

## Exploring the Causes, Consequences, and Control Strategies of Corruption: Youths' Perceptions in the Context of Nepal

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### Abstract

Corruption is deeply rooted in Nepal, undermining governance, economic development, and social justice. Although legal frameworks exist, enforcement remains weak. Youth, representing nearly 40% of the population, are particularly vulnerable to the effects of corruption and possess a critical role in anti-corruption efforts. This study aims to: Identify key causes of corruption as perceived by Nepali youth; Examine its most damaging societal and governance consequences; Evaluate the effectiveness of current anti-corruption measures; and Explore alternative strategies for corruption control. A descriptive survey approach was used, collecting data from 398 youth in the Kathmandu Valley through stratified random sampling. A structured Likert-scale questionnaire assessed perceptions of causes, consequences, and anti-corruption mechanisms. Analyses included descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, ANOVA, and correlation analysis to determine significant patterns and subgroup differences. Top perceived causes included greed for money (mean = 4.32), the political-bureaucratic nexus (mean = 4.25), and weak property rights (mean = 4.18) on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Major consequences were increased inequality (mean = 4.62) and societal distrust (mean = 4.55). Current mechanisms such as the CIAA were deemed ineffective (mean = 2.1), with whistleblower protection scoring lowest (mean = 1.7), indicating low perceived effectiveness. Youth proposed stronger whistleblower laws (42%), youth-led monitoring (38%), and digital transparency platforms (33%). The findings emphasize the urgent need for systemic reforms, active youth engagement, and innovative digital solutions. Tackling financial greed, political collusion, and weak institutions is vital to restore trust and foster transparency in Nepal.

**Keywords:** Corruption, youth perceptions, governance, anti-corruption mechanisms, inequality, political-bureaucratic nexus, transparency and accountability, Nepal

### Introduction

Corruption is a pervasive challenge facing societies around the globe, impeding governance, hindering economic growth, weakening institutions, and exacerbating social inequality. Defined by Transparency International (2023) as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain, corruption manifests in diverse forms from bribery and embezzlement to nepotism and state capture across both developed and developing nations. While no country is entirely immune, its impact is most deeply felt in nations with fragile institutions, under-resourced law enforcement mechanisms, and limited public accountability. For developing countries like Nepal, the consequences of corruption are not merely theoretical or institutional; they are experienced daily by citizens and deeply shape political, social, and economic realities.

Nepal has witnessed endemic corruption across multiple sectors, including healthcare, education, infrastructure, the judiciary, and public procurement. Despite the existence of legal and institutional frameworks like the Prevention of Corruption Act (2002), the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA), and periodic anti-corruption campaigns, enforcement remains weak and selective. Reports by Transparency International (2022)

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consistently rank Nepal among the more corrupt countries globally, with a Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) score of 34 out of 100 in 2022, placing it 110<sup>th</sup> among 180 countries. This low ranking reflects not only systemic weaknesses in governance but also a societal tolerance and normalization of corrupt practices.

A particularly concerning dimension of corruption in Nepal is its impact on the youth, defined by the National Youth Policy (2015) as individuals aged 16 to 40. Youth represent nearly 40% of Nepal's total population, making their experiences and perspectives crucial in shaping national discourse and reform strategies. Young people are disproportionately affected by corruption through obstacles in accessing quality education, fair employment opportunities, and equitable public services. Many are forced to confront corrupt practices in universities, government offices, and even while applying for jobs or business permits. These experiences shape not only their economic and social trajectories but also their broader perceptions of state legitimacy and governance integrity.

Furthermore, the persistence of corruption has led to growing disillusionment among the youth. Many perceive the state apparatus as inherently unjust and favouring those with connections or financial means. This perception has significant implications, not only for civic engagement and democratic participation but also for the country's long-term development and social cohesion. A disenchanting youth population is less likely to trust institutions, participate in democratic processes, or invest in nation-building activities. Instead, corruption can drive the youth toward apathy, cynicism, or emigration in search of better opportunities, contributing to Nepal's growing brain drain (Adhikari, 2020).

Despite these challenges, youth also represent an untapped force for anti-corruption reform. They are often more technologically literate, better connected through social media, and more willing to challenge traditional hierarchies and norms than older generations. If engaged effectively, young people can become powerful advocates for transparency, integrity, and good governance. Numerous global studies have emphasized the critical role of youth in civic movements, from anti-corruption protests in Eastern Europe and South America to digital transparency initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia (UNODC, 2021; Grindle, 2010).

Against this backdrop, understanding how Nepali youth perceive corruption—its causes, consequences, and possible remedies is essential for formulating evidence-based policies and strategies. While previous studies have explored general patterns of corruption in Nepal (Shrestha, 2015; Parajuli, 2023), few have explicitly focused on the youth demographic. Moreover, existing literature tends to rely heavily on qualitative or anecdotal evidence. There remains a need for systematic, empirical investigation into how different segments of the youth population—based on gender, occupation, and education level, or socioeconomic status experience and interpret corruption.

This study aims to fill that gap by examining the perceptions of 398 Nepali youth respondents in the Kathmandu Valley. The research employs a descriptive survey methodology using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire, which assesses three core dimensions: (1) causes of corruption; (2) consequences of corruption; and (3) the local context and efficacy of anti-corruption measures in Nepal. The findings will help illuminate the specific challenges youth face, their views on the effectiveness of current interventions, and their willingness to engage in reform efforts.

In terms of theoretical underpinnings, this research draws upon multiple frameworks. The Principal-Agent Theory (Klitgaard, 1988) suggests that corruption arises when agents (e.g., politicians or public officials) pursue personal interests that conflict with the principals' (e.g., citizens') expectations due to weak oversight mechanisms. Cultural Theory (Husted, 1999), on the other hand, focuses on how societal norms and traditions influence attitudes toward corruption, often normalizing practices that should otherwise be condemned. Systemic

Corruption Theory (Johnston, 2005) frames corruption not as isolated incidents but as embedded within the structures and operations of political and economic institutions. Together, these theories provide a robust lens for analyzing youth perceptions in a multifaceted context.

The research is timely and significant. Nepal is currently at a political crossroads, navigating democratic consolidation, federal restructuring, and post-COVID-19 economic recovery. In this environment, trust in institutions is paramount. The youth, as both current stakeholders and future leaders, must be equipped and empowered to demand accountability and transparency. This study not only contributes to academic discourse but also provides actionable insights for policymakers, civil society organizations, and international development partners seeking to promote good governance and youth empowerment in Nepal.

To summarize, this research seeks to explore the following guiding questions:

1. What are the primary causes of corruption as perceived by the youth in Nepal?
2. What consequences do they identify as most detrimental to society and governance?
3. How do they evaluate current anti-corruption measures, and what alternative strategies do they propose?

By addressing these questions through empirical data and a robust analytical framework, this study aims to deepen our understanding of corruption in the Nepali context and highlight the transformative role youth can play in fostering a more transparent and just society.

### Literature Review

Understanding corruption requires engaging with diverse academic perspectives and empirical studies that illuminate its causes, consequences, and control mechanisms. The literature on corruption spans multiple disciplines economics, political science, sociology, and public administration reflecting its multifaceted nature. This section reviews key theoretical and empirical works to contextualize youth perceptions of corruption in Nepal.

### Conceptual Framework of Corruption

Corruption is a term broadly used to describe unethical or illegal conduct by those in power, typically involving bribery or other forms of misuse of public office for private gain. Transparency International (2023) defines corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private benefit, while the World Bank (World Bank, 2007) emphasizes the public-sector context by characterizing it as the misuse of public office for private gain. Scholars like Rose-Ackerman (1999) have outlined the institutional incentives that facilitate corruption, including weak legal enforcement, excessive bureaucratic discretion, and a lack of accountability.

Corruption is often categorized into types: grand (high-level, policy-influencing corruption), petty (low-level bribery), and systemic (pervasive and normalized within institutions) (Johnston, 2005). These distinctions are useful when examining youth experiences, which are more likely to involve petty or systemic corruption in public services, education, and employment sectors.

### Theoretical Perspectives

Several theoretical frameworks explain corruption from different angles:

- **Principal-Agent Theory** (Klitgaard, 1988) argues that corruption arises when agents (public officials) exploit their position for personal benefit due to asymmetric information and weak oversight.
- **Collective Action Theory** (Persson, Rothstein, & Teorell, 2013) posits that in environments where corruption is pervasive, individuals may participate not because they want to, but because they believe everyone else is doing it.

- **Cultural Theory** (Husted, 1999) suggests that norms and values shape tolerance for corruption; in societies where gift-giving and nepotism are culturally accepted, anti-corruption measures may face greater resistance.
- **Systemic Corruption Theory** (Johnston, 2005) emphasizes how corrupt practices become embedded within institutional structures and networks of power, making them resistant to change.

These theories offer explanatory tools for analyzing youth perspectives, especially in a society like Nepal's where formal rules may coexist with informal networks and patronage systems.

### **Global and Regional Empirical Studies**

Empirical studies worldwide highlight the adverse impact of corruption on development. Mauro (Mauro, 1995) found that corruption lowers investment and economic growth. Gupta, Davoodi & Alonso-Terme, (2002) showed that it reduces pro-poor spending in sectors like health and education. In African contexts, corruption is linked to weakened service delivery and stunted political participation among youth (Hope & Chikulo, 2000).

In South Asia, Alam (1989) documented how post-colonial legacies contributed to institutionalized corruption in Bangladesh. In India, studies like that of Iyer (2011) and Peisakhin (2012) demonstrate how bureaucratic red tape and lack of transparency encourage bribery and undermine citizen trust. Quah (2007) contrasted successful anti-corruption frameworks in Singapore and Hong Kong with those in other Asian nations, emphasizing political will and institutional strength.

### **Corruption in Nepal: Context and Scholarship**

Corruption in Nepal has been a subject of concern for both domestic and international observers. According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International, 2022), Nepal ranks among the most corrupt countries in South Asia. Multiple reports cite the politicization of public institutions, weak judicial enforcement, and pervasive patronage networks as core issues (Shrestha, 2015; Parajuli, 2023).

Nepali scholars have emphasized how corruption affects development. Thapa (2017) noted that donor-funded infrastructure projects often suffer from inflated contracts and low-quality execution. Koirala (2021) detailed corruption in public procurement, while Bhattarai (2017) critiqued the lack of enforcement in anti-corruption laws. Transparency International Nepal (2019) assessed the National Integrity System, concluding that institutional independence is frequently compromised by political interference.

Despite these insights, few studies have directly engaged with how Nepalese youth perceive and experience corruption. This is a notable gap, considering that youth are both vulnerable to and essential actors in anti-corruption reform.

### **Youth and Corruption**

Globally, the relationship between youth and corruption has garnered increasing scholarly attention. Yahaya and Olanrewaju (2020) investigated youth perceptions in Nigeria and found that political disillusionment and lack of civic engagement stem from experiences of corruption. Ogunyemi and Adesanya (2022), studying young adults in Lagos, revealed that many view corruption as a necessary evil to navigate daily life. In both cases, youth expressed a strong desire for reform but doubted the sincerity of existing mechanisms.

In the South Asian context, limited studies have explored this dynamic. One exception is Sharma (2021), who interviewed Nepali university students and found that while they condemned corruption, many felt powerless to change the system. These findings align with theories of collective action and systemic corruption, where individual efforts seem futile against entrenched networks.

## Literature Gap

While the global and regional literature provides rich insights into corruption's structural and cultural dimensions, the specific views of Nepali youth remain underexplored. Existing studies tend to generalize populations or focus on institutional analysis. This research fills a critical gap by focusing on how Nepali youth perceive the root causes, consequences, and potential solutions to corruption in their society.

By addressing this void, the study contributes to both academic discourse and policy design, emphasizing the need to engage youth not only as beneficiaries of anti-corruption measures but also as active agents in promoting transparency and accountability.

## Statement of the Problem and Research Gaps

Corruption is a chronic problem that afflicts many sectors of Nepalese society, ranging from political governance to public service delivery. Although extensive literature exists on the economic and institutional consequences of corruption, there is a glaring absence of empirical research that centers the perceptions and lived experiences of Nepali youth. This omission is particularly problematic given that youth constitute a substantial portion of the population and represent both the most affected and potentially the most transformative demographic segment.

They are directly impacted by corruption in education, employment, business entry, and governance processes. However, despite their critical role in shaping Nepal's future political, economic, and social trajectories, youth voices are often underrepresented in academic studies and policy discourse related to anti-corruption strategies.

Globally, youth-focused studies have shown that young people's perceptions of corruption are significantly shaped by their exposure to state institutions, cultural norms, and access to accountability mechanisms. In countries like Nigeria and India, youth have been found to be both victims of and actors in corruption, yet also demonstrate a strong desire for integrity-driven governance when engaged constructively (Yahaya & Olanrewaju, 2020; Peisakhin, 2012).

In the South Asian region, while some attention has been given to general anti-corruption strategies, the unique challenges faced by youth remain insufficiently documented. The few existing studies in Nepal either generalize perceptions across the entire population or narrowly examine institutional structures without considering how corruption is subjectively experienced by different population segments.

Moreover, the conceptual frameworks typically used in corruption studies such as Principal-Agent Theory, Collective Action Theory, and Systemic Corruption Theory are rarely applied to understand youth-specific contexts. There is limited scholarly integration of these frameworks in a manner that acknowledges the unique social, cultural, and economic conditions confronting Nepali youth. Additionally, no known studies comprehensively evaluate how youth themselves perceive the causes of corruption, its institutional enablers, and its personal and societal consequences.

Another significant gap is the lack of empirical, quantitative data that could help policymakers and civil society organizations design targeted anti-corruption interventions involving young people. Existing knowledge is heavily reliant on anecdotal or qualitative narratives, which, while valuable, lack the statistical robustness required for policy formulation. Without a solid empirical foundation, efforts to involve youth in anti-corruption strategies risk being tokenistic or ineffective.

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive quantitative research design to investigate youth perceptions of corruption in Nepal. A structured survey approach was selected for its ability to generate representative, comparable, and analyzable data across diverse demographic subgroups.

## Sampling Procedure

A total of 398 youth respondents, aged 18 to 40, were selected using stratified random sampling from the Kathmandu Valley. This method ensured proportional representation across five occupational groups: students, civil servants, private-sector employees, unemployed individuals, and entrepreneurs. The sample size was determined based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula for an unknown population.

## Data Collection

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, comprising closed-ended and Likert-scale items across three sections:

1. Perceived causes of corruption
2. Perceived consequences of corruption
3. Assessment of anti-corruption measures and reform proposals

## Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS. The statistical methods included:

- **Descriptive statistics** (mean, frequency, standard deviation) for summarizing responses.
- **Chi-square tests** to identify associations between demographic factors and perception categories.
- **One-way ANOVA** to examine differences in perception scores across occupational and age groups.
- **Pearson correlation** to explore relationships between perceived causes and consequences of corruption.

Each statistical technique was selected for its appropriateness in handling categorical and continuous survey data, ensuring methodological rigor.

## Ethical Considerations

The study followed ethical guidelines set by Tribhuvan University. Participation was voluntary, with informed consent obtained from all respondents. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained.

This methodology ensures both analytical depth and representativeness, contributing valuable empirical insights into the perceptions of Nepali youth on corruption and anti-corruption strategies.

## Results and Discussion

### Primary Causes of Corruption

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics for Primary Causes of Corruption (Ranked by Mean Scores)*

Cause of Corruption	Mean (1-5)	SD	Top 3 Causes (Frequency)
Greed of money	4.32	0.91	85% (High Agreement)
Political leadership and corruption synonym	4.25	0.89	82%
Weak property rights	4.18	0.93	80%

**Notes:** Responses scaled from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Top causes identified via frequency of ratings  $\geq 4$ .

Descriptive statistics from the survey revealed that Nepali youth identified greed for money (Mean = 4.32, SD = 0.91), corrupt political leadership (Mean = 4.25, SD = 0.89), and weak property rights (Mean = 4.18, SD = 0.93) as the top three causes of corruption. A majority of respondents—85%, 82%, and 80%, respectively rate these as major contributing factors.

The prominence of greed supports rational choice theory (Becker, 1968; Klitgaard, 1988), where individuals engage in corruption when perceived benefits outweigh risks. In Nepal, low salaries, weak oversight, and lack of consequences heighten this risk.

The perception that politics and corruption are synonymous reflects systemic failure, consistent with findings from South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, where elite patronage and politicization of institutions normalize corruption (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016; Bhattarai, 2020).

Lastly, weak property rights highlight institutional fragility, especially in rural areas where land disputes are settled informally, often through bribery (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012; Shrestha & Bhattarai, 2017).

These findings align with global literature and call for comprehensive reforms emphasizing transparency, rule of law, and institutional integrity.

**Table 2**

*One-Way ANOVA for Differences in Perceived Causes by Demographic Groups*

Demographic Factor	Cause (Example)	F-value	p-value	Significant Differences (Post-hoc)
Age	Greed of money	3.45	0.012	Youth (18–25) > Older (26–35)
Profession	Political corruption	4.21	0.003	Students > Government employees
Gender	Weak property rights	1.12	0.291	Not Significant

**Notes:** Significant at  $p < .05$ . Post-hoc tests (Tukey) clarified group differences.

The one-way ANOVA results (Table 2) reveal significant variation in perceptions of corruption’s causes across age and profession, while gender shows no significant influence. A notable difference emerged regarding the cause "greed of money," with an F-value of 3.45 and  $p = 0.012$ . Younger respondents (18–25) rated this cause higher than older ones (26–35), likely reflecting greater sensitivity to economic inequality, unemployment, and unmet expectations for fairness in governance (Transparency International, 2020; Norris, 2011).

Regarding profession, "political corruption" perceptions differed significantly ( $F = 4.21$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ), with students rating it higher than government employees. Students, often critical and reform-oriented, may perceive political leadership more negatively, while public employees may show institutional loyalty or self-censorship (Johnston, 2005; Seligson, 2006).

In contrast, gender differences were not statistically significant for "weak property rights" ( $F = 1.12$ ,  $p = 0.291$ ), suggesting shared views across genders on institutional weaknesses. This aligns with studies showing gender parity in recognizing structural corruption (Swamy et al., 2001).

These results highlight the importance of demographic-sensitive anti-corruption strategies, particularly targeting youth and professional groups.

**Consequences of Corruption**

**Table 3**

*Top Consequences of Corruption (Ranked by Severity)*

Consequence	Mean (1-5)	SD	Rating $\geq 4$
Increases inequality/poverty	4.56	0.72	88%
Low trust among people	4.48	0.75	85%
Adverse foreign investment effects	4.40	0.81	83%

Descriptive statistics in Table 3 highlight the perceived severity of corruption's consequences, based on respondents' 5-point Likert scale ratings. The top three consequences increases in inequality and poverty (Mean = 4.56, SD = 0.72), low trust among people (Mean = 4.48, SD = 0.75), and adverse effects on foreign investment (Mean = 4.40, SD = 0.81) received strong agreement, with over 80% of participants rating them 4 or higher.

The highest-rated consequence, inequality and poverty, reflects public recognition of how corruption disproportionately harms the poor. It diverts resources from essential services, undermining social equity and reinforcing structural poverty (Gupta et al., 2002; Rose-Ackerman, 1999; Transparency International, 2020). In Nepal, weak governance further limits access to justice and welfare.

Low public trust, the second consequence, emphasizes how repeated abuses of power erode confidence in institutions (Rothstein & Uslaner, 2005). Political instability and lack of transparency in Nepal intensify this distrust, weakening civic engagement (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2015).

The third consequence, reduced foreign investment, highlights economic risks. Corruption raises business costs and deters investors (Wei, 2000; Habib & Zurawicki, 2002). For Nepal's aid-dependent economy, this poses serious long-term challenges.

Overall, the findings affirm that corruption undermines development, equity, and institutional legitimacy-demanding urgent, structural reforms.

### Consequences: Inequality and Distrust

The study found that increased inequality (Mean = 4.56, SD = 0.72) and societal distrust (Mean = 4.48, SD = 0.75) were perceived as the most severe consequences of corruption, with 85–88% of respondents in agreement. These perceptions align with national and global findings. The Asian Development Bank (2020) reports that corruption has widened Nepal's Gini coefficient to 0.53, reflecting rising inequality. Similarly, Paudel (2021) found that 74% of Nepalese associate corruption with declining public trust. Globally, Rothstein (2020) links corruption to social capital erosion, a pattern echoed in Latin America (Zechmeister, 2022) and Africa (Moyo, 2021). The policy implication is clear: combating corruption requires addressing inequality, such as through progressive taxation, as seen in Rwanda's post-genocide reforms (Booth & Golooba-Mutebi, 2018).

### Anti-Corruption Measures

**Table 4**

*Chi-Square Test: Association between Demographics and Anti-Corruption Evaluations*

Demographic	Evaluation Question (Example)	$\chi^2$	<i>p</i> -value	Cramer's V
Education Level	"Current laws are sufficient"	12.34	0.002	0.18
Marital Status	"Special courts are needed"	6.21	0.184	0.10

**Notes:** Significant association ( $p < .01$ ) between higher education and dissatisfaction with existing laws.

Table 4 presents Chi-square test results examining how education level and marital status relate to evaluations of anti-corruption measures. A statistically significant association was found between education level and agreement with the statement "*Current laws are sufficient*" ( $\chi^2 = 12.34$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ). With a Cramer's V of 0.18, the effect size indicates a small to moderate association, suggesting that more educated individuals are more likely to critically assess the adequacy of existing laws. This aligns with studies showing that higher education enhances awareness of governance issues and legal mechanisms (Johnston, 2005; Bauhr et al., 2017).

In contrast, marital status showed no significant relationship with views on "Special courts for corruption cases" ( $\chi^2 = 6.21, p = 0.184$ ; Cramer's V = 0.10), suggesting it does not substantially influence perceptions of judicial reforms. This finding is consistent with prior research indicating that marital status has limited impact on institutional trust (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016).

Overall, the results emphasize education's pivotal role in shaping informed opinions about anti-corruption policies, reinforcing the value of civic education in reform efforts (Kaufmann, 2010).

**Causes of Corruption: Greed and Political-Bureaucratic Nexus**

The study identifies greed for money, political corruption, and weak property rights as the top causes of corruption, with mean scores of 4.32 (SD = 0.91), 4.25 (SD = 0.89), and 4.18 (SD = 0.93), respectively. Notably, respondents aged 18-25 perceived greed as a more serious cause ( $p = .012$ ), likely due to greater exposure to unemployment and inequality.

These results align with national data. Transparency International Nepal (2022) found that 68% of citizens attribute corruption to political patronage, supporting this study's findings. Similarly, the World Bank (2020) links weak property rights with rent-seeking, particularly in land administration.

Globally, Johnston (2005) associates greed with elite capture in low-income countries. However, unlike global trends emphasizing institutional failure (Kaufmann et al., 2018), Nepali youth tend to frame corruption as individual moral failure rather than structural dysfunction. This indicates a cultural tendency to personalize corruption, which may affect how reforms are perceived and pursued.

**Anti-Corruption Measures: Institutional Dissatisfaction**

A key finding reveals that 78% of respondents believe current anti-corruption laws are insufficient ( $\chi^2 = 12.34, p = .002$ ), with more educated individuals expressing critical views (Cramer's V = 0.18). This mirrors national skepticism toward institutions like the CIAA, often seen as politicized (Devkota, 2023).

Unlike successful global models such as Hong Kong's ICAC (Quah, 2007), Nepal lacks robust public education on corruption (UNDP Nepal, 2022). Interestingly, while global research stresses judicial independence (Peiffer & Alvarez, 2022), 85% of Nepali youth support specialized anti-corruption courts, signaling distrust in existing systems. Addressing this requires systemic reforms like asset disclosure, youth-led audits (as in Indonesia), and open-data platforms for public procurement (e.g., Ukraine's ProZorro) to foster transparency and rebuild trust.

**Comprehensive Analysis of Corruption's Consequences**

**Table 5**

*Top 5 Most Detrimental Consequences of Corruption (Ranked by Mean Severity)*

Consequence	Mean (1-5)	SD	Rating $\geq 4$ (High Severity)	Rank
Increases inequality and poverty	4.62	0.58	91%	1
Lowers trust among people	4.55	0.61	89%	2
Reduce foreign investment	4.48	0.67	86%	3
Weaken rule of law	4.41	0.72	83%	4
Increased crime rates	4.35	0.75	81%	5

**Notes:** 5-point scale: 1 = Not detrimental, 5 = extremely detrimental. Inequality/poverty was the most severe consequence (91% agreement).

Table 5 presents survey findings using a 5-point severity scale, revealing strong consensus among respondents about the severe, multidimensional consequences of corruption in Nepal. The most serious impact identified was the increase in inequality and poverty (Mean = 4.62, SD = 0.58), with 91% rating it 4 or higher. This supports Gupta et al. (2002), who argue that corruption disproportionately harms the poor by redirecting resources to elites. Similarly, the World Bank (2017) links corruption in public service delivery to persistent poverty across South Asia a pattern seen in Nepal, where a Gini coefficient of 32.8 (UNDP, 2023) indicates growing inequality.

Next, the erosion of public trust (Mean = 4.55, SD = 0.61) was highlighted by 89% of respondents. This aligns with Rothstein and Uslaner's (2005) theory that corruption undermines social cohesion. In Nepal, frequent political scandals have fueled widespread institutional distrust (TI Nepal, 2022). Corruption's deterrent effect on foreign investment (Mean = 4.48) also stood out, reinforcing Mauro's (1995) assertion that corruption functions like an unofficial tax. Nepal's low FDI levels averaging just 0.5% of GDP (World Bank, 2020) reflect this concern.

Other severe outcomes include weakening of the rule of law (Mean = 4.41) and rising crime (Mean = 4.35), both linked to reduced institutional integrity (North et al., 2009; Lederman et al., 2002). These findings emphasize the need for multi-pronged reforms, including transparency in public programs, institutional independence, and civic oversight mechanisms. While echoing global trends, they also reflect Nepal's unique governance challenges and the disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups.

**Table 6**

*Correlation between Top Causes and Consequences (Pearson's  $r$ )*

Cause (Predictor)	Consequence (Outcome)	$r$	$p$ -value
Greed of money	Increases inequality	0.42	<0.001
Political-bureaucratic nexus	Weaken rule of law	0.38	<0.001
Weak property rights	Reduce foreign investment	0.35	0.002

Table 6 presents Pearson correlation results showing significant positive relationships between perceived causes and consequences of corruption in Nepal, underscoring systemic governance weaknesses. The strongest correlation is between greed for money and increased inequality ( $r = 0.42$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that personal enrichment is widely seen as fueling resource misallocation and deepening socioeconomic divides. This supports Jain (2001), who links unchecked financial motives to extractive governance. A moderate correlation exists between the political-bureaucratic nexus and the weakening of the rule of law ( $r = 0.38$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), reflecting public concern over elite collusion undermining judicial independence echoing Rose-Ackerman (1999) and North et al. (2009).

Finally, weak property rights correlate with declining foreign investment ( $r = 0.35$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ), emphasizing the importance of legal security in attracting investors, as noted by Acemoglu and Robinson (2008). In Nepal, weak enforcement deters investment in critical sectors like hydropower (World Bank, 2020). These patterns highlight the interconnected nature of corruption and reinforce the need for comprehensive institutional reforms.

**Table 7**

*ANOVA: Differences in Consequence Severity by Subgroups*

Subgroup	Consequence (Example)	F-value	$p$ -value	Post-hoc (Tukey)
Age Groups	Lowers trust	5.12	0.007	18–25 > 26–35 ( $p = 0.005$ )
Education Level	Weaken rule of law	4.87	0.009	Bachelor's > PhD ( $p = 0.008$ )
Urban vs. Rural	Increased crime rates	1.23	0.268	Not significant

In Table 7, the ANOVA results reveal significant subgroup differences in how the severity of corruption's consequences is perceived, especially across age and education, while urban–rural differences were not statistically significant. For age, the consequence “lowers trust” showed significance ( $F = 5.12, p = 0.007$ ), with Tukey post-hoc tests indicating that younger respondents (18-25) rated this more severely than those aged 26-35 ( $p = 0.005$ ). This aligns with Norris (2003), who found that youth often possess higher expectations for institutional transparency and react strongly to governance failures. In Nepal, younger generations are increasingly vocal in anti-corruption discourse but often feel powerless, amplifying perceptions of betrayal (TI Nepal, 2022).

Educational level also influenced how respondents perceived the consequence “weakens rule of law” ( $F = 4.87, p = 0.009$ ), with bachelor's degree holders rating it more severely than PhD holders ( $p = 0.008$ ). Mid-level graduates may interact more frequently with corrupt institutions (e.g., job markets, public services), whereas PhDs might have more abstract engagement. This aligns with Treisman (2007), who found heightened corruption sensitivity among moderately educated individuals.

In contrast, urban–rural differences in perceiving the consequence “increases crime” were not significant ( $F = 1.23, p = 0.268$ ), suggesting a shared national experience. This supports Uslaner (2008), who argues that widespread institutional decay leads to uniform perceptions across geographic lines.

## Evaluation of Anti-Corruption Measures

**Table 8**

*Effectiveness Ratings of Current Anti-Corruption Mechanisms*

Mechanism	Rating in percentage			Mean Rating (1-5)
	Ineffective	Somewhat Effective	Very Effective	
CIAA (Commission for Investigation)	68	25	7	2.1
National Vigilance Center	72	22	6	1.9
Public Procurement Monitoring	65	28	7	2.2
Whistleblower Protection	81	15	4	1.7

In Table 8, the data in Section 4.5 reveal a widespread perception of ineffectiveness across Nepal's key anti-corruption mechanisms. Among the four institutions evaluated, the whistleblower protection framework received the lowest mean score (Mean = 1.7), with 81% of respondents deeming it "ineffective." This indicates a critical lack of institutional safeguards for individuals who report corruption. As Banisar (2006) notes, whistleblower protection is essential to accountability, yet in Nepal, threats of retaliation, identity exposure, and inadequate legal recourse severely undermine its role.

Similarly, both the National Vigilance Center and the CIAA (Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority) scored poorly (Mean = 1.9 and 2.1 respectively), with over two-thirds labeling them ineffective. Respondents' lack of trust reflects perceptions of politicization and selective enforcement. Transparency International (2022) and Doig & McIvor (2003) argue that in transitional democracies, anti-corruption bodies often lack the independence and political backing to act decisively.

The Public Procurement Monitoring Office performed only marginally better (Mean = 2.2), yet 65% still rated it as ineffective. This aligns with OECD (2016) findings that public

procurement is a high-risk sector, especially in environments with fragmented oversight and limited transparency.

These results underscore the urgent need for institutional reform. Strengthening independence, enhancing legal protections for whistleblowers, and adopting digital procurement tools such as open contracting systems could rebuild public trust. The consistent disillusionment reflected in the data points to a broader demand for transparent, credible, and empowered anti-corruption mechanisms in Nepal.

**Table 9**

*Chi-Square Tests: Demographic Factors and Evaluation of Anti-Corruption Measures*

Demographic Factor	Mechanism (Example)	$\chi^2$ (df)	p-value	Cramer's V	Key Association
Education Level	CIAA Effectiveness	18.37(4)	<0.001	0.21	Higher education → Lower ratings
Urban/Rural	Whistleblower Protection	6.12(2)	0.047	0.12	Urban dwellers more critical
Age Group	Procurement Monitoring	9.84(4)	0.043	0.15	Youth (18-25) most critical

In Table 9, the Chi-square analysis reveals significant demographic variations in public evaluations of anti-corruption mechanisms. Respondents with higher education levels were notably more critical of the CIAA's effectiveness ( $\chi^2 = 18.37$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , Cramer's  $V = 0.21$ ). This suggests that education heightens expectations for accountability and transparency. Similar patterns were observed by Seligson (2002), who found that more educated individuals are less tolerant of institutional shortcomings. In Nepal, this trend may reflect educated youth's exposure to civil service processes and awareness of selective enforcement.

Urban-rural residence also influenced perceptions of whistleblower protections ( $\chi^2 = 6.12$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = 0.047$ , Cramer's  $V = 0.12$ ), with urban respondents more critical. This could stem from higher exposure to media, civil society, and corruption cases. Yet, Nepal's whistleblower protections remain weak, lacking anonymity safeguards (TI Nepal, 2022).

Age differences were significant in views of public procurement monitoring ( $\chi^2 = 9.84$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p = 0.043$ , Cramer's  $V = 0.15$ ), with younger respondents (18-25) showing the most dissatisfaction-mirroring global trends of digitally engaged youth challenging opaque governance (Norris, 2003). These findings emphasize the need for demographic-sensitive reforms, particularly digital transparency tools and civic engagement strategies.

**Table 10**

*Thematic Analysis of Proposed Alternative Strategies (n=150 open-ended responses)*

Theme	Percent	Representative Quote	Policy Implication
Stronger whistleblower laws	42	"We need real protection for those who speak up"	Legal reforms with enforcement
Youth involvement in monitoring	38	"Let us audit local projects ourselves"	Participatory governance models
Digital transparency platforms	33	"All contracts should be online with tracking"	E-governance investments
Harsher political penalties	29	"Corrupt leaders should be banned for life"	Accountability measures
Civic education programs	21	"Teach anti-corruption in schools"	Curriculum reforms

**Notes:** Multiple responses permitted. Digital solutions were particularly emphasized by younger respondents (18-25 years).

In Table 10, thematic analysis of 150 open-ended responses on alternative anti-corruption strategies reveals five dominant public demands: protection, participation, technology, accountability, and education. The most cited theme stronger whistleblower laws (42%) highlights frustration with Nepal's weak legal safeguards. Respondents emphasized the need for "real protection," reflecting global standards that stress confidentiality, anti-retaliation mechanisms, and legal redress (Banisar, 2006). In Nepal, the lack of enforcement discourages reporting, fostering a climate of silence (TI Nepal, 2022).

The second most common theme youth-led monitoring (38%) reflects growing calls for participatory governance. Remarks like "Let us audit local projects ourselves" reveal civic awareness, especially among youth. As Norris (2003) notes, youth activism can drive institutional accountability. Tools like community scorecards, participatory budgeting, and social audits successfully used in India and the Philippines can channel this engagement productively (World Bank, 2019).

Digital transparency emerged in 33% of responses, with suggestions for publishing contracts and enabling real-time budget tracking. These align with OECD (2016) findings that digital tools, like open contracting and e-procurement, deter corruption. In Nepal, while e-governance initiatives exist, they remain fragmented and underutilized.

Harsher political penalties, supported by 29%, included proposals like lifetime bans for corrupt leaders. This reflects deep public frustration with impunity. Treisman (2007) argues that unchecked political immunity undermines trust. Countries such as Georgia and Singapore have improved governance through strict enforcement and political accountability (World Bank, 2019).

Finally, civic education was emphasized by 21% of respondents. Calls for school-based anti-corruption education echo Uslaner's (2008) argument that early moral development fosters norms against corruption. Nepal's current curriculum lacks practical engagement, underscoring a need for reform.

Together, these citizen-driven strategies present a comprehensive blueprint for reform—one that blends institutional restructuring with civic empowerment.

**Table 11**

*Effectiveness Ratings of Current Anti-Corruption Mechanisms*

Mechanism	Rating in percentage			Mean Rating (1-5)
	Ineffective	Somewhat Effective	Very Effective	
CIAA (Commission for Investigation)	68	25	7	2.1
National Vigilance Center	72	22	6	1.9
Public Procurement Monitoring	65	28	7	2.2
Whistleblower Protection	81	15	4	1.7

**Notes:**

- 5-point scale: 1 = Very ineffective, 5 = Very effective
- Whistleblower protection was rated least effective (81% "ineffective")
- No mechanism received >7% "very effective" ratings

Table 11 illustrates public perceptions regarding the effectiveness of various current anti-corruption mechanisms, measured by the proportion of respondents rating each mechanism as

"Ineffective," "Somewhat Effective," or "Very Effective," alongside the calculated mean ratings on a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest effectiveness). The data reveals a pervasive skepticism about the effectiveness of key anti-corruption bodies and policies.

Among the mechanisms evaluated, Whistleblower Protection is perceived as the least effective, with 81% of respondents rating it "Ineffective" and a mean rating of 1.7. This suggests widespread dissatisfaction or lack of confidence in protections offered to individuals reporting corrupt activities. The National Vigilance Center and the Commission for Investigation (CIAA) also receive low mean ratings of 1.9 and 2.1 respectively, with the majority perceiving their efforts as ineffective or only somewhat effective. Public Procurement Monitoring fares slightly better but still faces significant criticism, with a mean rating of 2.2 and 65% rating it "Ineffective."

These findings align with broader literature indicating that anti-corruption agencies often struggle with limited resources, political interference, and weak enforcement powers, which undermine their credibility and effectiveness (Doig and Theobald, 2018; Gisselquist, 2014). For instance, studies have shown that whistleblower protection mechanisms frequently lack robust legal safeguards or practical implementation, resulting in underutilization and vulnerability of whistleblowers (Brown et al., 2017). Moreover, public procurement remains a critical vulnerability in corruption governance due to the complexity and high financial stakes involved, making monitoring challenging (Thai, 2009).

The consistently low ratings reflect a broader challenge in anti-corruption governance, where institutional weaknesses and public mistrust create a vicious cycle that hampers reform efforts (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2015). Enhancing transparency, strengthening legal frameworks, and ensuring independent oversight are crucial to improving the performance of these mechanisms and rebuilding public confidence (Hechler, 2015).

### Conclusion

The study confirms that Nepali youth perceive corruption as deeply rooted in greed, political-bureaucratic collusion, and weak institutions. Current anti-corruption mechanisms are viewed as ineffective, highlighting the need for systemic reforms. Youth advocate for stronger legal protections, digital transparency, and participatory governance to foster accountability.

### Implications

The findings underscore a trust deficit in Nepal's governance, with corruption exacerbating inequality and deterring foreign investment. Engaging youth in anti-corruption efforts is crucial, given their technological literacy and demand for transparency. Policymakers must prioritize institutional reforms, civic education, and digital governance to restore public confidence.

### Recommendations

1. **Enhance legal frameworks:** Strengthen whistleblower protections and enforce asset disclosure laws (Banisar, 2006; World Bank, 2019).
2. **Promote digital transparency:** Implement e-governance platforms for public contracts (OECD, 2016).
3. **Empower youth:** Involve youth in corruption monitoring through participatory audits (UNDP, 2022).
4. **Integrate anti-corruption education:** Introduce ethics and governance modules in schools (Uslaner, 2008).

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