 32)?

Another client from the same office who was a homemaker echoed the same anxiety over her electricity bill:

Our regular bills range between Taka 400 to 500. This bill has become 2,190 taka this time ... They prepare bills as per their wish and deliver to our homes (Interview 33).

Another client from the same rural electrification office of graduate-level education brought a different technique before the interviewer used for charging the clients more. He alleged that the officials hide information from being exposed, which help reduce the bills. For example, he referred to the remission of fine imposed on late payment of electricity bills for residential use. The officials did not disclose it. He made further elaboration:

Many orders, circulars, guidelines come from the government and ministries, which are not disclosed publicly. Dishonest officers and staff take benefits from utilizing the government documents. The circulars should be made public in front of the local offices. The changes should be known to the officials and the beneficiaries equally (Interview 9).

A teacher having post-graduate education provided information on the non-functional status of the complaining system. He also shared the cause of the non-functionality as the use of money:

The education office gives us more harassment. A task of one hour is not done in a month. If money is given for tea and snacks, works are done timely. ... They give signals that work will not be done without money, but no one here claims bribe. I have spent eight to nine thousand taka on my transfer order. I had complained to the DPEO, but I did not get any benefit. Contrarily, my file got stuck. The DPEO has a connection with the officials of the Upazila education office. Bribe also runs here. So, complaining does not bring any results (Interview 48).

#### **4.5.4 Absenteeism**

Non-availability of the service providers in their office during the service providing hours is another experience of harassment of the service seekers. Many service seekers alleged that the service providers were absent in office when they went for services. The absence of officials caused them loss in terms

of time and money. Although this is a phenomenon applicable to all offices, it happens more with the health officials than others. According to the interviewees interviewed in the Upazila health complexes, most physicians remained absent, and the patients got served by the assistants of the doctors and their compounders. A 45-year old patient who was a farmer by occupation and had visited an Upazila health complex many times shared his experience in the following words:

We cannot find the main doctors of the hospital who are supposed to provide us with treatment. Those who work are not doctors. Instead, they are assistants of the doctors. The compounders do all the things. The real doctors are not seen. If the doctors are available, they do not treat the patients properly. They do not give time to the patients. (We have) no importance to them (Interview 30).

This respondent was confident in his opinion as he visited the health facility now and then. He asked the interviewer to ask the other people present on the health complex premises, and he was confident that everyone would say the same thing. The same experience was shared by another interviewee about the same health facility:

I have brought my elder brother (patient) to this hospital. It has been two days since his admission. In these two days, no doctor has come to see. Only the nurses are examining him ... I have visited this hospital before also. I have not seen any doctor before as well. They (doctors) remain busy with their work (Interview 34).

Patients in the hospitals get services from other health officials if the doctors are absent. Assistants of the doctors or compounders can act as substitutes for the doctors. However, this does not happen with the other offices. The service seekers return home without getting their services. The rural electrification office was alleged to neglect its clients even though officials were found around the office premises:

When we come here (rural electrification office) to pay our bills, we do not find them (the officials who receive payments). They do not stay at the office. (They) gossip going to a tea stall. When we become late by one minute, our payments are not taken. (They) tell (us) to come tomorrow. (In fact) they remain in the office but do not take our payments (Interview 33).

A rural electrification office service seeker said that his electricity bill had increased abnormally during the Corona time, "We have not used electricity as such" (Interview 45). His regular average bill had been three to four hundred taka. This time the bill had been seven thousand taka. Last four days, he was coming to the rural electrification office, but he did not find any officials:

Every day I find this office closed. When I asked the neighbouring house, they suggested coming in the morning time. But I find it closed in the morning and in the afternoon. If I call the phone number mentioned in the bill, they advise coming to the office. But none is found in their office. If I call the number after coming to the office, they do not receive the call. I am very annoyed. I cannot pay my bill if problems are not solved. If they bill us

like this, we cannot use electricity (Interview 45).

The land-related offices are no exemptions. A service seeker was recurrently visiting a settlement office for two months to get *porcha* or records of right for his land. Many days he returned to his home because the official was not available in the office. He was told that the official had gone for lunch or was not in the office (Interview 31). The previous section has discussed the moneymaking tendency of the public offices—especially the land office. Absenteeism is an added harassment from this office:

If we were charged as per the rates, there would have been no problem. If the original fee is 100 Taka, they (land office) charge us 500 taka. Even after paying 500 taka, they will apply different artifices to get more money. (They) will not work (serve) in return. (They) will keep (you) running—come this day, that day. What is more, if you come to the office, you will not find them (Interview 36).

#### **4.5.5 Quality and Satisfaction**

The public offices mainly provide intangible services which can be measured only by perception. Parasuraman et al. developed a 22-item measurement scale to measure the quality of this kind of services, which has been discussed in the methodology section. This section presents the quantitative findings received from the survey questionnaire.

Table 4.3 shows the detailed results from the questionnaire items. The mean score of performance has been 2.47, which is less than the median against a very high mean expectation of 3.97. The top three high mean scores for performance have been E2 (office time is comfortable for all service seekers) with a mean score of 3.20, A4 (employees have the knowledge to answer the questions from the service seekers) with a mean score of 3.18, and T3 (the employees are well-dressed and neat and clean) with a mean score of 3.03.

The three worse mean scores for performance have been E1, E3, and RL3. E1 (employees give individual attention to the service seekers) got a mean score of 2.07, E3 (the office has employees who give personal attention to the service seekers) a mean score of 2.08, and RL3 (the employees provide services at the first encounter) a mean score of 2.09. Contrary to the performance scores, high values on expectation items are found. These are normative expectations. The highest score for expectation has been RL 4 (the office will provide services as per its promised timetable) with a mean score of 4.00. The second highest expectation score has been 3.99 and is received by nine expectation statements—six of which are from the reliability and responsiveness dimensions, each having three statements, two are from the assurance dimension, and one is from the empathy dimension.

**Table 4:3 SERVQUAL Items Analysis Results**

Dimension	Code	Performance		Expectation		Gap	Paired <i>t</i> -Test	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		<i>t</i> -Value	<i>p</i> -Value
Tangibles	T1	2.49	1.05	3.97	0.18	-1.47	-27.93	0.00
	T2	2.77	1.02	3.94	0.27	-1.17	-22.55	0.00
	T3	3.03	0.97	3.93	0.26	-0.90	-18.14	0.00
	T4	2.73	1.00	3.94	0.25	-1.20	-23.54	0.00
Reliability	RL1	2.25	1.08	3.99	0.11	-1.74	-32.16	0.00
	RL2	2.25	1.13	3.99	0.11	-1.74	-30.69	0.00
	RL3	2.09	1.10	3.97	0.19	-1.88	-33.99	0.00
	RL4	2.16	1.09	4.00	0.07	-1.83	-33.56	0.00
	RL5	2.37	1.15	3.99	0.09	-1.63	-28.15	0.00
Responsiveness	R1	2.49	1.08	3.99	0.12	-1.50	-27.58	0.00
	R2	2.13	1.11	3.99	0.09	-1.86	-33.36	0.00
	R3	2.17	1.12	3.99	0.10	-1.82	-32.61	0.00
	R4	2.11	1.11	3.81	0.58	-1.70	-27.37	0.00
Assurance	A1	2.26	1.11	3.98	0.12	-1.73	-30.79	0.00
	A2	2.56	1.21	3.98	0.13	-1.42	-23.52	0.00
	A3	2.49	1.05	3.99	0.10	-1.51	-28.37	0.00
	A4	3.18	1.01	3.99	0.09	-0.81	-15.99	0.00
Empathy	E1	2.07	1.10	3.95	0.24	-1.88	-33.65	0.00
	E2	3.20	1.06	3.99	0.11	-0.79	-14.75	0.00
	E3	2.08	1.11	3.96	0.25	-1.88	-33.58	0.00
	E4	2.37	1.07	3.98	0.13	-1.61	-30.01	0.00
	E5	3.01	1.03	3.98	0.16	-0.97	-18.85	0.00
Total		2.47	0.84	3.97	0.09	-1.50	-35.81	0.00

The differences between performance and expectation scores in all items of all dimensions across the measurement tool have produced negative gap scores. All the differences are significant with  $p < 0.00$ . These negative gap values indicate that the offices covered by the study do not meet the expectation of their clients. The highest negative gap value has been -1.88 scored by three items. Two of the items are from the empathy dimension, and one is from the reliability dimension. The two items from the empathy dimension have been E1 (employees give individual attention to the service seekers) and E3 (the office has employees who give personal attention to the service seekers). Moreover, the highest-scoring negative item from the reliability item has been RL3 (the employees provide services at the first encounter). The bottom three lowest gap scores have been -0.79 (E2 office time is comfortable



for all service seekers), -0.81 (A4 employees have the knowledge to answer the questions from the service seekers), and -0.90 (T3 the employees are well-dressed and neat and clean).

Table 4.4 shows the mean SERVQUAL scores and scores of the dimensions across the offices covered by the study. The offices are arranged in the order of highest to lowest gap scores. In other words, in all satisfaction dimensions, the top gap scorer office appears at the top, and the lowest gap scorer office appears at the bottom. Eight offices are ranked. These are Upazila-level (sub-district) offices. The eight offices are settlement, sub-registrar, land, rural electrification, election, accounts, health complex, and education offices. The mean scores in table 4.4 are the gaps between performance and expectation scores across the dimensions of service quality. The highest the negative gap scores are, the worst is the service quality.

The overall SERVQUAL scores of the eight offices reveal that the three land-related offices scored the top three negatives scores. The settlement office received the highest mean of -2.02, followed by the sub-registrar’s office with a mean of -1.83, and the land office with a mean of -1.76. The rural electrification office has been in fourth place with a mean score of -1.48. This trend is more or less similar across all the dimensions of service quality. As per the measurement tool, the maximum gap score could be  $\pm 3$ , and the minimum could be 0. If a gap score of within  $\pm 1$  is characterized as moderate, within  $\pm 2$  as severe, and a gap score of above  $\pm 2$  as extreme, the overall quality of service of the following three offices receive these titles: the settlement office can be called extremely bad, the sub-registrar, land, rural electrification, election, accounts, and health complex become severely bad, and the education office becomes moderately bad. What is noticeable across the dimensions of the service quality scores, settlement, sub-registrar, and land offices are consistently the top scorers. In the reliability and responsiveness dimensions, their scores are extremely bad.

**Table 4:4 SERVQUAL Dimension Scores across Offices**

Service Quality Dimension	Office	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
SERVQUAL	Settlement	-2.02	28	0.62
	Sub-registrar	-1.83	67	0.72
	Land	-1.76	88	0.83
	Rural Electrification	-1.48	72	0.81
	Election	-1.34	24	0.91
	Accounts	-1.24	10	0.80
	Health complex	-1.08	80	0.72
	Education	-0.84	13	0.61
	Others	-0.81	16	0.70
	Total	-1.50	398	0.84
	Settlement	-1.99	29	0.89

<b>Service Quality Dimension</b>	<b>Office</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Tangibles	Sub-registrar	-1.71	68	0.80
	Land	-1.27	88	1.03
	Rural Electrification	-1.12	72	0.75
	Health complex	-0.88	80	0.68
	Education	-0.87	13	0.33
	Election	-0.55	24	0.78
	Accounts	-0.40	10	0.39
	Others	-0.58	16	0.49
	Total	-1.19	400	0.90
Reliability	Settlement	-2.32	29	0.83
	Sub-registrar	-2.13	68	0.90
	Land	-2.09	88	0.95
	Election	-1.88	24	1.12
	Rural Electrification	-1.74	72	0.95
	Accounts	-1.56	10	1.04
	Health complex	-1.24	80	0.88
	Education	-0.85	13	0.73
	Others	-0.89	16	0.94
	Total	-1.76	400	1.01
Responsiveness	Settlement	-2.09	29	0.85
	Land	-2.09	88	1.00
	Sub-registrar	-2.03	68	0.91
	Rural Electrification	-1.69	72	0.97
	Election	-1.65	24	1.23
	Accounts	-1.55	10	1.15
	Health complex	-1.27	80	0.97
	Education	-0.90	13	0.73
	Others	-1.06	16	1.12
	Total	-1.72	400	1.04
	Land	-1.71	88	0.94
	Sub-registrar	-1.67	67	0.81

Service Quality Dimension	Office	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Assurance	Settlement	-1.88	28	0.71
	Health complex	-0.85	80	0.74
	Rural Electrification	-1.38	72	0.91
	Education	-0.81	13	0.76
	Election	-1.24	24	1.03
	Accounts	-1.35	10	0.85
	Others	-0.58	16	0.61
	Total	-1.37	398	0.92
Empathy	Land	-1.64	88	0.84
	Sub-registrar	-1.61	68	0.72
	Settlement	-1.54	29	0.66
	Rural Electrification	-1.48	72	0.86
	Election	-1.38	24	0.96
	Accounts	-1.32	10	0.80
	Health complex	-1.18	80	0.71
	Education	-0.77	13	0.73
	Others	-0.93	16	0.86
Total	-1.43	400	0.82	

**Table 4:5 Correlation Matrix**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Dependent Variable</b>						
1 Satisfaction						
<b>Independent Variables</b>						
2 Tangible	.533**	1				
3 Reliability	.840**	.605**	1			
4 Responsiveness	.821**	.572**	.921**	1		
5 Assurance	.780**	.595**	.845**	.859**	1	
6 Empathy	.823**	.533**	.827**	.836**	.833**	1
Mean	5.05	-1.19	-1.76	-1.72	--1.37	-1.43
SD	2.31	0.90	1.01	1.04	0.92	0.82

Note: \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlations of the variables are shown in table 4.5. As table 4.5 shows, all correlations were statistically significant at the 0.01 level. The respondents' overall satisfaction was regressed on the five dimensions of service quality to know the relative importance of the five dimensions of service quality. Table 4.6 shows the results of the regression analysis. The regression analysis revealed that the prediction model was statistically significant,  $F(5, 392) = 247.815$ ,  $p < .001$ , and accounted for approximately 76 per cent of the variance of satisfaction ( $R^2 = .760$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .757$ ). Reliability surfaced as the most contributing and significant dimension to predict satisfaction of the service seekers followed by empathy. The Pearson correlations of these two dimensions with the dependent variable are also of higher degrees (Table 4.5).

**Table 4:6 Relative Importance of the Five Dimensions in Predicting Satisfaction**

Dimension	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>
Tangible	.032	.081	.012	.391	.696	
Reliability	.913	.156	.400	5.869	.000	
Responsiveness	.239	.156	.107	1.529	.127	.757 ( $p < .00$ )
Assurance	.110	.137	.044	.803	.422	
Empathy	1.010	.141	.358	7.151	.000	

*Note:* The dependent variable was Satisfaction,  $R^2$  was .760 ( $p < .00$ )

## 4.6 COMPLAINING BEHAVIOUR

In the previous section, the presentation of findings on the service experience of the service seekers surveyed and interviewed by this study revealed that the service seekers were aggrieved, more or less, by the quality of services provided by their service providers. This section focuses on their complaining behaviour. We also know from a discussion on the respondents' knowledge about the GRS complaints mechanism that the service seekers knew little about it or had a misconception. At this backdrop, they were asked whether they had any complaints against their service providers. They were told about the complaints mechanism introduced by the GRS and were asked about their willingness to complain. This section mainly presents the experiences and perceptions of the service seekers extracted from the interview data. The coding of the interview data produced some categories. Accordingly, the interview data are presented in subsections under the headings of trust, fear of reprisal, incapacity, tolerance, and preferred mode of (future) complaining. Nevertheless, before presenting the interview data, some related statistical findings from the survey questionnaire are presented.

The survey questionnaire had one item about whether the respondents had complaints against their service providers. The number of the respondents having complaints was less than half. In other words, more than half of them (54.5%) reported not having complaints (Table 4.7). This survey finding does not mean that they were happy with the services of the providers. Those who claimed that they did not have a complaint said so because of the prevalence of some factors which have been presented

in some subsequent subsections.

**Table 4:7 Complaints Against Service Providers**

Items of Information	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Complaints against service providers N=400	Have	182	45.5
	Don't have	218	54.5

Table 4.8 shows a crosstab of the information presented in tables 4.1 and 4.7. The respondents who claimed that they knew of the existence of a complaint mechanism are almost equally divided on whether having a complaint against their service providers or not. Most of the respondents who had claimed that they did not know about the complaints mechanism claimed not to have a complaint against their service providers. What is notable here is that although half of the respondents who claimed to know the complaints mechanism and had complaints against their service providers, qualitative data revealed that none was eager to lodge complaints against their service providers.

A crosstab of education with complaints and occupation with complaints is presented in table 4.9. No pattern between the respondents' level of education and their having complaints against their service providers could be found. Similarly, no pattern between the occupation of the respondents and their having complaints against their service providers could be found.

**Table 4:8 Knowledge on Complaints Mechanism and Having a Complaint**

Items of Information		Complaints against service providers		
		Have	Don't Have	100%=
<b>A complaints mechanism exists</b>	Know	50.3	49.7	145
	Don't know	42.7	57.3	255

**Table 4:9 Occupation-wise Respondents' Knowledge about GRS Issues**

Occupation	Complaints			Education	Complaints		
	Have	Don't Have	100%=		Have	Don't Have	100%=
Farmer	55.8%	44.2%	86	No formal education	42.9	57.1	56
Service	38.8	61.5	104	Up to class five	53.1	46.9	64
Labourer	47.4	52.6	38	Up to class eight	37.8	62.2	37
Business	52.8	47.2	72	SSC	38.0	62.0	79
Homemaker	31.7	68.3	60	HSC	58.1	41.9	62

Student	47.1	52.9	34	Graduate	41.0	59.0	61
Others	50.0	50.0	6	Post-graduate	46.3	53.7	41
Total	45.5	54.5	400	Total	45.5	54.5	400

#### 4.6.1 Trust

The service seekers had a significant deficit of trust in their minds about the functionality of the complaints mechanism. The system is there, but the belief is that it is non-functional. This belief of the non-functionality of systems comes from the everyday observation the service seekers make. For example, an office may have a complaint box as a part of the system. Nevertheless, the service seekers notice that no one ever puts any complaints in the box, and the box is never opened. The box exists to showcase only. Therefore, it is a non-functional system. Similarly, some service seekers knew about the 333 call centre from newspaper and television advertisements. However, only one out of the 77 interviewees attempted to use this mechanism, but he was returned with a discouraging response from the call centre. As is discussed in a previous section, a service seeker complained to a district office against an Upazila office. Nevertheless, his complaint brought him sorrows. Observations like these destroy the trust of the people in the systems.

Service seekers provided logical and non-refutable arguments about the non-functionality of the redress system. They questioned functionality, referring to the prevalent malpractices. A service seeker having primary education was found on the premises of a rural electrification office. By occupation, he was a van-puller and had no idea about the redress mechanism. He, along with others, had complained to the Upazila electrification office for giving them electricity bills of much higher than their regular bills. However, those complaints did not work. Now he realized, “If complaining had worked, there would have been no problems, and we would have no harassment. Contrarily, they (service providers) put us in sufferings if we complain” (Interview 32).

Very few respondents were found who had used one of the three modes of complaining. These respondents came to know about the national call centre named 333. The GRS guidelines do not make a direct reference to the call centre of 333. The guidelines encourage postal service, directly complaining to front desks, and the use of the GRS website, i.e., grs.gov.bd. The guidelines mention that complaints may also be made through ‘other methods’. About the ‘other methods’, the guidelines mention two names in the first brackets—e-file and call centre. The national web portal of Bangladesh—bangladesh.gov.bd—has a menu on ‘mobile service’. Clicking on this menu bar takes visitors to a page that lists 25 numbers. The page of the 333 call centre provides some information about the call centre. It informs that calls can be made from any mobile phone with a charge of 60 paisa per minute any time of a year. The call centre’s objectives inform that it provides information to a caller about all websites of the national web portal of the government and public services, among other things. One respondent who had an education of higher secondary and was a student by occupation once attempted to make a complaint using the call centre number 333. He was a service seeker of a settlement office. He found the call centre service unhelpful. So, he lost his trust in the system. He said:

One day, I made a complaint by calling the 333 number. However, they did not accept my complaint. They advised me to contact the office with which I had problems. They commented that my problem was a personal issue of the office and me. Did I have anything more to do in this regard (Interview 25)?

Although some service seekers believed the complaint box installed in front of the offices to be the only mode of lodging complaints, they did not use the complaint box for lodging their complaints because of a lack of trust in the system. For example, a service seeker of a sub-registrar's office who had no formal education commented about the complaint box, "What is the benefit of having this box? No one will put complaints in it" (Interview 24).

The trust deficit is not limited to the experiences of the service seekers of particular offices. Some had a trust deficit in the total system of the government. The respondents believed that whatever happens to them in the field offices was not unknown to the government. The government knew about all the harassments but did nothing. An interviewee expressed his beliefs in the following words:

Everything is (a part of) the game of the government. The government does everything. The government knows everything—what happens where or does not happen. Only we are harassed everywhere. All games are played on us ... (Interview 30).

Trust is lost on the ground that the government officials defend each other's interests. So, complaining will not work because "they will not do anything to their own men" for serving the interests of a complainant (Interview 43). Therefore, "it has no benefit, and it will not work" (Interview 43). Complaining is overwhelmingly believed to be a counterproductive action. A respondent argued that "if a complaint is made against anyone, it (the name of the complainant) will reach to (the) ear" of the official against whom the complaint has been raised because the officials defend each other's interests. So, a service seeker does not "want to take this risk" (Interview 50). A service seeker of an Upazila land office said that he had "already spent much money" beyond the government fees, and he was not willing to take a risk to "bury it (the spending) by making complaints" (Interview 36). He explained his expenditure:

Do you understand what significant a loss it is when I come here, leaving my work and spending my time here (without results)? Do I spend less after coming here daily? I need to use public transport for coming here. After coming here, I need to spend 100-150 taka for snacks and tea. Is this a small loss (for me)? In addition, I need to pay to the office. Even after payment, we do not get service (Interview 36).

A service seeker of an Upazila accounts office who is also a public servant elaborated how complaining is counterproductive:

Complaining will increase my danger. If I complain to the ACC against the accounts office, my harassment will be more. I do a job here. I do not have any quarrel with the accounts office so far. An official of the accounts office wanted five hundred taka (illegally) for a service. He did the work, and I gave him the money. Then he wanted one thousand

taka (more) from me. I told him that it was your duty to do the work. Yet I gave you five hundred taka. Then they (the office) hid one of my files. I could get that file after much suffering. I could not draw my salary until the file was found. At one point, I went to a saint (for a remedy). I had to write to the Dhaka office and the ministry several times (Interview 11).

Trust is lost because complaining requires producing documentary evidence, which is challenging to make. For example, a service seeker “had to give 200 taka against the rate of 100 (for a service),” and he “complained to the AC land but the office assistant denied” (Interview 2). Then the AC land told the complainant that his complaint had “no documentary evidence” and, therefore, the complaint was quashed (Interview 2).

Trust is lost because “there is no benefit in complaining” (Interview 10). “All people know that complaining does not work” (Interview 37). “Is any inquiry made if complaints are made (surprisingly, Interview 38)? “If complaints could bring any benefits, then people would have made complaints ... I have never heard that anyone has made complaints against hospitals” (Interview 34). “All know that” the service seekers “are victims of corruption” and “none is doing anything despite knowing this (Interview 10). Therefore, “what is the need for complaining anew” (Interview 10). The government could have taken steps “if it had wanted” (Interview 10). So, it implies that the person against whom a complaint will be made “is also corrupt” (Interview 12). Thus “there is nothing to do where higher officials are corrupt” (Interview 12). According to the excerpt of a service seeker from an Upazila land office, complaining will benefit the government officials financially:

Complaining will benefit the higher officials. Everybody in public offices takes money. Take my example. My file has been withheld for five months in the land office. If I complain to the district office, the district office will not punish him (the Upazila official). Instead, it will increase the rate of money it takes from them (Upazila office). Do you think that the money this office (Upazila office) receives is consumed by them alone? They all share among themselves (including the district office). The district office will put pressure on the Upazila office that “complaints are lodged against you. From now on increase the rate (on service seekers). Otherwise, you will be in trouble”. Now, who (Upazila official) works for five thousand taka, will not work below eight thousand taka. So, who will make the loss? In the end, the loss is ours. Complaining will bring more benefits to them (officials). (They) will share (benefits) among themselves. ... If I complain, they will not find my file. They will (somehow) know who has complained. Then my work will not be done and, what is more, my harassment will increase manifold. There is no benefit in complaining to officials who themselves are corrupt, I think. Only if there are honest officers then, complaints can work (Interview 42).

The lack of trust in complaining develops from the observation of the government’s tolerance of corruption. As corruption is believed to be pervasive, it logically generates another belief that the complaints receiving authorities are also infected by corruption. A service seeker expressed his belief in the non-functionality of the system in the following excerpts:



What complaints should I make? This picture is the same everywhere in Bangladesh. Corruption is everywhere. Where I will complain, you will see, also do corruption. There would have been not many problems as such if complaining could correct all. ... There is no benefit in complaining. Everything will go as such as is going now even if I complain. If I do not complain, it will go the same way. Why should I make complaints then? If complaining could bring benefits, then complaints could be made (Interview 33).

When this service seeker was requested to have a try to see whether complaining works, he told to the interviewee:

I think you are a newcomer in Bangladesh. That is why you are saying this. Which place will you talk about? I can tell you closing my eyes that all places are filled with corruption. Words cannot do the work. All works are done with the money. All works will be done if you give money. If you cannot give money, your words have no value. Nobody will listen to you (Interview 33).

#### **4.6.2 Fear of Reprisal**

The most dominating factor behind the unwillingness of the service seekers to lodge complaints against their service providers was their fear of reprisal from the public officials. Almost all of the interviewees did not dare to complain against any public officials. One of the beliefs that kept them aloof from making complaints was that the public officials have fellow feeling among themselves. “The truth is that they (service providers) are people of the government, and the government is the people of them” (Interview 30). If complaints are made against a public official, the official with whom complaints would be lodged would cooperate with the complainee and make decisions favouring the complainee. On the other hand, the complainant would suffer from the wraths of the public officials. A service seeker who had no formal education shared his beliefs in the following words:

If complaints are made, they (public officials) will solve their problems among themselves, and, contrarily, all blames will come to us—the general people. Complaining against public officials will only bring danger (to us) (Interview 24).

The fear is so intense that the service seekers were found to prefer harassment to complain, “It is better if more visits bring results” (Interview 24). The fear of reprisal exists in the minds of the service seekers for unknown reasons. When they were asked to express the causes of their fear, their practical experience of reprisal, they could not substantiate their narratives. “I cannot dare to complain lest they (who receive complaints) disclose my name (to the service provider) after lodging complaints” (Interview 25). Remaining anonymous after complaining was a significant concern in the interviewees’ minds when the question of complaining came. When an interviewee was assured that the system allowed for anonymous complaining, his fear did not fade, “In that case, a complaint could be lodged as a trial” (Interview 30). This respondent believed that remaining anonymous was difficult nowadays because of the advancement of technology, “Even after that fear remains if, somehow, they can know” the name of the complainant “in this age” of technological advancement (Interview 30).

An unknown fear of reprisal hunts the service seekers. Complaining against a public office appeared to be a very frightening step, “Is this a straightforward task to complain against public officials” (Interview 31)? The public officials appear to be all-powerful in the eyes of the frontline service seekers. An interviewee shared his feeling when the interviewer told him about the complaining mechanism:

I fear complaining. I fear what will happen if I complain. They are public officials. All power is in their hand. We are general working-class people. Can we survive after complaining against them (Interview 28)?

The fear develops out of a hostage-like feeling. The service seekers do not see alternatives to seeking services from the Upazila offices. So complaining puts them at risks of being deprived of the desired services. For example, a service seeker was visiting a land office for three months to have his land record. He said, “I have almost wrapped up the work. Behind this, I had to take the brunt of all harassment. Now it is about to be done (Interview 36). Therefore complaining “at this point”, according to his belief, would turn his efforts to “go in vain” (Interview 36). Similarly, a poor patient cannot afford to go to private hospitals in the cities. So, he says, “This (hospital) is for my whole life. This is our locality. We will need to come here (frequently)” (Interview 4). His vulnerability is that the next day he may need to take his father to the hospital. Therefore, if he complains against the officials of the hospital, “their anger will be” with him, and he will be deprived of services (Interview 4).

Fear lies not only in being deprived of services but also in losing documents. The land is the most valuable resource of the villagers. The records of their land remain in the land office. They resort to this office now and then. A service seeker expressed his fear in the following words:

My all (documents) are in their hand (land office). Not only of this but all records of my land are also in their hand. If they look at me through evil eyes, they can make my all land records disappeared. What can you do then? We need to take service from this office now and again. Therefore, we cannot complain against them though we want (Interview 15).

The fear is further aggravated by the belief that public officials at all levels are corrupt. Therefore, complaining to corrupt officials will bring no benefits. Corrupt officials collaborate among themselves:

If I complain, they (officials) will exchange money among themselves. Then they will be united together. In the middle, we will be considered their enemy. The officials against whom I will complain and the officials I will complain to are the same people. So, what is the benefit of complaining? ... One will keep another’s mouth closed by feeding money. That is why nobody goes close to complaining. It is better if the work can be done by spending more money (Interview 37).

### **4.6.3 Incapacity**

All service seekers aggrandized the service providers in terms of their power and position and

demeaned and devalued themselves. Not complaining despite being aggrieved is partially driven by the perceived incapacity of the service seekers. This incapacity can be described as their weakness in terms of educational and financial capabilities. This incapacity is evident when a service seeker having primary education says, “I do not know what to tell in complaining” (Interview 28). When the respondent was asked to tell about how the complaints mechanism can be made easy for them, his reply was, “I do not have the intelligence to give you suggestions. This is not in my head.” The interviewer told a service seeker from an Upazila health complex who had a lower-secondary level of education about the redress system. Then he commented, “We are people of the ordinary level. Do we (have the capacity to) understand so much? What is more, what will happen in doing this? There is no benefit” (Interview 30). Low level of education results in a low level of confidence. A service seeker who had no formal education told about complaining, “We are poor and illiterate people and do not understand many things by ourselves. There is a panic whether they will listen to us” (Interview 31). An illiterate van puller seeking service from a rural electrification office said, “We are common people from villages. What do we understand about these” (Interview 39). Though this service seeker was willing to complain but refrained from doing so out of fear.

Poverty is another factor for the perceived incapacity of the service seekers. The financially poor condition makes them psychologically weak. For example, a housewife having primary education made her financial poverty responsible for being incapable of complaining though she was aggrieved by the services she received from an Upazila health complex (Interview 4). Her financial capacity does not permit her to buy health services from the private sector, “We do not have money and cannot go elsewhere (for treatment). We will need to come here. I do not have the power to do something” (complaining) (Interview 4). She equated financial capacity as power, “If I had power, I would do (complain)” (Interview 4).

Psychological incapacity powered by financial and educational poverty bars service seekers from materializing their rights. This type of incapacity turns rights into favours. A service seeker of an Upazila land office argued that because he was “a poor and illiterate person” he did not “understand what to do” in complaining (Interview 41). When the interviewer advised him to share his service-related sufferings with the AC land, he considered that he did not “have the opportunity to meet the big boss” (Interview 41). He tried to meet the AC land, but the officials did not allow him to do so. He stated, “I am a powerless man. Will the big boss allow me to meet him? The staff of the land office did not allow me to meet the big boss” (Interview 41). A farmer seeking service from a land office explained his incapacity to complain:

We are very poor. Soaked rice finishes by the time salt are brought. Should we die by involving ourselves in the harassment of complaining? Complaining against these people (public officials) and bringing crocodiles by digging canals are the same thing ... They are the men of the government. The government supports them. Can we fight with them? We will be in deep troubles if we complain against them. Then we will become criminals (in their eyes). Better we should accept whatever the current situation is ... Such is the age now; the laws are in the hands of the powerful. The laws work in favour of those who have money. As we do not have money, we are not valued. If I had money, I would have power in my hand, and my work (service) would have been done in a minute. I would not have to come here even. Only a phone call would have been enough to do

the work. I have no money. So, I am weak. So, my words do not work. My words have no value (to the officials) (Interview 35).

#### **4.6.4 Tolerance**

Some respondents were found to be sympathetic to the service providers. They found the service providers to be busy with the workload. They do recognize harassment but are tolerant. They were ready to accept the harassment they faced from their service providers. They did not mind coming to the offices recurrently:

I do not need to come here (the settlement office) every day. When a need arises, I come (here). The work may be done or not. If not done, (I) will need to come again. Advantages and disadvantages are everywhere. Some problems (recurring visits) may happen sometimes. Making complaints about this will not work. Making complaints brings us more harassment. If I had to come here every day (for the same service), I would have made complaints. As I do not need to come here every day, why should I make complaints (Interview 27)?

A service seeker of a sub-registrar's office who had been coming to the office for three consecutive weeks was interviewed. A farmer by occupation, he had primary education and was 55 years old. He was a resident of another Upazila, but the service he needed belonged to a different Upazila, under a different district, where he was interviewed. He explained his problems in the following terms:

We come here from too far a distance ... If we are not served timely, we get hurt ... We live in Gangachara Upazila (under Rangpur district). Previously, we were under Kishoregonj Upazila (under Nilphamari district). So, the land property (a record) of the forefathers has remained under Kishoregonj Upazila. Our two unions have been taken to the Gangachara Upazila (for administrative adjustment). Now we need to come here (Kishoregonj) for land (-related services). We will not need to come here if this work (service) is met. I come here for this purpose. I am running here for the last 15/20 days (Interview 28).

The interviewer informed the interviewee mentioned above that there were options for complaining. Although the man (Interview 28) was recurrently visiting the sub-registrar's office to get his desired service, he did not think that he should complain about his harassment by the service providers. His comments on complaining show his level of tolerance:

I will complain if I am harassed at the highest level ... I will see (wait for) some more days (and see) where the water flows. If I see that the service is not delivered, then I will complain (Interview 28).

The story of a 48 years old man who was a farmer by occupation is worth-mentioning a case of tolerance. His father had died when he and his other two brothers were minor boys. His grandfather had land property. After his father's death, his mother could not stay in their ancestral home, and they had to move to a different village because of the conspiracy of his uncle. His opportunist uncle grabbed the grandfather's land property. As he and his brothers grew older and began to understand the grab, he started to collect land-related information from the public offices and could retake some of the lands from his cousins' possession. He considered himself weaker because he had lower secondary grades while his uncle's four sons had higher education and were jobholders. He was trying to get relevant papers from the sub-registrar's office. His opinion about the service of this office is stated in his following words:

I have got many papers until now. (I) need to make recurrent visits and need to keep inquiring ... For now, I do not want to complain about services. I should not complain about small things. No office in Bangladesh provides services timely (Interview 29).

The tolerance has developed from the prevalence of the standard practices. The harassment does not appear to be an exceptional case of a particular public office. The interviewees considered harassments to be a regular phenomenon of all public offices. Every service seeker accepts this behaviour of the public offices as usual. About complaining about grievances, an interviewee said:

If I could see that everything is all right everywhere, and injustice is happening to me only, there was an issue (in it). Problems (injustice) are not with me only. All are sufferers. What will happen if I alone complain? If all had made complaints, it would have an effect (Interview 30).

Tolerance also develops from fear of reprisal. As money is the prime objective of putting service seekers into harassment, service seekers give illegal money to the service providers. The service seekers who had already spent money for getting desired services feared that if complaints were made at this point, the service providers would put them in further harassment by making the service delivery more complex. A service seeker who had already spent money to get his land records told about complaining, "The problem is that already much money is spent. Complaining may cause my efforts (to get land records) to fall flat" (Interview 31). The following excerpt shows acceptance by the service seekers of abnormality in public offices as a normal behaviour:

It has been a rule to get a job done in an accounts office with the help of money. All know, but no one, even the higher officials, says anything about this. ... If my relations with them become bad (for complaining), the loss is mine (Interview 49).

#### ***4.6.5 Preferred Mode of (future) Complaining***

As none was found who either had used the complaints mechanism or was willing to complain, the interviewees were asked how they would like to lodge complaints in future had they decided to do so.

The most preferred mode was the use of mobile phones—all interviewees except a few preferred this mode for complaining. There are obvious reasons for this preference. Those “who do not have education cannot operate internet and also cannot write an application” should be allowed to lodge complaints through mobile phones because nowadays everyone has a mobile phone (Interview 41). However, it has to be anonymous complaining (Interview 43). We have noted in our previous findings that a fear factor captures the field-level service seekers. Everyone believed that complaining would bring them additional harassment from the public officials. Therefore, the service seekers overwhelmingly preferred a system where complaining could be made through mobile phones and anonymously. Only one interviewee having HSC qualification and a retired soldier of the army was found who had opined in favour of complaining through the website (Interview 38). None was found to be fully aware of the GRS and, therefore, publicity about the GRS was demanded, “If advertisements are made on television and Facebook about this mechanism, the general service seekers will know about it” (Interview 45).

Apart from the mobile phones as a mode of lodging complaints, some interviewees mentioned some other means which are different from what the GRS incorporated. There was a desire to have an in-person, face-to-face complaining system (Interview 3). The GRS allows for the face-to-face submission of complaints to the front desks. This system requires an Upazila level aggrieved service seeker to go to the district offices to make complaints physically. Therefore, the Upazila level service seekers preferred a system of face-to-face submission of complaints at the Upazila level. Their preferences included the UNO, police stations, local ACC office, and local elected representatives. Some respondents wanted a system that would allow them to complain to the local Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) for their harassments in the other offices of the Upazila. An interviewee said, “it would have been better if we could make complaints to an administrative authority such as the UNO (Interview 25). A respondent (Interview 29) wanted a system that would allow making complaints to the chairman of the union council. If this does not work, then the police station should be the next step. If it does not work, only then could complaints be taken somewhere else at a higher level. Expressing his preference, an interviewee said, “I think it would have been perfect if complaints could be lodged in police stations, and if the police stations had taken the complaints and adopt measures (accordingly) (Interview 32).

Preference for submission of complaints to local authorities demonstrates the urgency of the service seekers for quick actions on the complaints. An interviewee opined, “Representatives of ACC at the Upazila level will act instantly. Sometimes, they may make observations in disguise” (Interview 1). Echoing this voice, another service seeker opined for “a monitoring team that would make secret visits” (Interview 5). Monitoring from the government agencies has received more support, “It would have been better if the government would monitor from its initiative what is happening where” (Interview 34). A service seeker opined that wherever complaints are lodged, they would be happy “if actions are taken” based on the complaints (Interview 32).



## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Grievance redress attempts to make inroads into the maladministration by addressing and rectifying any harm done to service seekers by public service providers. The government of Bangladesh introduced such grievance redress system (GRS) in 2007 for the first time, which, at that time, lacked an elaborate mechanism. In the course of its development, the GRS gradually took the shape of a fully designed system with the introduction of the GRS guidelines in 2018. This study attempted to understand the programme theory of the GRS guidelines implementation and assess the relevant part of the programme theory that relates to the field-level public offices. In the context of Bangladesh, the field-level offices are the offices located in the Upazilas and districts.

The data presented in the findings chapter reveal that the programme theory of the GRS starts with publicity about the newly introduced redress mechanism. This publicity can be considered as a precondition to the implementation of the GRS guidelines. The ultimate goal of the GRS implementation was identified as enhancement of the satisfaction of the service seekers. In the middle of these two edge points of the programme theory lie three significant activities—lodging complaints by aggrieved service seekers, processing the submitted complaints, and monitoring the activities encompassing publicity and handling complaints. For the sake of an assessment of the part of the programme theory that relates to the field-level offices, the second specific objective of the study was split into four component parts, which included looking into the publicity activities by relevant public offices, the immediate result of this publicity in the form of knowledge of the service seekers about the GRS, their experience of public services including service quality and the resultant satisfaction, and their actual behaviour about complaining.

Publicity about the GRS has fallen short of what is required in the context of a low level of awareness among field-level service seekers. The inadequacy in publicity has contributed to the development of misconception about complaints mechanism. The respondents overwhelmingly believed the complaint box to be the lone mode of complaining. None of the service seekers was found to know the GRS. Few service seekers knew about the national call centre of 333 from television and newspaper advertisements or Facebook and word-of-mouth communication. A few service seekers knew about complaining to district offices in writing. Weakness in publicity and the resultant misconception about complaining have threatened the effective implementation of the GRS policy. The effect of organizational silence might have worked in poor publicity of the GRS initiative. There is a natural trend in organizations to nurture organizational silence in their internal operations (Morrison and Milliken 2000). An organization that does not encourage voice from within will not promote voices from outside, which hold its officials accountable.

Administrative justice falls flat in the field-level service delivery where procedural fairness sees gross violations in the sense of applying administrative rules to decision making by officials (Adler 2018). The service seekers of the field-level public offices experience harassment in seeking public services. The service providers, in general, turn their apathetic responsibilities to the service seekers, but there are exceptions. The providers are not compassionate to the needs of the service seekers. Instead, they capitalize on the needs. Most harassment happens in the form of giving recurring dates to the service seekers for a particular service. The providers do not give a definite date for a particular service. Another form of harassment is taking money illegally from the service seekers. The providers do not



want money directly from the service seekers but give indications that money can solve the problems of harassment. Service seekers perceive that recurring dates are given so that they are compelled to offer money to avoid further new dates. Service providers' being absent in the office during service delivery hours is another source of harassment of the service seekers. All these negative experiences of the service seekers are reflected in their mediocre satisfaction over the public services. The three land-service-related offices have been the three top scorers of negative service quality. Two variables—reliability and empathy—are found to be the significant predictors of satisfaction in the context of the field-level offices. This statistical data validate the interview findings of service quality and satisfaction.

The awful findings of this study are the perception of the service seekers about complaining about their grievances. None of the interviewees was willing to lodge complaints against their service providers. Overwhelming lack of trust in the systems is one of the major causes. The perception is that every public institution is plagued by corruption. Beliefs in the pervasiveness of corruption inevitably affect the belief in the effectiveness of the grievance redress system. The direct experience of corruption by the service seekers further fortifies their distrust in the systems. Another appalling finding on complaining behaviour has been fear of reprisal from the service providers. The service seekers have shown their firm beliefs in the vindictive character of their service providers. It will take dedicated efforts to reverse the belief that complaining returns with reprisals. Two field notes shared with the researcher by one of the data collectors appear meaningful in describing the contexts of the Upazila-level service seekers:

This day (20 July 2020) I visited both the rural electrification office and the sub-registrar's office. At first, I arrived at the rural electrification office. There I noticed the citizen charter hanging behind a big shelf. It was not able to be seen clearly. Besides, the citizen charter was not formed in a legal (prescribed) way. The office authorities fabricated it on their own accord. In the middle of the rain, I interviewed a service seeker inside a tea stall. He was complaining against the service holders of this office vehemently. Meanwhile, two service holders of the office entered the same tea stall. I could not recognize them, but the interviewee did. Seeing them, he faltered in talking his words smoothly. After some time being out of the stall, the interviewee brought a number of charges against the rural electrification office. Leaving the rural electrification office, I went to the sub-registrar's office. I interviewed a person there in a tea stall too. He did not have any complaints while he was being interviewed. However, later he confessed that he lied at the time of taking his interview. He had to pay Tk 300/- as a graft to check his document whether it belonged to another person. He said to me that he had hidden the truth in fear of being jeopardized anyway. His problem was not solved. He had to visit the office repeatedly from time to time for a single and simple cause.

Today (21 July 2020), I visited the settlement office and the sub-registrar's office. The citizen charter was found hanging in front of the office corridor. It was not formed in the proper format. There were so many service seekers waiting in front of the office corridor to get their problems solved. Through convincing a lot, I was able to talk with a few of them. All the people who talked with me said that nowadays, every corner of this county is contaminated with corruption. The service holders from every office are mostly

avaricious of receiving money in an illegal way. In the question of the settlement office, they replied that the office authority demands 5/6 times more money than the regular charge in every step. In spite of fulfilling their demands, the service seekers do not get the service at the right time. They always have to visit the office frequently for a single purpose. One of the service seekers said that once he had tried to lodge a complaint by dialing 333 against the office. But from the other side did not accept his complaint. They suggested him to deal with the concern office in which he has the problem. Then I went to the sub-registrar's office. There I met a number of service seekers. They said that their (the service holders of the office) only intention is to embezzle money in an illegal way from the service seekers. They also stated that each and every corner of the country is affected by corruption. Therefore, they were not eager to lodge complaints. They did not see any efficacy of lodging complaints throughout their life.

Perceived personal incapacity due to poor financial and educational condition adds to the avoidance of the complaining mechanism. Pursuing a complaint needs resources—financial and mental. The service seekers' existing condition constrains both. An Upazila level service seeker needs to use either the internet for lodging online complaints, or write an application to a district office, or go to the front desk located in the district office. The use of any of these three modes of complaining needs money and educational capacity to some extent. These conditions lead some service seekers to accept the prevailing condition of maladministration and not complain about grievances. Therefore, distrust in the systems and fear of reprisals coupled with perceived incapacity and tolerance tendency result in avoidance of the use of the complaining mechanism.

The GRS guidelines of the government of Bangladesh established a bureaucratic rationality model of grievance redress espoused by Mashaw (1983), based on fair execution of administrative rules. This study reveals violation in maintaining procedural fairness in treating the service seekers of the field-level offices through fair application of administrative rules in decision making (Adler 2018). The apathy of the service providers towards the need of the field-level service seekers is a reality. However, this should not be a “negative social portrayal” of the overall public service delivery (Jahan and Shahan 2012, p. 283). The service seekers' experience of harassment is an injury to them, and they blame the service providers for the injury. However, this injury does not turn into a complaint because the service seekers, for obvious reasons, do not claim a remedy to the injury, the third step in the naming, blaming, and claiming theory (Flestiner et al. 1980-81). Contrary to the academic's reporting of popular trust in some significant institutions, whether it is blind or naïve (Askvik and Jamil (2013), trust of the field-level service seekers in the complaining system is acutely non-existent. “Fear of retaliation” from the service providers identified by Lens (2007, p. 394) is equally true in the case of the Upazila level service seekers. Although the perceived incapacity and high level of tolerance are responsible for not making an injury into a claim, lack of trust in the systems and the fear of reprisal, as a reason, surpass them all. These factors together are a big blow to the implementation of the GRS policy of the government at the field-level offices.

The study revealed several key findings that have policy implications. First, service seekers lack knowledge about the GRS. Second, they have dissatisfaction with their service experience from the Upazila-level offices. Third, a fearful image of the service providers is dominant in the minds of the service seekers, and, hence, they are unwilling to complain against the public officials out of fear of

reprisal from the service providers. Fourth, the service seekers have limitations in lodging complaints because of their illiteracy and financial capabilities. These limitations bar them from complaining either by using the internet—[www.grs.gov.bd](http://www.grs.gov.bd)—or by going to their district offices for submitting applications to the front desks or by sending applications to the district offices through the postal service.

This study recommends some specific actions based on the findings revealed by it. Firstly, massive awareness-building efforts are necessary to keep the field-level service seekers and service providers abreast of the GRS complaining mechanism. Such awareness-building efforts have to include a component capable of assuring the service seekers of no harassment if complaints against service providers are made. The fear of reprisal of service seekers from the service providers is disgraceful for the entire nation. The awareness-building programme should instil in the service seekers that they are the principal and the providers are agents. It is necessary to bring service seekers' trust in the systems that the public officials exercise procedural fairness. Secondly, the GRS should create a user-friendly system of complaining through mobile phones for the Upazila level service seekers. The Upazila level service seekers are unwilling and incapable of using the three modes of complaining introduced by the GRS guidelines. All interviewees have demanded this option of complaining. This option can be made especial for the Upazila-level service seekers because they can afford to use this device.

This study has covered only the Upazila-level offices. The vast field of the bureaucracy has remained out of its coverage. The complaining behaviours of the users of public services from the other offices—district-level offices, departments, agencies, ministries—need to be studied. How the submitted complaints are processed, how the supervision and monitoring activities are functioning, and the satisfaction level of the service receivers from the other offices need detailed studies to have complete comprehension of the implementation of the GRS.

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## APPENDICES

### A. Paired t-test detailed results

	Paired Samples Test							
	Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
Tangibility 1	-1.47	1.06	0.05	-1.58	-1.37	-27.93	399	0.00
Tangibility 2	-1.17	1.04	0.05	-1.27	-1.07	-22.55	399	0.00
Tangibility 3	-0.90	1.00	0.05	-1.00	-0.81	-18.14	399	0.00
Tangibility 4	-1.20	1.02	0.05	-1.30	-1.10	-23.54	399	0.00
Reliability 1	-1.74	1.08	0.05	-1.85	-1.64	-32.16	399	0.00
Reliability 2	-1.74	1.13	0.06	-1.85	-1.63	-30.69	399	0.00
Reliability 3	-1.88	1.11	0.06	-1.99	-1.77	-33.99	399	0.00
Reliability 4	-1.83	1.09	0.06	-1.94	-1.73	-33.56	399	0.00
Reliability 5	-1.63	1.15	0.06	-1.74	-1.51	-28.15	399	0.00
Responsiveness 1	-1.50	1.09	0.05	-1.61	-1.39	-27.58	399	0.00
Responsiveness 2	-1.86	1.12	0.06	-1.97	-1.75	-33.36	399	0.00
Responsiveness 3	-1.82	1.12	0.06	-1.93	-1.71	-32.61	399	0.00
Responsiveness 4	-1.70	1.24	0.06	-1.83	-1.58	-27.37	399	0.00
Assurance 1	-1.73	1.12	0.06	-1.84	-1.62	-30.79	398	0.00
Assurance 2	-1.42	1.21	0.06	-1.54	-1.30	-23.52	399	0.00
Assurance 3	-1.51	1.06	0.05	-1.61	-1.40	-28.37	398	0.00
Assurance 4	-0.81	1.01	0.05	-0.91	-0.71	-15.99	399	0.00
Empathy 1	-1.88	1.12	0.06	-1.99	-1.77	-33.65	399	0.00
Empathy 2	-0.79	1.07	0.05	-0.89	-0.68	-14.75	399	0.00
Empathy 3	-1.88	1.12	0.06	-1.99	-1.77	-33.58	399	0.00
Empathy 4	-1.61	1.08	0.05	-1.72	-1.51	-30.01	399	0.00
Empathy 5	-0.97	1.03	0.05	-1.07	-0.87	-18.85	399	0.00





## B. Survey Questionnaire

বাংলাদেশ লোক-প্রশাসন প্রশিক্ষণ কেন্দ্র, সাভার, ঢাকা

কোড:

### সেবাগ্রহীতার জন্য প্রশ্নমালা

[এই প্রশ্নমালা বাংলাদেশ লোক-প্রশাসন প্রশিক্ষণ কেন্দ্রের একটি গবেষণা কার্যক্রমে ব্যবহারের জন্য প্রণীত। ইহার মাধ্যমে সংগৃহীত তথ্য গবেষণার কাজে ব্যবহৃত হবে এবং গবেষণার ফলাফল সরকারের নীতি নির্ধারণে ভূমিকা রাখবে। অনুগ্রহপূর্বক বর্ণিত নিয়ম মেনে প্রশ্নমালাটি পূরণ করুন।

নিয়ম ১: সেবাগ্রহীতা সক্ষম হলে তিনি নিজে প্রশ্নমালাটি পূরণ করবেন। তা নাহলে, তথ্য সংগ্রহকারী সেবাগ্রহীতাকে বাক্যসমূহ সহজবোধ্যভাবে পড়ে শোনাবেন এবং সেবাগ্রহীতার মতামতের ভিত্তিতে উত্তর লিপিবদ্ধ করবেন।

নিয়ম ২: একটি উত্তম/আদর্শ সরকারি অফিসের কথা ভাবুন। এ রকম একটি অফিসের ক্ষেত্রে, নিচের (প্রথম অংশ) বাক্যগুলো কী মাত্রায় প্রযোজ্য বলে আপনি মনে করেন। যদি অত্যাবশ্যকীয় মনে করেন, তাহলে ৪ নম্বরটিতে গোলাকার চিহ্ন দিন। যদি অনাবশ্যকীয় মনে করেন, তাহলে ১ নম্বরটিতে গোলাকার চিহ্ন দিন। আপনার মতামতের মাত্রা অনুযায়ী সঠিক নম্বরটিতে গোলাকার চিহ্ন দিন।]

### সেবাগ্রহীতা যে অফিস থেকে সেবা নিয়েছেন:

- (ক) ভূমি অফিস, (খ) সাব-রেজিস্ট্রার অফিস, (গ) সেটেলমেন্ট অফিস, (ঘ) স্বাস্থ্য কমপ্লেক্স,  
(ঙ) পল্লীবিদ্যুৎ অফিস (চ) অন্যান্য (উল্লেখ করুন): .....

### প্রথম অংশ (একটি উত্তম সরকারি অফিস সম্পর্কে প্রত্যাশিত অবস্থা)

প্রত্যাশাসমূহ: (৪=সম্পূর্ণ একমত, ৩=কিছুটা একমত, ২=কিছুটা দ্বিমত, ১=সম্পূর্ণ দ্বিমত)

একটি উত্তম/আদর্শ সরকারি অফিস/অফিসের—

- |   |     |     |     |     |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| ১। আধুনিক ও সুদর্শন সরঞ্জামাদি থাকবে  | (১) | (২) | (৩) | (৪) |
| ২। অবকাঠামো সুবিধাদি দৃষ্টিনন্দন হবে  | (১) | (২) | (৩) | (৪) |
| ৩। কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীগণ পোশাক-পরিচ্ছদে পরিচ্ছন্ন ও ফিট-ফাট হবেন                     | (১) | (২) | (৩) | (৪) |
| ৪। সেবা সংক্রান্ত জিনিসপত্র (কাগজপত্র, নোটিশবোর্ড ইত্যাদি) দৃষ্টিনন্দন হবে          | (১) | (২) | (৩) | (৪) |
| ৫। নির্দিষ্ট সময়ে কোনো সেবা দেয়ার প্রতিশ্রুতি দিলে, সেটা সে করবে                  | (১) | (২) | (৩) | (৪) |
| ৬। সেবাগ্রহীতার সমস্যা সমাধানে আন্তরিক আগ্রহ দেখাবে                                 | (১) | (২) | (৩) | (৪) |
| ৭। সেবাগ্রহীতাকে প্রথম সাক্ষাতেই কাঙ্ক্ষিত সেবাটি দিবে                              | (১) | (২) | (৩) | (৪) |
| ৮। প্রতিশ্রুত সময়ের মধ্যেই কাঙ্ক্ষিত সেবাটি দিবে                                   | (১) | (২) | (৩) | (৪) |
| ৯। ত্রুটিমুক্ত রেকর্ডের উপর জোর দিবে  | (১) | (২) | (৩) | (৪) |
| ১০। কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীগণ সেবাপ্রার্থীকে জানাবে ঠিক কখন কাঙ্ক্ষিত সেবাটি সম্পন্ন হবে | (১) | (২) | (৩) | (৪) |
| ১১। কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীগণ সেবাপ্রার্থীকে দ্রুত সেবা দেবেন                            | (১) | (২) | (৩) | (৪) |
| ১২। কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীগণ সেবাগ্রহীতাকে সহায়তা করার জন্য সর্বদা আগ্রহী থাকবেন       | (১) | (২) | (৩) | (৪) |
| ১৩। কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীগণ অতি ব্যস্ততা সত্ত্বেও সেবাগ্রহীতার অনুরোধে সাড়া দেবেন     | (১) | (২) | (৩) | (৪) |
| ১৪। কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীগণের আচরণ সেবাগ্রহীতার মধ্যে আস্থা জাগিয়ে তুলবে              | (১) | (২) | (৩) | (৪) |

১৫। সেবাগ্রহীতারা অফিসের সাথে লেন-দেন করতে নিরাপদ বোধ করবেন	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
১৬। কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীগণ সেবাগ্রহীতারদের কাছে ধারাবাহিকভাবে বিনয়ী হবেন	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
১৭। কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীগণের সেবাগ্রহীতার প্রশ্নের উত্তর দেয়ার মতো জ্ঞান থাকবে	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
১৮। সেবাগ্রহীতাদের প্রতি ব্যক্তিগতভাবে মনোযোগ দেবে	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
১৯। অফিস-সময়কাল সকল সেবাপ্রার্থীর জন্য সুবিধাজনক হবে	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
২০। এমন কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারী থাকবে যারা সেবাগ্রহীতার প্রতি ব্যক্তিগতভাবে মনোযোগ দেবেন	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
২১। সেবাগ্রহীতাদের সর্বোত্তম স্বার্থ অন্তরে লালন করবে	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
২২। কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীগণ সেবাগ্রহীতাদের সুনির্দিষ্ট প্রয়োজনসমূহ বুঝবেন	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)

নিয়ম ৩: এই অফিস সম্পর্কে আপনার বাস্তব ধারণার আলোকে, নিচের (দ্বিতীয় অংশ) বাক্যগুলো কী মাত্রায় প্রযোজ্য বলে আপনি মনে করেন। সঠিক মাত্রাটিতে গোলাকার চিহ্ন দিয়ে আপনার মতামত প্রকাশ করুন।

### দ্বিতীয় অংশ (বাস্তব ধারণা)

বাস্তব ধারণাসমূহ: (৪=সম্পূর্ণ একমত, ৩=কিছুটা একমত, ২=কিছুটা দ্বিমত, ১=সম্পূর্ণ দ্বিমত)

#### সেবাপ্রদানকারী সরকারি অফিস/অফিসটির—

১। আধুনিক ও সুদর্শন সরঞ্জামাদি আছে	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
২। অবকাঠামো সুবিধাদি দৃষ্টিভঙ্গন	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
৩। কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীগণ পোশাক-পরিচ্ছদে পরিচ্ছন্ন ও ফিট-ফাট	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
৪। সেবা সংক্রান্ত জিনিসপত্র (কাগজপত্র, নোটিশবোর্ড ইত্যাদি) দৃষ্টিভঙ্গন	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
৫। একটি নির্দিষ্ট সময়ে কোনো সেবা দেয়ার প্রতিশ্রুতি দিলে, সেটা সে করে	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
৬। সেবাগ্রহীতার সমস্যা সমাধানে আন্তরিক আগ্রহ দেখায়	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
৭। সেবাগ্রহীতাকে প্রথম সাক্ষাতেই কাঙ্ক্ষিত সেবাটি দেয়	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
৮। প্রতিশ্রুত সময়ের মধ্যেই কাঙ্ক্ষিত সেবাটি দেয়	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
৯। ত্রুটিমুক্ত রেকর্ডের উপর জোর দেয়	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
১০। কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীগণ সেবাপ্রার্থীকে জানায় কাঙ্ক্ষিত সেবাটি ঠিক কখন সম্পন্ন হবে	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
১১। কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীগণ সেবাপ্রার্থীকে দ্রুত সেবা দেন	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
১২। কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীগণ সেবাগ্রহীতাকে সহায়তা করার জন্য সর্বদা আগ্রহী থাকেন	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
১৩। কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীগণ অতি ব্যস্ততা সত্ত্বেও সেবাগ্রহীতার অনুরোধে সাড়া দেন	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
১৪। কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীগণের আচরণ সেবাগ্রহীতার মধ্যে আস্থা জাগিয়ে তোলে	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
১৫। সেবাগ্রহীতারা অফিসের সাথে লেন-দেন করতে নিরাপদ বোধ করেন	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
১৬। কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীগণ সেবাগ্রহীতারদের কাছে ধারাবাহিকভাবে বিনয়ী	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
১৭। কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীগণের সেবাগ্রহীতার প্রশ্নের উত্তর দেয়ার মতো জ্ঞান আছে	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
১৮। সেবাগ্রহীতাদের প্রতি ব্যক্তিগতভাবে মনোযোগ দেয়	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
১৯। অফিস-সময়কাল সকল সেবাপ্রার্থীর জন্য সুবিধাজনক	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)
২০। এমন কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারী আছে যারা সেবাগ্রহীতার প্রতি ব্যক্তিগতভাবে মনোযোগ দেন	(১)	(২)	(৩)	(৪)

২১। সেবাগ্রহীতাদের সর্বোত্তম স্বার্থ অন্তরে লালন করে

(১) (২) (৩) (৪)

২২। কর্মকর্তা-কর্মচারীগণ সেবাগ্রহীতাদের সুনির্দিষ্ট প্রয়োজনসমূহ বোঝান

(১) (২) (৩) (৪)

সেবাগ্রহণ অভিজ্ঞতা (আপনার সন্তুষ্টি) বিষয়ে সংশ্লিষ্ট অফিসকে আপনি ১০ এর মধ্যে কত নম্বর দিবেন?

১	২	৩	৪	৫	৬	৭	৮	৯	১০
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সেবাদাতা অফিস/কর্মচারী/কর্মকর্তার বিরুদ্ধে আপনার কোনও অভিযোগ আছে কি?

হ্যাঁ	না
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সরকারি অফিসের সেবার মান সম্পর্কে অভিযোগ করা যায় আপনি তা জানেন কি?

হ্যাঁ	না
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সেবাগ্রহীতার পেশা: . . . . .

সেবাগ্রহীতার বয়স: . . . . . (বছর)

সেবাগ্রহীতার লিঙ্গ:

(১) পুরুষ

(২) মহিলা

সেবাগ্রহীতার সর্বোচ্চ শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা:

. . . . .

সেবাগ্রহীতার সেবা গ্রহণের তারিখ: . . . . .

তথ্য সংগ্রহের তারিখ: . . . . .

