

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL LEVEL POLITICS: A CASE STUDY ON NAZIRPUR UPAZILLA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the factors, patterns, and challenges regarding women's participation in local-level politics in Nazirpur Upazila. Based on Political Feminist Theory and Social Empowerment Theory, the study explores how social and cultural conditions influence women's political involvement at the local level. Applying a mixed-methods explanatory approach, this study integrated a quantitative analysis of 100 purposively sampled respondents with nuanced qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews to provide a multi-dimensional perspective. Secondary data were gathered from academic literature, policy documents, and government reports. Data analysis involved descriptive and inferential statistics to identify associations between socio-cultural variables and levels of political participation, complemented by thematic analysis to contextualize the findings. The findings reveal a significant gender gap: while male participation stands at 65%, women's direct engagement is limited to 30%. Furthermore, 67% of women reported that their voting choices are guided by their family opinions, reflecting a lack of individual political agency. The study identifies that patriarchal norms (77%), family restrictions, and limited political education are primary barriers to effective participation. A key contribution of this research is the creation of a cause-and-effect framework that proves how specific social barriers directly lead to women being left out of politics. Based on these results, the study proposes two models: one showing the cycle of barriers and another showing how education and training can lead to empowerment. The main limitation is that the research focused only on one Upazila. Future research should compare different regions and use more advanced models to better understand women's political empowerment across rural Bangladesh.

JEL Classifications: J16, H70, D72, P16, R50

Keywords: Women, Participation, Politics, Local-Level Politics

INTRODUCTION

In a democratic political system, various methods are adopted to increase public involvement in politics. Both men and women need to participate to strengthen the political structure and its foundations. The country has made progress in gender equality and women's empowerment, but women still take part less in local political decision-making. Democracy and social justice cannot be established without women's representation and participation in politics (Ara, 2020; Rahman, 2015).

In Bangladesh, a country characterized by its vibrant democracy, women's active involvement in local-level politics is integral to achieving inclusive and effective governance. The Constitution and different laws give women the right to equal representation in local government. Yet, women are still fewer in elected posts. This lack of representation reduces the variety of ideas in policymaking. It also makes it harder to carry out plans that focus on women's needs and problems. At the same time, it keeps gender inequality alive in society (Bhuiyan, 2019; Ara, 2020).

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Women are a part of society and half of the population of the world, and Bangladesh are women. But the presence of women in the arena of politics is very insignificant. They hardly participate in local-level politics. While women in urban areas have the opportunity to represent and participate in politics alongside men, they do not have the opportunity to participate in politics at the village or local level. The main reason for the low participation of women in politics is that our society sees politics as a place for men. Besides, there are social, religious, and cultural rules and regulations. Male party leaders consider men to be good candidates. A political party also has very little participation of women, whereas an election law requires parties to reserve at least 33% of committee positions for women. Despite women at the top, Bangladesh's politics are still male-dominated. Because of these class, economic, and cultural inequalities, women are still far from political power and policymaking (Ara, 2020; Rahman, 2015). The participation of men and women in building and developing the country's democratic system is absolutely desirable. As the central government is strengthened when local governments are strong, there is a need to increase the participation of men as well as women at the national level, as well as at the local level (Bhuiyan, 2019; Ara, 2020).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overall objectives are to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences, challenges, and contributions of women in the political sphere. The specific objectives are:

- 1) To assess the current status of women's participation in local-level politics.
- 2) To identify the challenges to women's political activities in local-level politics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The political participation of women in Bangladesh is a central theme in democratic discourse. While scholars generally agree that gender inclusion is vital for social justice, empirical evidence suggests that women's effective participation, particularly at the local level, remains constrained despite constitutional guarantees. The following sections categorise existing literature into the primary thematic barriers identified by previous research

Structural and Economic Barriers to Women's Political Participation

Many scholars identify structural inequality as a major barrier to women's political participation in Bangladesh. Khan (1988) argues that women's weak political position is closely linked to economic dependency and limited access to education. He states that without economic empowerment, women cannot exercise political power effectively. Similarly, Kabeer (1990) and Amin (1997) explain that poverty and gender inequality reduce women's autonomy within the household. Limited control over resources weakens women's bargaining power, which affects their ability to participate in public decision-making. Ullah (2018) also highlights economic dependence and patriarchal family structures as key obstacles to women's engagement in local government. However, most of these studies provide general discussions and do not focus on specific rural localities.

Cultural Norms and Patriarchal Practices

Cultural and social norms play an important role in shaping women's political participation. Jahan (1976) explains that practices such as purdah restrict women's mobility and limit their public visibility. She argues that traditional gender norms reduce women's interaction with political actors. Mannan and Khanam Meri (2016) also identify patriarchy as the main structural barrier to women's empowerment in politics. They note that although women hold visible leadership positions at the national level, grassroots participation remains weak due to deep-rooted cultural attitudes. Chowdhury (2009) adds that political violence and patriarchal culture discourage women from entering politics. These studies clearly show the cultural roots of exclusion, but they do not examine how these norms influence everyday political behaviour at the local level.

Representation versus Meaningful Participation

Several scholars distinguish between formal representation and substantive participation. Hasanuzzaman (2002) argues that women in reserved seats often lack real authority. He states that representation without power does not ensure meaningful participation. Similarly, Khan and Salma (2003) and Women for Women et al. (1999) argue that women's presence in governance is often symbolic. Women representatives frequently face resistance from male colleagues and receive limited institutional support. From a theoretical perspective, Pitkin (1967) and Mansbridge (1999) explain that representation must be substantive. Women must influence decisions rather than simply occupy positions. These arguments suggest that increasing the number of women in political institutions is not sufficient for real empowerment.

Institutional and Party-Level Constraints

Institutional weaknesses and party-centered politics also limit women's participation. Riaz (2013) discusses broader structural problems in Bangladeshi politics, including weak institutions and centralized party control. He argues that internal party dynamics often marginalize women. Talukder (2012) examines rural local government and highlights governance weaknesses, but does not deeply analyse gender-based barriers within these institutions. These studies show that institutional reform is necessary, yet they do not provide detailed field-based evidence from a specific Upazila.

Theoretical Perspectives on Women's Political Empowerment

Feminist Political Theory argues that politics has historically been constructed as a male-dominated space. Bryson (2003) states that equal participation requires transforming patriarchal power structures. Empowerment Theory emphasizes that women need knowledge, confidence, and resources to participate effectively in political processes (United Way NCA, 2022). These theoretical perspectives help explain why legal reforms alone cannot ensure meaningful participation. However, many theoretical discussions remain abstract and are not directly linked with empirical field research at the local level.

Research Gap and Position of the Present Study

Although previous studies clearly identify patriarchy, low education, economic dependence, and cultural norms as barriers, three major gaps remain:

1. Most studies focus on national politics rather than local-level political practice.
2. Many studies describe barriers but do not empirically test cause-and-effect relationships.
3. Very few studies provide area-specific field data from one Upazila to show how these barriers operate in everyday political life.

The present study addresses these gaps by focusing specifically on Nazirpur Upazila. Unlike earlier works that mainly provide descriptive discussions, this study uses field-based empirical data to examine how patriarchy, family influence, illiteracy, and cultural norms affect women's voting autonomy, meeting attendance, and direct political participation.

By connecting empirical findings with Feminist Political Theory and Empowerment Theory, this research not only identifies problems but also explains how structural and socio-cultural factors produce lower political participation among women. Therefore, this study contributes to existing literature by providing area-specific evidence and by linking theoretical arguments with measurable local-level realities.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Research Design

This study used a descriptive-explanatory mixed-methods research design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component helped measure patterns of political participation while the qualitative component provided deeper explanations of the social and cultural dynamics influencing

women's engagement in local politics. This combination ensured a comprehensive and reliable understanding of women's political participation in Nazirpur Upazila.

Study Area and Population

The research was conducted in Nazirpur Upazila, which is located in the Pirojpur District of Bangladesh. The target population consisted of individuals who are directly or indirectly connected to local-level political processes, including Union Parishad chairmen and members, Women representatives, Political activists, General citizens, students, and professionals. This diverse population allowed the study to gather wide-ranging perspectives on women's political activities and the barriers they encounter.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

A non-probability purposive sampling technique was adopted because the study required respondents who possess knowledge, experience, or awareness of local political participation. A total sample of 100 respondents was selected. The sample size was considered adequate to generate meaningful quantitative results and support qualitative interpretations.

Data Collection Methods

Primary Data Collection: Three specific methods were used to collect primary data:

1. Structured Questionnaire Survey

A structured questionnaire containing both closed-ended and a few open-ended items was administered. This instrument generated quantitative data related to voting behavior, political participation levels, decision-making autonomy, and perceptions of barriers.

2. Semi-Structured Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with Union Parishad representatives, women members, teachers, and local leaders. This provided qualitative insights regarding societal norms, gender roles, political experiences, and the challenges women face.

3. Telephone and Online Interviews

These were used when respondents were not accessible in person. They ensured the completeness of data collection and helped avoid missing responses.

Secondary Data Collection

Secondary information was gathered from academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, government publications, NGO reports, election statistics, census documents, and newspaper archives. These sources strengthened the credibility of the study by providing historical, policy-related, and contextual data.

Research Instruments

The research utilized a structured questionnaire for quantitative data and an interview guide for qualitative data. Both instruments were pre-tested with a small group of respondents to ensure clarity, relevance, and reliability before final use.

Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data were coded and analysed using both descriptive and inferential (differential) statistics. Frequencies, percentages, and distributions were used to present respondents' demographic profiles and general patterns of political engagement. Qualitative data obtained from interviews were analysed using a thematic analysis approach.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly followed. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study. Personal identities were kept confidential, and all data were used exclusively for academic purposes. Respondents' consent was obtained verbally or in writing before participation.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Participation

Participation means being actively involved in political and social activities. It is not only about being present, but about speaking, influencing, and contributing to decisions (Kurebwa, 2016). Voting is one form of participation, but real participation goes beyond that. It includes having the power to shape outcomes and being part of decision-making processes (Kurebwa, 2016). The Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees equal political rights for all citizens. Article 28 gives women the right to vote and to stand as candidates in elections, which is an important legal step to ensure equality (Constitution of Bangladesh, Art. 28).

However, having rights does not always mean full participation. Social and cultural practices often restrict women's roles. Expectations to stay at home, family duties, and traditional attitudes can make it hard for women to join political activities (Kabeer, 1990; Amin, 1997). Many women are legally entitled to engage but are unable to do so because of movement restrictions, lack of support, or fear of criticism (Women for Women et al., 1999; Khan & Salma, 2003).

Participation can therefore be seen in a few main forms:

	Formal Participation: Voting, contesting election.
Participation	Active/Informal Participation: Expressing Opinion, joining discussions, influencing decisions.
	Opportunity Based Participation: Requiring not just rights but also education, freedom and support to act independently (Kurebwa, 2016).

Source: Compressed by the author.

True participation is possible when women have both legal rights and real opportunities. Support, resources, and encouragement are needed to ensure that women can contribute meaningfully.

Representation

Representation means women's views and needs are reflected in politics and governance. It is about having women present in political bodies and also ensuring that they are able to work effectively for people's interests (Pitkin, 1967; Mansbridge, 1999).

Representation usually takes two main forms:

	Descriptive Representation: Women are present in numbers and hold political seats.
Representation	Substantive Representation: Women use their position to actively promote women's interests and bring change (Pitkin, 1967; Mansbridge, 1999).

Source: Compressed by the author.

Bangladesh has taken important measures to increase women's representation. The Constitution and later amendments created reserved seats for women at both the national and local levels (Constitution of Bangladesh, Art. 28; 14th & 17th Amendments). This has increased the number of women in politics. But numbers alone do not always mean power. Some women hold seats but cannot influence decisions or speak freely. In such cases, representation becomes symbolic rather than transformative (Ahmed & Rahaman, 2024). For representation to be meaningful, women must be empowered with knowledge, skills, and resources. Only then can they contribute fully to policy-making and governance (Mansbridge, 1999; Rahman, 2015).

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Feminist Political Theory serves as the foundation for this study, showing how women have often been excluded from politics because of patriarchal systems (Bryson, 2003). It highlights the need for equal representation and calls for removing barriers that stop women from taking part in politics (Bryson, 2003). Without women actively involved, democracy is incomplete and unfair (United Nations Women, 2014). The theory also explains that simply increasing the number of women in politics is not enough (Bryson, 2003). Women must participate meaningfully having real influence over the decisions that affect their communities (United Nations Women, 2014). Their opinions must be heard and respected so that policies meet the needs of everyone (United Way NCA, 2022).

Empowerment Theory helps explain how women can gain confidence, knowledge, and skills to participate in politics (United Way NCA, 2022). Empowered women can overcome social, cultural, and institutional obstacles, allowing them to contribute effectively to governance (United Way NCA, 2022). Together, these theories promote fair and inclusive local governance (Bryson, 2003; United Nations Women, 2014). When women take part, decisions are more balanced and policies better reflect the needs of the whole community (United Way NCA, 2022).

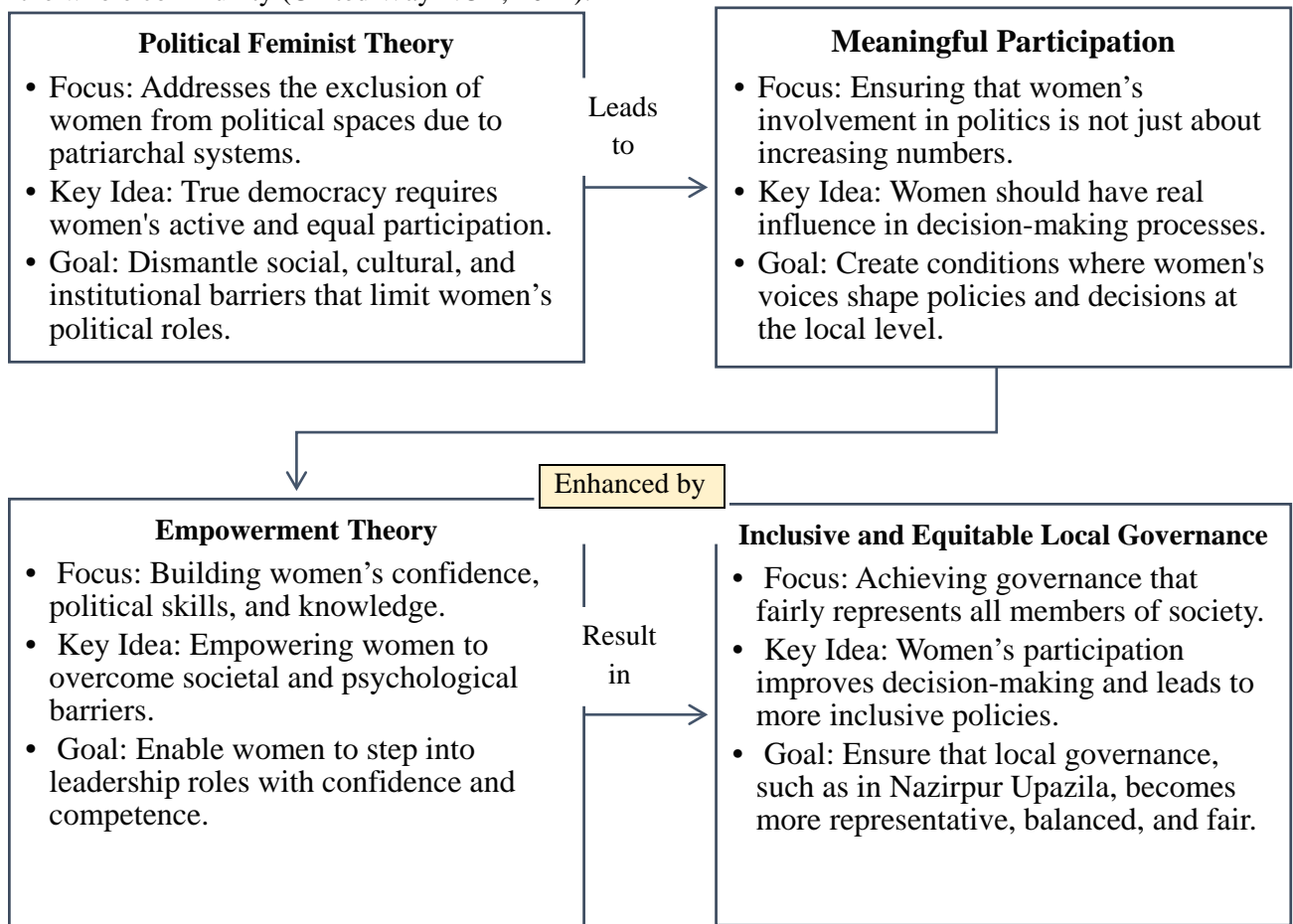


Figure 1: The Link Between Theory and Women’s Political Participation at the Local Level

Source: Compressed by the author

Description of the Area

Nazirpur Upazila is part of Pirojpur District in the Barishal Division of Bangladesh. Its total area is 233.65 square kilometres (90.21 sq mi). The total population is 180,408, and the population density is 770 people per square kilometer. Nazirpur is located at 22.7461°N 89.9678°E (Website of Nazirpur Upazila, n.d.). According to the 2011 Bangladesh census, Nazirpur had 40,561 households and a population of 180,408. Among them, 40,448 children (22.42%) were under 10 years old. The literacy rate for people aged 7 and above was 59.3%, which is higher than the national average of 51.8%. There were 1,011 females for every 1,000 males. About 4,730 people (2.62%) lived in urban areas (Website of Nazirpur Upazila, n.d.). In the 1991 Bangladesh census, Nazirpur had a population of 166,014. Males made up 50.92% and females 49.08% of the population. The number of people aged 18 or over was 86,581. The literacy rate was 43.4% for those aged 7 and above, which was higher than the national average of 32.4% at that time (Website of Nazirpur Upazila, n.d.).

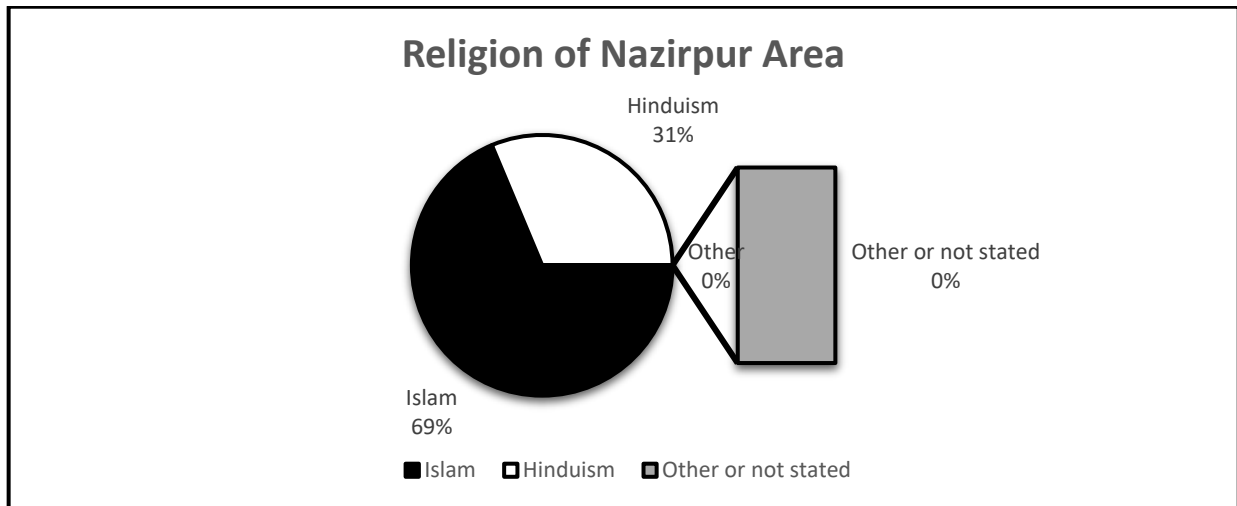


Figure 2: Religion of Nazirpur Upazila

Source: Website of Nazirpur Upazila, 2025.

Nazirpur Upazila is divided into nine union parishads:

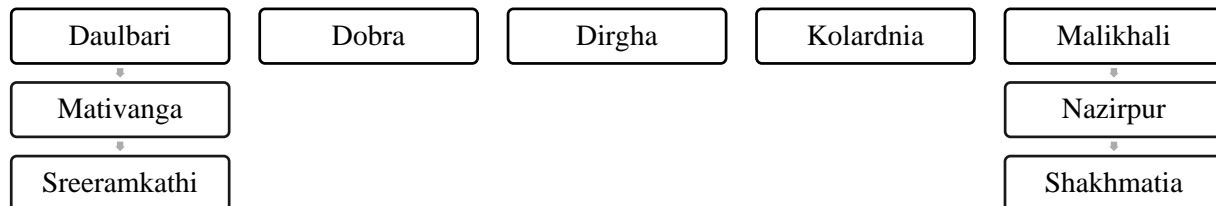


Figure 3: Religion of Nazirpur Upazila

Source: Website of Nazirpur Upazila, 2025.

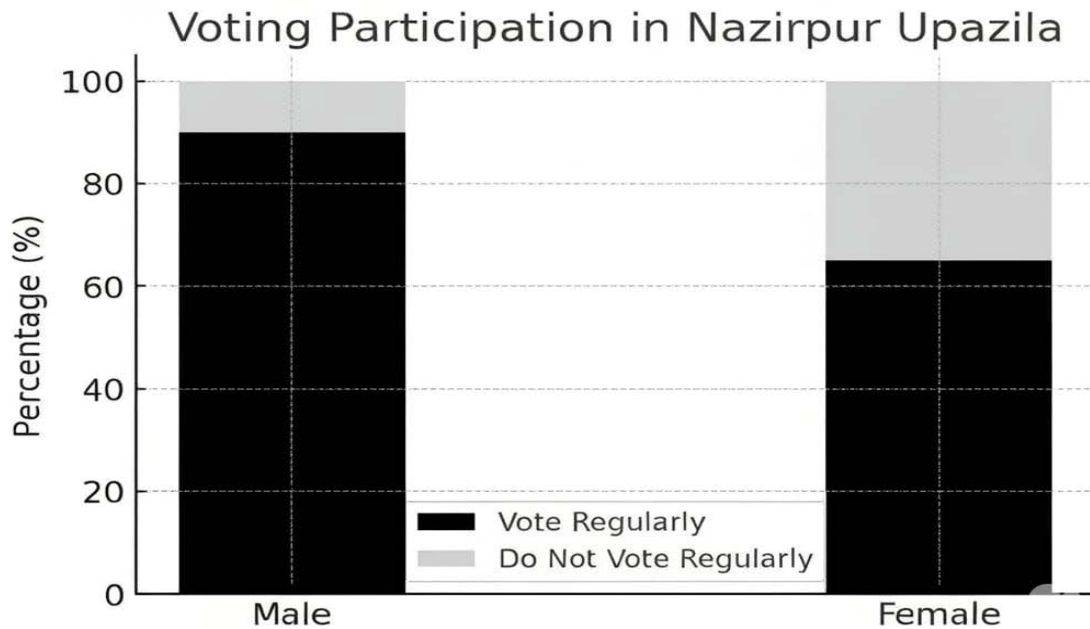


Figure 4: Percentage of Interest of the Non-representatives in Regular Voting

This study was done on 100 political participants in Nazirpur Upazila. There were 55 males and 45 females. They were asked if they vote regularly. Among men, 90% said they vote regularly. Among women, 65% said they vote regularly. This shows that men take part in voting more than women. Women also vote, but their participation is lower compared to men.

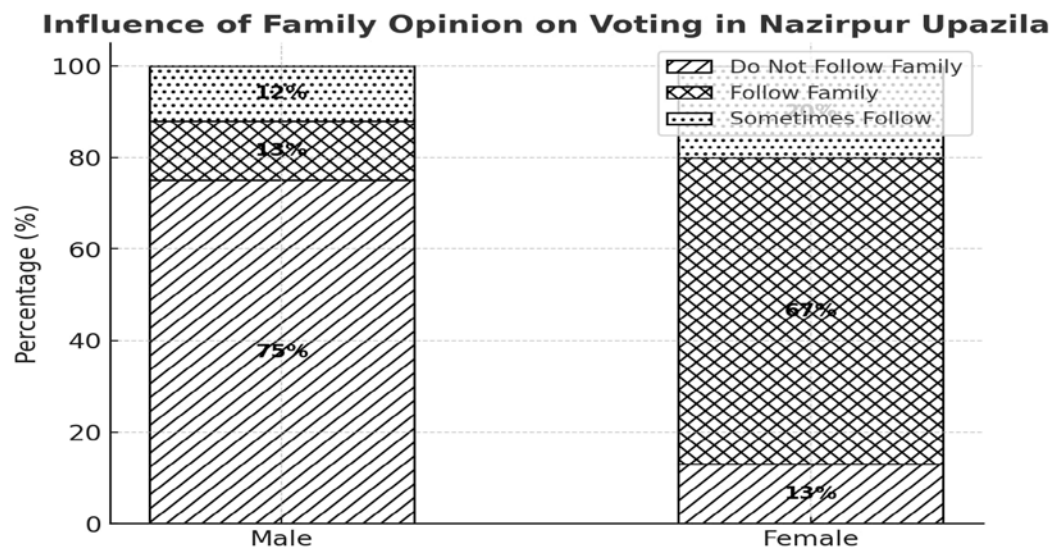
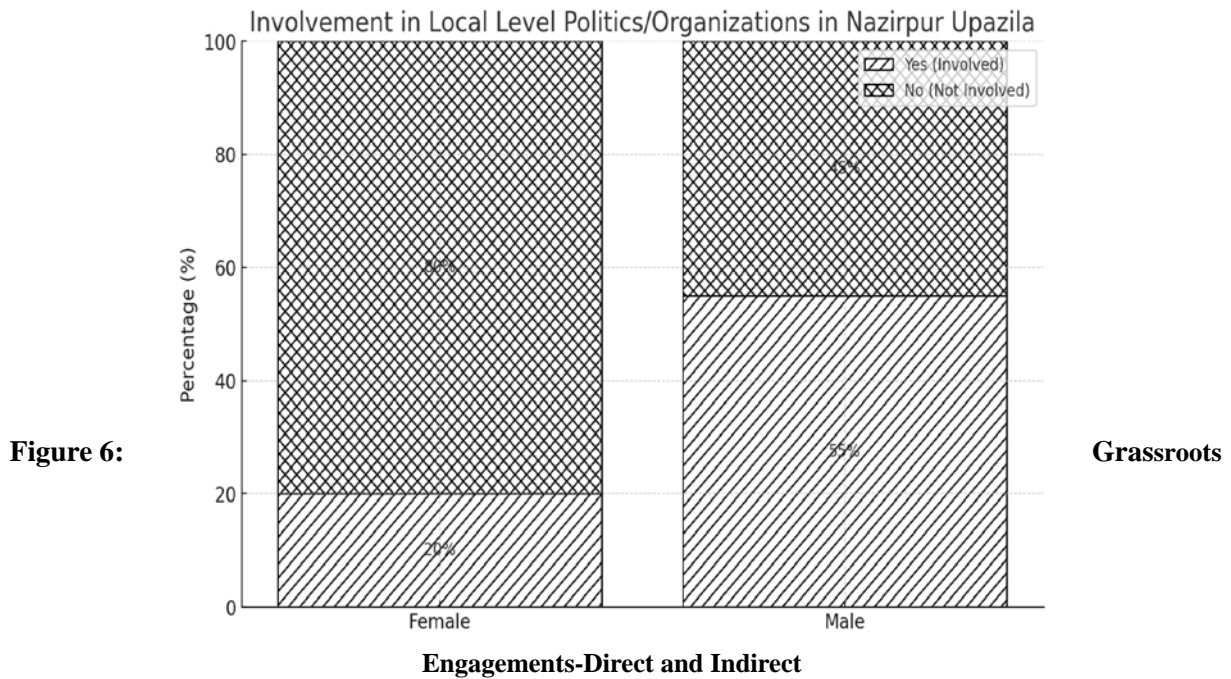


Figure 5: Analyse Voting Preferences Based on Family Members

This analysis, based on a survey of 100 participants, highlights a notable gender gap in voting autonomy influenced by family opinions. The findings show that a significant majority of men (75%) do not base their voting decisions on their family's opinion, reflecting a high degree of individual political agency. In contrast, a large portion of women (67%) stated that they do base their vote on their family's opinion. This indicates that while women are participating in the political process by voting, their choices

are frequently guided by familial influence. sometimes follow their family's opinion (12% of men and 20% of women) or do not (13% of both men and women). This data suggests that the political voice of women at the local level may be less independent compared to that of men.



In this research area, the level of involvement in local level politics and organizations shows a noticeable gender gap. According to the findings, 20% of women reported that they are actively involved in some form of local politics or organizational activities, while the majority, 80% of women, stated that they are not involved. In contrast, the participation rate among men is significantly higher: 55% of men reported involvement in local level politics or organizations, whereas 45% of men indicated no involvement.

This comparison highlights that men are more engaged in political and organizational activities at the local level than women. While a certain portion of women are participating, their level of engagement remains considerably lower than that of men, reflecting a persistent gender disparity in grassroots political participation in Nazirpur Upazila.

Table 1: Direct Political Participation in Nazirpur Upazila

Gender	Yes (%)	No (%)
Men	65%	35%
Women	30%	70%

The table shows that men participate more in direct politics than women. 65% of men said yes, while only 30% of women agreed. In contrast, 70% of women said No, showing lower political participation compared to men.

Table 2: Percentages of Attendance at Political Party Meeting/ Rally/ Convention/ Seminar

Gender	Yes (%)	No (%)	Sometimes (%)
Male	52%	15%	33%
Female	21%	67%	12%

Another question for them was whether they had ever attended any political party meeting, rally, or seminar. In response to this question, women did not respond as expected. 52% of men answered that they participated in these, 15% never, and 33% sometimes. In the case of women, it was observed that 67% women never participated in these, 21% women participated, and the remaining 12% participated occasionally. So, it is understood that men participate more in local level politics.

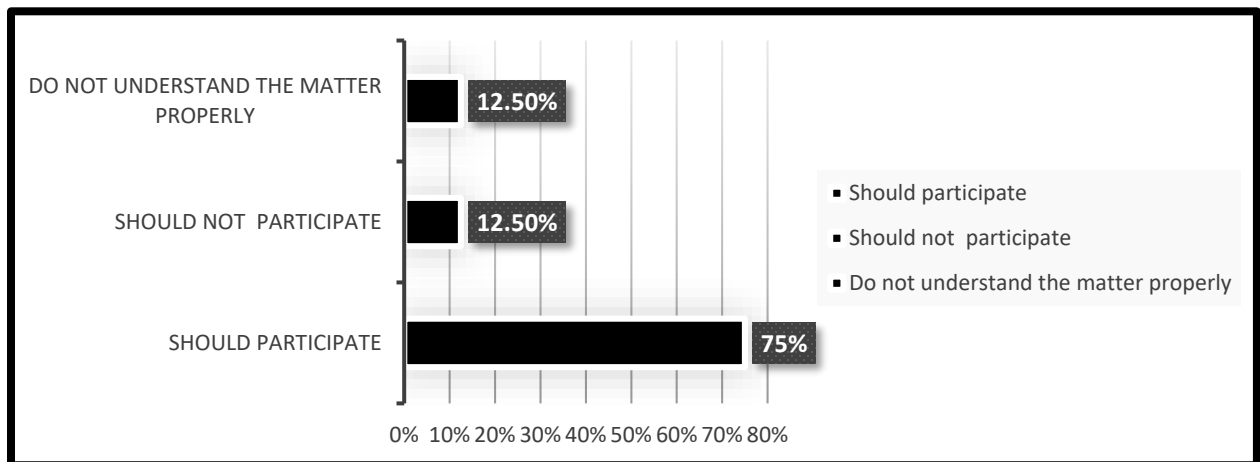


Figure 7: Views on Women's Participation in Politics

We wanted to know everyone's views on women's participation in direct local level politics. 75% people answered positively. They said women should participate. Only 12.50% of people said women should not participate. 12.50% of people were not able to understand what they would like to say.

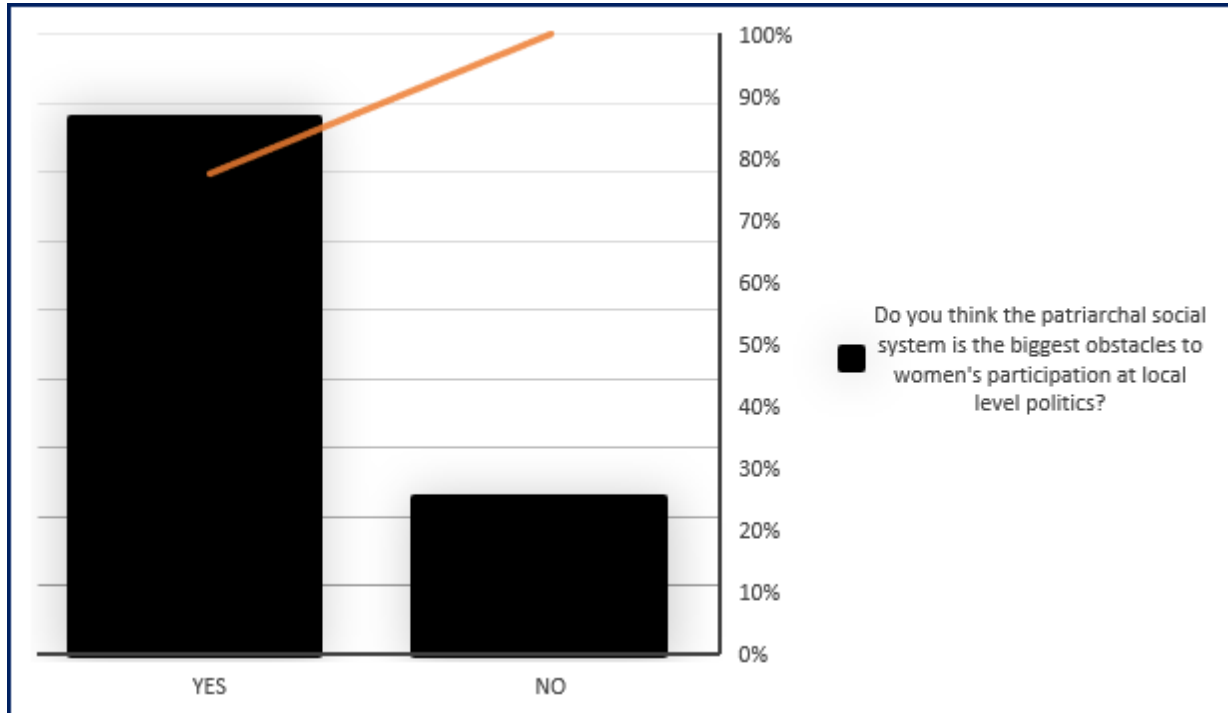


Figure 8: Views on Patriarchal Societal System

Due to the patriarchal society, women are left behind in almost everything. Because in this society, men are more dominant. Due to this, despite the desire of girls, they cannot do many jobs due to this social system. My question also referred to this patriarchal social system as a major barrier to women's participation in politics. 77% people answered yes, and the remaining 23% people disagreed that patriarchal society acts as a major barrier to women's participation in politics.

Table 3: See Literacy is a Barrier to Political Participation

Category	Consider literacy as a barrier to political participation (%)	Do not consider literacy as a barrier to political participation (%)
People Surveyed	70%	30%

There was a related question as to whether illiteracy acts as a barrier to women not wanting to participate in local level politics. 30% of people feel that illiteracy can never act as a barrier to participating in politics. 70% of people consider illiteracy a barrier; they think that uneducated people always believe in superstitions, and they are also not interested in social change.

Table 4: Challenges Faced by Women in Local Level Political Participation

Barrier	Respondents (n)	Percentage (%)
Cultural and traditional barriers	29	29%
Family responsibilities	24	24%
Gender stereotypes	16	16%
Limited political education and training	13	13%
Limited representation and opportunities	8	8%
Limited access to resources/funds	6	6%

Lack of recognition	4	4%
Total	100	100%

The survey shows that the main barrier for women in local politics is cultural and traditional restrictions, as reported by 29 respondents. Family responsibilities are also a big challenge mentioned by 24 people. Gender stereotypes were pointed out by 16 respondents, while 13 said limited political education and training are an obstacle. Eight respondents mentioned limited opportunities, and six said a lack of resources or funds. Only four people felt that the lack of recognition was the main barrier. In general, cultural barriers and family duties stand out as the two biggest challenges for women's participation in local politics

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Less Political Participation of Women

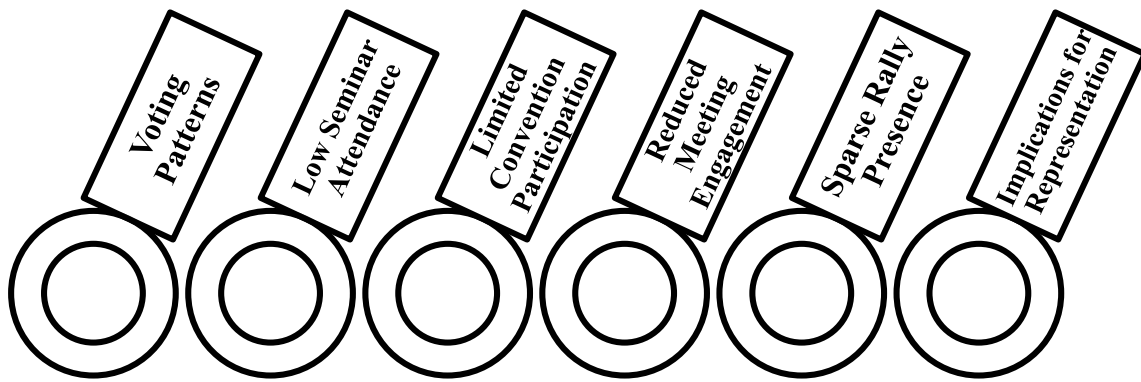


Figure 9: Less Political Participation of Women

In Bangladesh, the constitution supports gender equality, but women's role in politics is still very limited. In Nazirpur Upazila, women are rarely seen in political meetings, rallies, or conventions. Their absence shows that women's voices are still missing in local governance. Men take part in voting and other political activities more regularly, while many women stay away because of social rules and family duties.

The study found that men usually decide their vote on their own, but many women follow the opinion of their family. This shows how cultural traditions and social norms still guide women's political choices. Household responsibilities also stop women from being more active, since society values their family role more than their public role.

Women also take part less in political seminars, which are important for learning about politics. Because of this, their knowledge and confidence remain lower than men's. Unless these spaces become easier and more welcoming for women, the gap in political awareness will continue.

Another finding is that most women who join politics in Nazirpur come from political families. Their involvement often depends on family background, not on equal opportunities for all. This means women from ordinary families rarely get the same chance. Such patterns raise questions about how inclusive local politics really is.

THE PROBLEM OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL LEVEL POLITICS

Sex is one of the determinants of representation and participation in politics. In every society, women are less involved in politics than men. In this regard, there is a difference between urban and rural women. Because women in urban areas get the opportunity to represent and participate in politics along with men in various ways. But this does not apply to women in rural areas. In addition to rural-urban differences, there are differences in education, income, occupation, age, etc. that affect political participation. Despite such differences, it can be said that most women in the local area face the following problems in participating in politics:

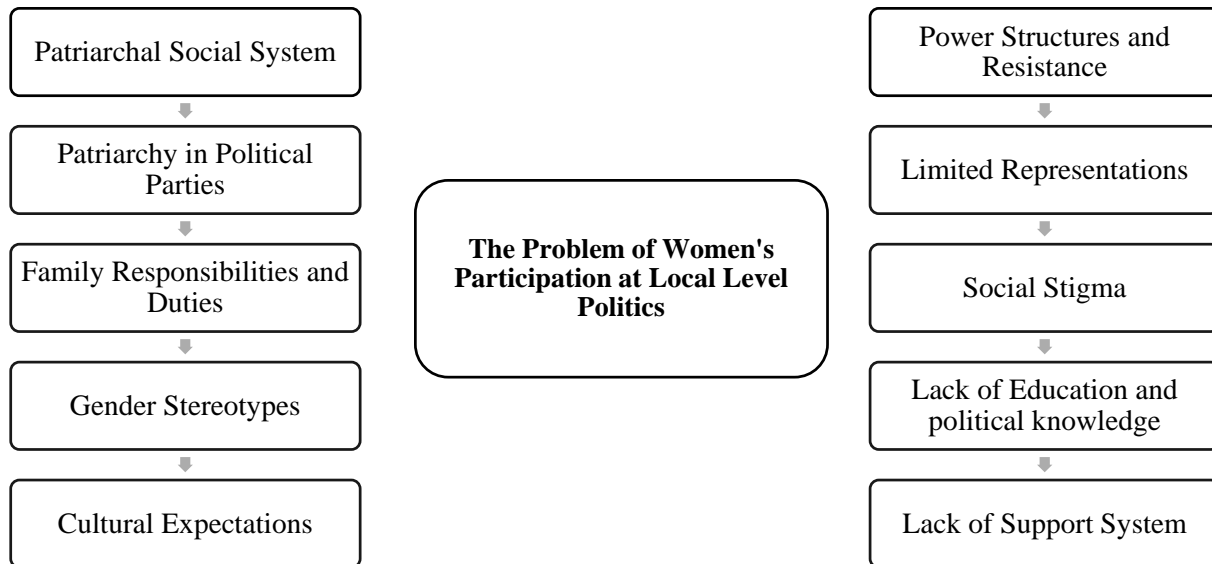


Figure 10: The Problems of Women's Participation at the Local Level of Politics

Women in local areas face many barriers when it comes to political participation. In most cases, their involvement is shaped by a patriarchal social system where men hold authority both in the family and in society. Women's activities are usually limited to the household, and in rural areas, they often cannot take part in politics without male permission. Even voting sometimes happens under male influence, which reduces women's independent role in decision-making.

Political parties also reflect these patriarchal values. Most parties are controlled by men, and women are rarely given important roles. Party nomination and leadership opportunities are usually reserved for male members, while women's participation is often symbolic or neglected. As a result, women feel discouraged from joining active politics.

Family duties create another strong barrier. Women are expected to take care of household responsibilities, which leaves them little time or freedom to engage in public activities. Social expectations also make it difficult for women to balance political involvement with domestic roles. In many cases, society values their role in the family more than their role in politics.

Cultural traditions, social stigma, lack of education, and limited political knowledge further weaken women's participation. Women who do not belong to political families face even more challenges as they lack resources, recognition, and support networks. Together, these barriers create an environment where women's voices remain underrepresented in local politics, especially in rural areas like Nazirpur Upazila.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Teach women about politics so they can join confidently in decision-making and leadership.
2. Raise awareness to challenge old traditions and support equal roles for women in politics.
3. Provide the necessary support and resources to help women overcome barriers in political work.

4. Improve laws so women's voices and influence are stronger in government decisions.
5. Encourage families to help women balance their household duties with political responsibilities.
6. Break negative stereotypes so society accepts women as leaders.
7. Create groups and platforms where women can come together, share ideas, and take action.
8. Men should stand beside women and support gender equality in politics.
9. Political parties need to give women equal chances and leadership positions.
10. Women should join political meetings and forums to make governance more inclusive.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE EXISTING LITERATURE

This study adds to the existing scholarship on women's political participation by offering a grounded and analytically informed perspective from the local level.

To begin with, most research in Bangladesh has concentrated on national politics or broad rural trends. By focusing specifically on Nazirpur Upazila, this study brings forward detailed, field-based evidence from a single rural context. This localized focus allows the research to highlight everyday socio-cultural dynamics that are often overlooked in wider national analyses. In addition, the study moves beyond a purely descriptive account of barriers. While earlier works identify patriarchy, family influence, and limited education as constraints, this research examines how these factors are directly reflected in women's political behaviour, including voting autonomy, participation in meetings, and involvement in local political activities. In doing so, it offers a clearer explanation of how structural conditions shape women's political agency. The study also strengthens the theoretical dimension of the discussion by bringing Feminist Political Theory and Empowerment Theory into a practical analytical framework. To illustrate the causal dynamics identified in the field, two conceptual models are proposed:

Cycle of Structural Barriers Model

Patriarchal Norms → Family Restrictions → Limited Education & Mobility → Reduced Political Confidence → Low Participation

This model explains how interconnected socio-cultural constraints gradually reinforce women's exclusion from grassroots politics.

Empowerment Pathway Model

Political Education + Training + Family Support → Increased Autonomy → Active Participation → Substantive Representation

This model outlines how targeted support mechanisms can enhance women's autonomy and lead to meaningful participation and representation.

Finally, by linking empirical findings with concrete recommendations, the study contributes not only to academic debates but also to policy discussions on gender and local governance. In this way, the research offers both analytical clarity and practical relevance to the ongoing discourse on women's political empowerment in rural Bangladesh.

CONCLUSION

Women's participation in local level politics is important not just for equality but also for better and fair governance. In areas like Nazirpur Upazila, many women still face problems such as cultural restrictions, lack of money, and social pressure. These challenges keep them away from active politics. If these barriers are removed, women can take part more fully in local decisions. To make this happen, society needs to change its views on women in politics. Training and education can help women to feel more confident. Financial and other support are also needed so women can compete equally. Both Political parties and government policies should give more chances to women and value their leadership. When women are involved, decisions become stronger and more balanced. Local governance also improves because it listens

to both men and women. This helps not only women but the entire community. Reaching equal participation will take time and effort, but it will build a fairer and more developed society where everyone's voice matters.

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