

Evaluating the Capacity of a City Development Authority in Bangladesh: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract: Understanding the capacity of any authority is crucial for determining its ability to fulfill its responsibilities. This research aimed to assess the capacity of RAJUK in serving its jurisdiction effectively. The study gathered insights from key informants on this topic using a qualitative method. A purposeful sampling technique was employed to select academicians, experts, and professionals from the target population. In total, 13 key informants participated in interviews that utilized a semi-structured questionnaire, consisting of both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The findings were analyzed using thematic and narrative analyses with NVivo 14 software. The study revealed a notable lack of capacity in RAJUK to support and monitor development activities within its jurisdiction. Significant concerns regarding RAJUK's capabilities included issues related to manpower, institutional structure, the number of planners, the extensive size of its jurisdiction, and accountability. To identify similarities among these concerns, a cluster analysis was conducted. The findings of this study contribute to a better understanding of the shortcomings faced by city development authorities and may provide insights for improving their performance. Future research could explore another city development authority in a different urban context to enhance the generalizability of these findings.

Keywords: capacity, incapability, manpower, institutional structure, jurisdiction, accountability, cluster analysis, RAJUK.

Introduction

Institutional cohesiveness and regulatory consistency can be achieved by any plan preparation and implementation authority if it has the capacity to provide all sorts of support and facilities to the related local governments to implement that plan and monitor the development activities. So, it is essential to know the capacity of any such authority to know whether it can perform its duty properly in time. RAJUK has a vast

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jurisdiction fully and partly comprising Dhaka North, Dhaka South, Gazipur, and Narayanganj city corporations, along with Savar, Tarabo, Kanchan, Kaliganj, and Sonargaon municipalities (DAP, 2022-2035). They all have autonomy under different ministries with different laws (Rahman, 2015). Though institutionally and legally central, RAJUK failed in maintaining its function of strategic planning over the years (Talukder & Newman, 2003). Now it is high time to identify the reasons behind this failure. However, in the present literature, studies are absent regarding the condition of capacity and areas of incapability of RAJUK to perform its responsibilities as a plan preparation and implementation authority. Very few studies partially discussed RAJUK's capacity, while the majority of literature discussed on the condition of coordination between RAJUK and other related organizations (Rahman, 2015) and few focused on the limitations (Rob & Azizuddin, 1995), and irregularities of RAJUK (Mahmud, 2007), while some discussed on the causes of those challenges (Afroz & Rahman, 2020).

Under Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), Afroz and Rahman (2020) performed a study to identify the nature and magnitude of governance challenges of RAJUK including legal, institutional (insufficient human resources; irregularities related to recruitment, posting, transfer and promotion, skill development and training; lack of coordination among the concerned offices; dependency on related ministry; inadequate monitoring; gaps in grievance redress mechanism; etc.) and political. They also explored the reasons behind those challenges to recommend future strategies. The difficulties highlighted are- lack of appropriate legal provisions and challenges in formulating laws, insufficient monitoring and inspection, lack of coordination and transparency, undue political influence and nexus between business and politics, the price of land, gaps in political will, accountability, participation, and inclusiveness.

Mahmud (2007) studied the planning permission process in RAJUK and found some points of corruption. He also appraised the institutional capacity and transparency of this process and provided some policy guidelines for the effective implementation of its plan. According to Mahmud (2007), planning permission for the construction of buildings was lengthy and difficult for general applicants. He added that problems in plan implementation occurred due to the scarcity of building inspectors. There was also a lack of an adequate number of urban planners.

Rob and Azizuddin identified some problems and constraints of RAJUK back in 1995 and categorically listed them as- administrative problems as this authority suffered from red-tapism; coordination problems as the concerned personnel could not regularly visit its regional branches along with other autonomous authorities; planning problems as the plan and projects of RAJUK should be done by a bottom-up approach but in reality, those plans and projects were recommended by the Prime Minister and

Ministers, promised at various occasions without prioritizing the local needs and demands. Lastly, implementation problems due to inadequate fund and the number of personnel, delay in sanctioning project/producing fund, project approval, project aid, land requisition and transfer, procuring machines etc., signing the contract with donor, decision at the ministry level, design/ plan submission, appointing consultant and tender and other formalities.

As no studies have been found directly focusing on the capacity of RAJUK to undertake its duties as a planning and developing authority, this study attempted to fill the gap and enrich the current literature by identifying the capacity of RAJUK to perform its responsibilities properly within its large jurisdiction.

Materials and Methods

Qualitative Method

As the qualitative research method helps discover individual's experiences, (Andrew & Halcomb, 2007; Polit & Beck, 2006), and interviews can be a rich source of data if performed well (Daniel & Harland, 2018), this research used this method to identify the opinion of the key informants about the capacity of RAJUK to perform its functions.

Research Population and Sampling Technique

The research population consists of academicians, experts, professionals, researchers, students of the urban planning discipline, etc., who have first-hand knowledge about RAJUK. This research used the purposeful sampling technique to select academicians, experts, and professionals from the research population and also to select the final interviewee from each category because it allows the selection of the most appropriate objects based on their knowledge and ability to answer the research questions (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007).

Sample Selection and Data Gathering Procedure

The sample respondents of this research were regarded as academicians, experts, and professionals. Academicians are teachers, scholars, and researchers in the field of urban planning. Experts are former practitioners in the Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP) Project and RAJUK. Professionals are current employees of RAJUK and the urban local governments within the DMDP area.

As 10 to 20 semi-structured and unstructured interviews are enough (Daniel & Harland, 2018; Jeyaraj & Harland, 2014), a total of 13 key informants were interviewed with a semi-structured questionnaire because this form of the interview provides the opportunity for both informants and interviewees to discover questions and answers and also develops new ideas (Daniel & Harland, 2018). The Respondents were identified as KII-1(A1), KII-2(A-2), KII-3(A-3), KII-4(E-1), KII-5(E-2), KII-6(E-3),

KII-7(E-4), KII-8(E-5), KII-9(P-1), KII-10(P-2), KII-11(P-3), KII-12(P-4), and KII-13(P-5) where A, E and P represent academicians, experts, and professionals, respectively. Interviews were conducted using both face-to-face and Zoom meeting platforms.

Preparation of Questionnaire

The questionnaire has both open-ended and closed-ended questions. It asked whether RAJUK was capable of supporting and monitoring development activities within its jurisdiction, how it utilizes its capacity (e.g., human resources, funds, equipment, etc.) to monitor development activities within its extensive jurisdiction, the reasons behind its incapability, and what could be done to make RAJUK capable. The researcher conducted all of the interviews and also transcribed them herself.

Data Analysis Technique

As thematic analysis is a process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017) and recognizes, analyzes, and reports themes from data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), this analysis technique was performed to achieve the results of the KIIs with NVivo14 Software in this research. All the data was broken down into codes to identify the important issues or themes the informants raised. Then these codes have been grouped into different categories as themes. Along with this, a narrative analysis was conducted to explain and interpret the discussion of the interviewees. A Cluster Analysis was also performed using the NVivo14 software to find out the relations among the areas of incapability.

Results

As a development authority, an institute should be able to support related institutes and provide prescribed services to the people within its jurisdiction. To determine the capacity of RAJUK to perform its responsibility, all the KII contents were grouped into two sub-themes under the theme ‘Capacity of RAJUK’ (Table 1).

Table 1: Sub-themes of Capacity of RAJUK mentioned with respect to Number of Occurrences and Informants

Sub-theme Name	How many times it was mentioned (across all interviews)	How many informants mentioned it
Condition of Capacity	18	13
Area of Incapability	60	12

Condition of Capacity

When the informants were asked about the capability of RAJUK to support and monitor development activities within its jurisdiction, the majority expressed their doubts, with only two affirming its capabilities. Those who doubted the competence of RAJUK included KII-01(A-1), KII-02(A-2), KII-03(A-3), KII-05(E-2), KII-06(E-3), KII-07(E-4), KII-08(E-5), KII-09(P-1), KII-10(P-2), KII-12(P-4), and KII-13(P-5). These informants cited various challenges, such as inadequate resources, insufficient personnel, a lack of accountability, and several other concerns. Conversely, Informants KII-04(E-1) and KII-11(P-3) believed that RAJUK does possess the necessary capabilities for support, reflecting their belief in the potentiality of RAJUK to implement policy effectively. They argued that RAJUK has successfully developed plans, including structural and detailed area plans, and has secured funding, indicating both financial and technical capability. In this context, Informant KII-11(P-3) commented,

In my opinion, it was capable from every perspective. I do not see any incapability of RAJUK here. Because every twenty years, it prepares structure plans and revises the DAP, and by any means, it does so. It is also getting funds from the government.

With a same tune of KII-11(P-3), Informant KII-04(E-1) voiced,

Yes, RAJUK is capable of supporting and monitoring development activities within its jurisdiction; only the number of planners is short, but other capacities are not short.

Informant KII-01(A-1) also agreed on the financial capacity of RAJUK and supported its current technical abilities. However, according to the Informant, RAJUK still lacks other necessary elements to function effectively as the main physical planning authority for Dhaka. The Informant stated,

In its current condition, RAJUK has plenty of equipment. It has neither technological shortage.

Conversely, Informant KII-02(A-2) raised concerns about the limitations of RAJUK, stating,

RAJUK solely does not have the capacity to service its vast area. It must have needed support from the local governments, district administration, and even from the police.

Informant KII-13(P-5) highlighted a critical issue indicating a noticeable gap in the monitoring capabilities of RAJUK, even in areas immediately surrounding its offices. According to the Informant,

They do not properly monitor the nearest area of the RAJUK office. How can they be capable of the rest of their jurisdiction?

If RAJUK cannot effectively supervise these nearby locations, it raises questions about their ability to oversee and manage its broader jurisdiction effectively.

There are instances where timely intervention from local communities is crucial to resolve specific local challenges. However, RAJUK lacks the capacity to thoroughly understand and tackle such local problems. Investigating into the root causes of the challenges of RAJUK in addressing local issues, Informant KII-07(E-4) remarked,

RAJUK is not capable of seeing local problems intensively. Sometimes intervention is needed from local people to resolve local problems, which RAJUK cannot do because it is not represented by public representatives. Moreover, it does not have any accountability to the public.

This lack of accountability to the public may result in various forms of corruption in RAJUK.

Areas of Incapability

As most informants identified that RAJUK lacks capacity, they further mentioned the areas of its incapability. Fifteen (15) areas of incapability of RAJUK have been identified. ‘Manpower’ is the most identified area of incapability in both cases of informant number and occurrence frequency. Figure 1 embodies the sunburst diagram showing the most mentioned area of the incapability of RAJUK with respect to the number of informants and occurrences mentioned in the KIIs. In terms of number of informant spoken about a particular issue, nine (09) (manpower, institutional structure, number of planners, accountability, board, funds, large jurisdiction, service provision, and authority to perform the planning activities) are emphasized (Fig. 1a) and seven (07) (manpower, institutional structure, large jurisdiction, accountability, board, number of planners, and funds) (Fig. 1b) are emphasized in terms of occurrence frequency.

The fifteen areas of incapability of RAJUK are manpower, institutional structure, number of planners, large jurisdiction, accountability, board, the others are technology, funds, service provision, knowledge, training, authority to perform the planning activities, impunity in society, incapable manpower, and research cells. These areas are described below sequentially from most to least mentioned with respect to the number of informants.

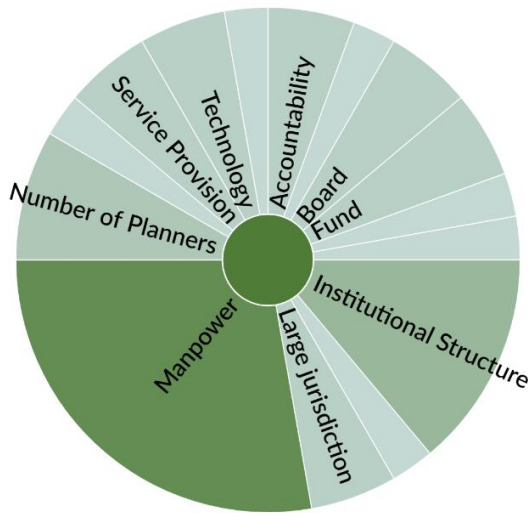


Fig. a: Hierarchy Chart compared by number of items coded (Informant)

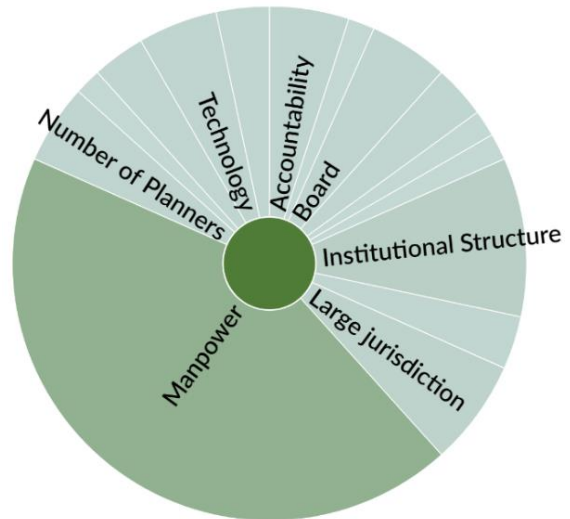


Fig. b: Hierarchy Chart compared by number of coding references (Occurrence)

Fig. 1: Sunburst Diagram of Areas of Incapability of RAJUK identified from KIIs

Manpower: Manpower is the significant area of incapability by Informants KII-01(A-1), KII-02(A-2), KII-03(A-3), KII-05(E-2), KII-06(E-3), KII-07(E-4), KII-08(E-5), KII-09(P-1), KII-10(P-2), and KII-12(P-4), a total of ten (10) informants. Meanwhile, Informant KII-08(E-5) precisely mentioned that during the DMDP implementation period, RAJUK lacked the workforce needed to monitor 590 sq. miles of area. Informants KII-03(A-3) and KII-09(P-1) argued that though RAJUK now has many manpower to perform its daily routine work, the number of manpower is still not sufficient for planning its vast area. Whereas indicating the small number of inspectors who visit the site to monitor the development activities compared to its jurisdiction, Informant KII-07(E-4) stated,

It is not possible for anybody to monitor such a vast area. How can these few inspectors monitor the hundreds of thousands of buildings?

Several studies that analyzed the activities of RAJUK found that RAJUK lacked sufficient manpower to monitor and administer building codes (Afroz & Rahman, 2020; Ansary et al., 2020; Islam & Adri, 2008; Mahmud, 2007). Many studies revealed that RAJUK required resources and training too (Farooque, 2011; World Bank, 2007). That is, RAJUK not only needs manpower but also has incompetent manpower to perform its duties well. RAJUK needs to organize training for them as organizational efficiency is positively impacted by manpower development (Okereka & Abasili, 2023;

Yang, Sanders, & Bumatay, 2012). The current number of town planners employed in RAJUK is merely a drop in the ocean of the actual requirement of the capital city (Kalam, 2009).

Institutional Structure: Five (05) informants, KII-02(A-2), KII-03(A-3), KII-05(E-2), KII-06(E-3), and KII-09(P-1) pointed out many aspects of the institutional structure of RAJUK, which portrayed the incapable condition of this authority. Informants KII-05(E-2) and KII-06(E-3) indicated the institutional setting of RAJUK as the ‘main problem’, and KII-05(E-2) opined,

It was mentioned in the law that they should upgrade the institutional organogram, but still, now, the designation of the town planner is below the chief engineer. Still, the town planner post ranks the same as the superintendent engineer.

Informant KII-02(A-2) added that though RAJUK restructured its organogram, it still needs more manpower. Another valued informant, KII-03(A-3), expressed,

The definition of ‘capacity’ is broad-based. Capability can be technical, financial, institutional, from a governance point of view, Grievance-Redress-System (GRF), etc. In all these institutional categories or the criteria of capability, I think RAJUK has failed severely in all of those criteria.

Indicating the absence of planners in higher posts of RAJUK and other planning-related authorities as the reason behind its incapability, the informant added,

The main reason is that the direction an organization will move depends on the perspective from which it views the future of that organization and the government. The perspective to institutionalize the planning is absent at the upper level of the government till now. We have ERD⁴ and the Ministry of Planning. Unfortunately, no planners work there. If I talk about RAJUK, there are almost no planners at the higher level. At that level, no one is a planner.

Taking projects as per the DMDP, there is a need for DPP⁵ preparation, feasibility study, etc. Informant KII-09(P-1) pointed out that RAJUK did not have such an institutional structure or any specific wing to undertake projects by the DMDP. These lack the RAJUK to implement its plan properly.

⁴ ERD- Economic Relations Division

⁵ DPP- Development Project Proposal

The current study found that the institutional structure of RAJUK is a significant area of its incapability, which hampers its capacity. Previous studies found that RAJUK can only apply partial control over its jurisdiction because the rank of the Chairman of RAJUK is equal to a Joint Secretary, but Mayors of City Corporations are ranked equal to a Minister (Al-Amin & Akter, 2022; Pramanik & Islam, 2013). The related agencies and organizations regard themselves as equivalent to RAJUK in status (Talukder & Newman, 2003). These institutional limitations result in fragmented development and planning, and thereby, the growth of Dhaka is hindered from running in a planned direction. Many studies indicated a lack of coordination among the related authorities with RAJUK for this hindrance (Rahman, 2015; Pramanik & Islam, 2013; Masum, 2010). Indicating the institutional structure, Kalam (2009) added that these town planners lack appropriate decision-making authority, which makes them unable to play a significant role in shaping the megacity in the political and bureaucratic environment of RAJUK.

Number of Planners: Though ‘Manpower’ is the highest spoken problem area for RAJUK, three (03) informants, KII-03(A-3), KII-04(E-1), and KII-05(E-2), particularly mentioned that a lack of sufficient planners is an area of incapability of RAJUK. Informant KII-03(A-3) highlighted that no planners are at the higher level of RAJUK. Teasing the current number of planners appointed in RAJUK, Informant KII-05(E-2) stated,

There are t-charts and organograms of RAJUK. There may be mentioned about 12 town planners, but only 2 of them were there.

In the past, there was an acute shortage (Mahmud, 2007) of experienced planners (Rob & Azizuddin, 1995) in RAJUK.

Large Jurisdiction: RAJUK is responsible for overseeing a large jurisdiction of 1528 sq.km. Possessing a large jurisdiction is a challenge itself. Informants KII-07(E-4) and KII-12(P-4) highlighted the difficulties of effectively managing and controlling development activities across such a vast area, indicating incapability of RAJUK to have comprehensive oversight over its jurisdiction. Informant KII-07(E-4) emphasizes that the sheer size of the territory makes it impractical for RAJUK to conduct thorough monitoring activities, especially at the local level. The Informant stated,

This is not possible for anybody to monitor such a huge area.....It is not possible for RAJUK to go deep inside at the local level.

Similarly, Informant KII-12(P-4) echoed this sentiment by stating,

“..... It is impossible to control such a large area from within Dhaka.”

According to this Informant, it is challenging to control development from a central location in Dhaka, which indicates the need for more localized management strategies. Without the ability to reach deep into the areas that fall under the jurisdiction of RAJUK, effective monitoring and enforcement of development regulations become significantly limited.

Accountability: Two (02) informants, KII-02(A-2) and KII-07(E-4), discussed that there is a lack of accountability among RAJUK personnel, which hinders its capacity to perform its activities properly. Informant KII-02(A-2) described this area of incapability as follows,

The main reason is the interest in corruption. The one performing this corruption manages the upper layers, and the portion of corruption goes to all. This is not like the inspectors or the authorized officers being the main ones behind the corruption, as they are the responsible personnel for inspecting the development activities and providing building approval. There are members and directors over them. Together, they are a cycle. None of this cycle has to be accountable to anyone.

As the officials of RAJUK do not face punishment for their offences and violations of integrity (Afroz & Rahman, 2020), RAJUK lacks accountability. RAJUK also lacks accountability to the public (Pramanik & Islam, 2013; Islam, 1999) as it is under government control and operated by bureaucrats (Pramanik & Islam, 2013; Moinuddin, 2010).

Board: Two (02) informants, KII-01(A-1) and KII-05(E-2), raised this point. Indicating the tendency of this board, Informant KII-05(E-2) stated that as the higher posts of RAJUK are not permanent, they are not committed to the institution that they are working for, which makes RAJUK incapable of performing its activities sincerely and adequately. The Informant addressed,

“... .. But they (the top level) do not perform these activities because they come here for two days and then return to their places after two days.”

Technology: Informants KII-03(A-3) and KII-05(E-2) highlighted significant concerns regarding the technological inadequacies faced by RAJUK. This persistent lack of advanced technology severely limits its capacity to operate effectively hindering its ability to adopt innovative solutions essential for modern urban planning and development. Informant KII-05(E-2) stated,

They were short of advanced technology. Even now they are still!

The above statement paints a picture of RAJUK that is hindered by outdated technological practices, which could lead to inefficiencies and a lack of competitiveness in a rapidly evolving field.

Funds: According to KII-03(A-3) and KII-09(P-1), two (02) valued informants, funding is one of the incapacabilities of RAJUK. However, Informant KII-01(A-1) expressed otherwise and stated that, regardless of other incapacabilities, RAJUK possesses enough funds for performing its activities. Whereas, Afroz and Rahman (2020) stated that RAJUK did not spend the allocated budget properly every time.

Service Provision: According to two (02) informants, KII-03(A-3) and KII-13(P-5), RAJUK is not capable of providing services within its jurisdiction. Informant KII-13(P-5) stated,

“If I cannot satisfy the people of my current jurisdiction with my service provision or cannot manage those, why should I increase my jurisdiction?”

Nahrin (2018) found that the institutional framework for sanitation within RAJUK is multifaceted, insufficient, and inefficient, though four government organizations- RAJUK, DWASA, DPHE, and Paurashava- are directly and indirectly involved in sanitation.

Knowledge: Identifying a critical manpower shortage as the foremost challenge, Informant KII-01(A-1) emphasized the knowledge gap as the second most pressing issue. It is essential to be intimately familiar with every intricate detail of the plan to implement it effectively. If there is a lack in that understanding, it is clear that there exists a significant knowledge gap about the plan. It is not merely an abstract concept but a significant barrier to success. The Informant highlighted,

.....The next is the knowledge gap. I should know every black word of the plan. If that has not occurred, a knowledge gap exists.

By stating the importance of knowing every ‘black word’ of the plan, the Informant underscores the depth of knowledge required for effective execution of any plan.

Training: Lack of training is an area of incapability of RAJUK addressed by one (01) informant. Informant KII-01(A-1) stated,

...the field-level officers of RAJUK need more training and equipment exposure. Because technology makes work easy and provides efficiency, those officers are neither efficient nor have any urge for this.

The informant also revealed that not only RAJUK but also local authorities lack training. According to Afroz and Rahman (2020), though RAJUK staff receive some training within and outside the country, this is insufficient for their skill development and ability to perform their duties efficiently.

Authority to Perform the Planning Activities: According to one (01) informant, though the plan preparation and implementation authorities prepare plans, they do not have the authority to implement them properly. This is ultimately an area of the incapability of RAJUK. Informant KII-12(P-4) added,

“In our country, we prepare plans, but are the planners given the authority to perform their duty properly and fully implement the plan at the field level? Are we given that authority? To be honest?”

Planning and development activities are mainly performed by RAJUK by providing rules and regulations for such activities, but city corporations perform urban management activities, while other services belong to other agencies (Pramanik & Islam, 2013). Because of different ministries and laws, the related authorities do not follow the planning directions of RAJUK (Rahman, 2015). Kalam (2009) directed the institutional structure of RAJUK due to the lack of authority to perform their planning activities.

Impunity in Society: Only Informant KII-02(A-2) argued that there is a lack of proper execution of any sentences regarding planning-related offenses and stated,

“..... None of this cycle (of corruption) had received any exemplary punishment for their offenses in the last twenty years. If there prevails impunity in a society, i.e., if I know that for any illegal income, I do not have to go through any penalty or punishment, I must perform corruption. Isn't it? But, on the contrary, we, the plot owners, know that if we can get a permit illegally or we deviate from the approved plan, providing some money, in the future, our financial gain will be much higher than the paid amount. This is a win-win situation for both of us, as punishment for crime is not working here.”

Islam (2018) also found that RAJUK failed to obtain its plan proposals because of its lack of law enforcement, institutional capacity, corruption, and the influence of real estate companies. Political influence and personal connection are used to get approval from RAJUK (Masum, 2010). Referencing Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), The Dhaka Tribune, an online news site of Bangladesh, accused RAJUK of being a synonym for corruption (Dhaka Tribune, 2020). Whereas, TIB also stated that ‘exploitation of loopholes, mismanagement, corruption, irregularities, and lack of transparency and accountability’ have been committed because of the erroneous formation of RAJUK (The Daily Star, 2020).

Incapable Manpower: In a discussion regarding the areas of incapability of RAJUK, Informant KII-03(A-3) mentioned that unqualified manpower in RAJUK is a concern.

According to the Informant, the recruitment process of RAJUK is to blame for this. The Informant added,

“The appointment system of RAJUK has been very much political over the years. As a result, the incapable persons are appointed instead of the capable ones.”

This suggests a deliberate prioritization of political affiliation over merit-based qualifications, which ultimately undermines the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization. That is to say, the capable individuals, who possess the skills and experience essential for the posts, are often overlooked in favor of those who may have political connections but lack the requisite capabilities. This eventually hinders the capability of RAJUK to perform its responsibilities properly.

Research Cell: Informant KII-09(P-1) emphasized the critical absence of a dedicated research cell, underscoring its necessity and significance in both addressing current challenges and fostering future advancements. The Informant argued,

“One is routine work, and the other is to work for the future. There is no initiative to work for the future of our country. There is no research cell.....We do not make the field for researchers.”

The Informant also recalled that there was once a Research and Development (R&D) cell within RAJUK, which had two researchers dedicated to innovative tasks. Unfortunately, these key posts were abolished, leaving a gap in the ability of RAJUK to conduct meaningful research.

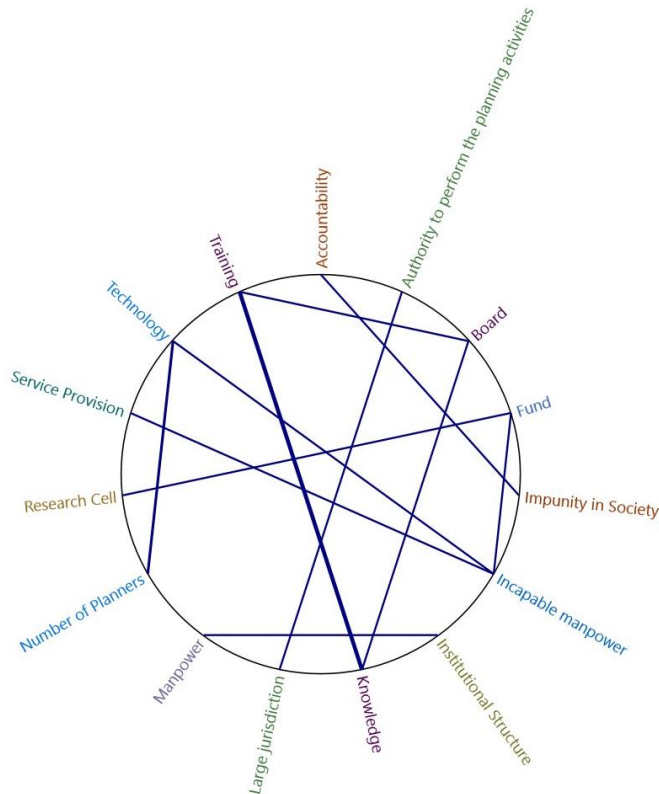


Fig. 2: Cluster Analysis on Areas of Incapability of RAJUK

Figure 2 shows the similarity among the areas of incapability of RAJUK. As the outcome of the cluster coding similarity offers the opportunity to identify possible relationships (Yousef, Chatti, Wosnitza, & Schroeder, 2015), the Cluster Analysis (clustered by coding similarity) has been performed on the Sub-theme, ‘Areas of Incapability of RAJUK’, to perform an automatic analysis of the content of KIIs using the NVivo14 software. The software generated the following figure, envisaging the relationships between identified items based on their similarities in attribute values using Jaccard’s coefficient. The thicker the line, the more the similarity between the two items. The highest similarity is found between training and knowledge (Jaccard’s coefficient is ‘01’), meaning fewer training attempts will create a knowledge gap and vice versa.

Discussion

The study found fifteen areas of incapability of RAJUK and are divided into four groups: 1) human resources and capacity: manpower, number of planners, incompetent manpower, knowledge, and training; 2) organizational and institutional structure:

Institutional structure, authority to perform the planning activities, board, accountability, and impunity in society; 3) resources and tools: Technology, funds, and research cell; and 4) scope and output of planning: Large jurisdiction and service provision. These four groups were made based on the quality and quantity of people involved in planning; how planning institutions are organized and empowered; financial, technological, and research resources; and jurisdictional reach and services provided by RAJUK. Taken together, the above-mentioned elements need to be considered to enrich the capacity and improve the performance of a city development authority.

Manpower development plays a crucial role in enhancing organizational effectiveness (Okereka & Abasili, 2023). Conversely, a lack of adequate manpower, coupled with insufficient training, can hinder the planning functions of city development authorities. It is essential that the workforce possesses both the right quantity and quality for specific purposes and timing (Okon, Akpanim, & Malachy, 2022). The shortage of building inspectors has significantly impeded plan implementation within the jurisdiction of RAJUK (Mahmud, 2007). Furthermore, having an experienced town planner is essential for effective town planning (Rob & Azizuddin, 1995). Personnel incompetence poses a threat to the growth and success of an organization, causing delays in achieving results (Okon et al., 2022). Therefore, the presence of incompetent manpower at RAJUK could severely obstruct its operational efficiency.

The current structure and capacities of urban development authorities pose significant challenges to effective growth management in Bangladesh (Mahmud & Hoque, 2014). The operational context of planning authorities has a considerable impact on plan implementation (Laurian et al., 2004), making it essential for these authorities to maintain a well-established institutional framework. Issues such as organizational structure, insufficient authority to carry out planning activities, the complex board structure of RAJUK, a lack of accountability, and societal impunity may erode public trust, leading to substandard planning practices. Inefficiency within organizations is often linked to inadequate training and development of their workforce (Okon et al., 2022). However, institutional effectiveness can be enhanced through proper training (Okereka & Abasili, 2023) alongside effective human resources management, financial efficiency, accessibility of information, financial audits, coordination among relevant organizations, and logistical availability (Afroz & Rahman, 2020). Moreover, while development authorities are theoretically empowered to carry out planning activities, their autonomy is frequently compromised by bureaucratic and political interference in practice.

The lack of resources—such as technology, equipment, sensors, human capital, and financial support—poses a significant challenge that directly impacts development

(Khan, 2020). RAJUK's deficiencies in technology and funding further complicate its planning and development activities. Urban environments have been strategically planned and developed through technological advancements (Yigitcanlar, 2015; Shin & Shin, 2012), including high-performance computing systems, high-speed communication networks, and low-power embedded sensing technologies (Yigitcanlar, 2015; Heo et al., 2014). These advancements have necessitated new urban planning strategies (Shiode, 2000), offering opportunities for economic development, improved organizational performance, social equity, and enhanced quality of life in urban settings (Stratigea, Papadopoulou, & Panagiotopoulou, 2015).

Moreover, advanced information and telecommunication networks have transformed societal values and increased cultural diversity within cities, thereby highlighting the need for more flexible and responsive planning frameworks (Shiode, 2000). However, many development authorities struggle with limited access to modern planning tools, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), and data analytics platforms. Even when technology is accessible, the requisite knowledge and training to utilize it effectively are frequently lacking, revealing a gap in these authorities' capacities.

Funding also emerges as a recurrent constraint, as insufficient financial resources can restrict the scope of planning and delay the implementation of approved initiatives. An often overlooked yet crucial element is the establishment of dedicated research cells within planning agencies. In the face of rapid urbanization, cities are undergoing swift changes and encountering diverse challenges. Institutions that maintain active research units demonstrate a greater ability to adapt to evolving conditions, assess existing policies, and devise innovative solutions. Conversely, the absence of such units tends to result in stagnation and reactive rather than proactive planning.

City development authorities operating within large jurisdictions may face challenges due to insufficient manpower, which can impede their ability to conduct comprehensive and timely planning activities. This situation ultimately leads to overburdened staff and a decline in the quality of service delivery.

The efficacy of development authorities relies on a well-balanced combination of skilled personnel, empowered authority, a robust institutional structure, adequate funding, modern technology, and accountability mechanisms. A well-functioning authority is essential for effective urban development (Rob & Azizuddin, 1995). To achieve better planning outcomes, it is crucial to strengthen training programs, revitalize research units, and ensure proper understanding of development plans among city development authorities. Enhancing the implementation capacity of planning authorities, alongside that of their staff, can significantly improve plan execution (Laurian et al., 2004). However, these enhancements may still fall short in large

jurisdictions. In such cases, where planning authorities lack sufficient funds, personnel, or technical capacity, service provision may become fragmented, delayed, or even dysfunctional.

The capacity of development authorities plays a crucial role in their ability to achieve objectives. However, existing literature is deficient in studies regarding the capabilities of RAJUK, particularly its limitations in executing planning and development activities, the extent of these limitations, and potential solutions. Current research mainly addresses the governance challenges faced by RAJUK (Afroz & Rahman, 2020), instances of corruption within the plan approval process (Mahmud, 2007), and some general problems and constraints (Rob & Azizuddin, 1995). This study aims to address this gap by examining the current capacity of RAJUK and identifying its specific areas of incapability and the relationships among them.

The study limitations were: a) literature related to the capacity building of city development authorities in the context of developing countries was limited; 2) the significance level of all incapability of RAJUK could not be determined because of the nature of the qualitative data; 3) literature other than English language was not considered; and 4) the study findings may not be generalized to other city development authorities in Bangladesh. Future research might use a quantitative approach to identify the most influential factors and their association with performing the functions of city development authorities. Future research may also consider another city development authority in Bangladesh to generalize these study findings.

Conclusion

The effective functioning of any development authority hinges on its capacity to fulfill its responsibilities. However, there is a notable lack of studies examining the capacity of such authorities to execute their duties. This research aimed to assess the capacity of RAJUK to serve its jurisdiction through qualitative methods. The study employed thematic and narrative analyses, along with cluster analysis, based on the content of Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). The findings revealed the current condition of the capacity of RAJUK and highlighted areas where it falls short. Specifically, RAJUK was found to struggle with supporting and monitoring development activities within its jurisdiction. Key areas identified as lacking include manpower, institutional structure, the number of planners, the vastness of its jurisdiction, accountability, and the governance board of RAJUK. By effectively addressing the identified issues of incapacity and understanding their interrelationships, RAJUK could significantly improve its capacity to carry out its designated responsibilities.

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