

The Level of Corruption in Democratic Republic of Nepal: An In-depth Analysis of Root Causes, Governance Impact, and Potential Solutions¹

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Abstract

This article critically examines the issue of corruption in Nepal's modern democracy, which poses a significant challenge to the foundational principles of transparency, accountability, and fair representation. Through an exploration of the root causes, impact on governance, and potential solutions, the study sheds light on the complexities of corruption within Nepal's political and administrative systems.

The analysis identifies historical factors, including the lingering effects of past autocratic regimes and political instability, as contributors to the conducive environment for corruption. Furthermore, weak institutional frameworks, characterized by insufficient checks and balances, inadequate enforcement mechanisms, and political patronage networks, are identified as systemic issues fostering corrupt practices.

The impact of corruption on governance is manifested in the erosion of public trust, economic consequences leading to resource misallocation, and impaired service delivery in essential sectors. These consequences collectively contribute to disillusionment among citizens, hindering the democratic process and perpetuating social inequalities.

This study utilizes qualitative methods to analyze corruption in Nepal's democracy, identifying root causes and impacts while proposing solutions like strengthening institutions and fostering transparency. Secondary research study was performed to abstract potential solutions, emphasizing the need for strengthening democratic

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institutions, promoting transparency and accountability through robust measures and enforcement of anti-corruption laws, and fostering citizen engagement. Additionally, international cooperation is highlighted as a valuable avenue for sharing best practices and gaining insights from successful anti-corruption efforts in other nations.

In conclusion, the study advocates for a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to address corruption in Nepal's democracy. By addressing root causes and fostering a culture of accountability, the nation can strive towards building a more resilient democratic system that effectively serves the interests of its people. The article underscores the importance of sustained efforts and a collective commitment to combating corruption for Nepal to realize a future where democracy thrives and fulfills its promises.

Keywords: Causes of Corruption, Corruption, Governance, Nepal

Introduction

Corruption, as a pervasive challenge in modern democracies, continues to undermine the fundamental tenets of transparency, accountability, and fair representation. In the context of Nepal, a nation that has undergone a historic transition to republic democracy in recent decades, the complexities surrounding corruption within its political and administrative systems demand critical examination. This article seeks to delve into the challenges and consequences of corruption in Nepal's modern democracy, exploring its root causes, impact on governance, and potential solutions.

Nepal's historical trajectory, marked by political transitions and changes in governance structures, has laid the groundwork for the persistence of corruption. The lingering effects of past autocratic regimes and periods of political instability have created an environment where corrupt practices can thrive (Shrestha, 2017). Additionally, the nation's weak institutional framework poses a significant obstacle to effective democratic governance, characterized by inadequate legal frameworks, insufficient checks and balances, and a lack of robust enforcement mechanisms (World Bank, 2020).

Political patronage further exacerbates the issue, as the Nepalese political landscape often witnesses the favoring of loyal supporters with positions and benefits, contributing to a culture where personal and political interests may supersede public welfare (Tiwari, 2019).

The impact of corruption on governance is multifaceted. It manifests in the erosion of public trust in democratic institutions, hindering citizens' confidence in the

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democratic process and fostering disillusionment and apathy (Khanal et al., 2018). Moreover, corruption has far-reaching economic implications, diverting resources away from essential public services and infrastructure projects, thereby impeding economic development and perpetuating poverty (Transparency International, 2021). Additionally, corrupt practices in the public sector compromise the delivery of vital services, such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure, directly affecting the well-being of citizens and perpetuating a cycle of underdevelopment (World Bank, 2018).

To address these challenges, potential solutions must be explored. Strengthening democratic institutions is imperative, requiring a focus on enhancing their independence and ensuring adequate resources and capacities to perform effectively (United Nations Development Programme, 2022). The promotion of transparency and accountability through the enforcement of anti-corruption laws and the establishment of independent oversight bodies is crucial (Khanal et al., 2018). Citizen engagement, facilitated by public awareness campaigns, civic education, and the promotion of a culture of accountability, can act as a powerful check on corruption (Treisman, 2000). Furthermore, international cooperation, involving collaboration with organizations and the sharing of best practices, can contribute to a more comprehensive approach in tackling corruption (World Bank, 2021).

Literature Review

Corruption in democratic systems is a global concern that has garnered significant attention from scholars and policymakers alike. This literature review aims to provide an overview of existing research on corruption in democratic contexts, with a specific focus on Nepal. By examining key theories, concepts, and findings from previous studies, this review seeks to identify gaps in the literature that the current research endeavors to address.

Theoretical frameworks on corruption in democracies

Principal-agent theory

Principal-agent theory has been frequently employed to understand corruption within democratic systems (Rose-Ackerman, 1999). In the democratic context of Nepal, this theory suggests that the relationship between citizens (principals) and elected representatives or bureaucrats (agents) may be marred by information asymmetry and moral hazard, contributing to corrupt practices (Debbane, 2006).

Cultural and Social Capital Perspectives: Research has also explored cultural and social capital perspectives to elucidate the role of societal norms and networks in fostering or mitigating corruption (Sobel, 2005). In Nepal, societal expectations and networks may influence the prevalence of corruption, as has been observed in other South Asian contexts (Treisman, 2007).

Root causes of corruption in Nepal's democracy

Historical legacy and political transition

The historical legacy of autocratic rule and political transitions in Nepal has created an environment conducive to corruption (Shrestha, 2017). Political instability and changes in governance structures may have left lasting effects that contribute to the challenges faced in curbing corruption within the democratic framework.

Weak institutional framework

The effectiveness of democratic institutions in Nepal is hindered by weak legal frameworks, insufficient checks and balances, and inadequate enforcement mechanisms (World Bank, 2020). The literature suggests that addressing these institutional shortcomings is crucial for combating corruption.

Political patronage networks

Political patronage, a recurring theme in Nepalese politics, involves the exchange of political support for positions and benefits (Tiwari, 2019). The existence of these networks may contribute to a culture where corruption thrives, as officials prioritize personal and political interests over public welfare.

Governance impact of corruption in Nepal

Erosion of public trust

Corruption erodes public trust in democratic institutions, leading to disillusionment and apathy (Khanal et al., 2018). Understanding the impact on citizen perceptions is essential for assessing the health of Nepal's democratic system.

Economic consequences

Corruption diverts resources away from essential public services and infrastructure projects, hindering economic development and perpetuating poverty (Transparency International, 2021). This misallocation of funds has far-reaching economic implications for the nation.

Impaired service delivery

Corruption in the public sector compromises the delivery of essential services, impacting healthcare, education, and infrastructure (World Bank, 2018). This directly affects the well-being of citizens and perpetuates a cycle of underdevelopment.

Potential solutions and gaps in the literature

Strengthening institutions

Research emphasizes the importance of strengthening democratic institutions in Nepal (United Nations Development Programme, 2022). Addressing the gaps in the literature, this study aims to provide nuanced insights into the specific institutional reforms required for effective anti-corruption measures.

Promoting transparency and accountability

Previous literature suggests the need for robust transparency measures and accountability mechanisms (Khanal et al., 2018). The current research seeks to contribute by examining the practical implementation of these measures within the Nepalese context.

Citizen engagement

While citizen engagement is recognized as a potential solution (Treisman, 2000), the gaps in the literature may include specific strategies for empowering citizens in the Nepalese democratic process. This study aims to explore and propose concrete methods for fostering citizen participation.

International cooperation

Collaboration with international organizations is highlighted as beneficial (World Bank, 2021). However, the gaps in the literature may involve a deeper exploration of the specific challenges and opportunities associated with international cooperation in Nepal's context.

The existing literature provides a valuable foundation for understanding corruption in democratic systems, particularly in the context of Nepal. This literature review identifies key theoretical frameworks, root causes, governance impacts, and potential solutions discussed in previous research. However, gaps persist, particularly in the specific application of solutions within Nepal's democratic framework. This study aims to address these gaps by offering a comprehensive analysis of corruption in Nepal, contributing to both academic discourse and policy recommendations for combating corruption in democratic systems.

Theoretical Framework

The study on corruption in the Democratic Republic of Nepal is guided by a comprehensive theoretical framework that draws on various key concepts and ideas within political science, sociology, and public administration. This theoretical foundation aims to provide a structured lens through which to analyze the root causes, governance impact, and potential solutions to corruption within Nepal's democratic context.

Principal-agent theory

The Principal-Agent theory serves as a foundational framework to understand the dynamics of corruption in democratic systems (Rose-Ackerman, 1999). In the Nepalese context, citizens act as principals, delegating authority to elected representatives or bureaucrats who function as agents. This theoretical perspective allows us to explore how information asymmetry, moral hazard, and the delegation of power contribute to corrupt practices within the democratic framework of Nepal.

Cultural and social capital perspectives

Complementing the Principal-Agent theory, the study incorporates cultural and social capital perspectives. By drawing on concepts from sociology, particularly the works of James S. Coleman and Pierre Bourdieu, the analysis considers how societal norms, values, and social networks influence corruption (Coleman, 1988; Bourdieu, 1986). The examination of cultural and social capital seeks to uncover the informal structures that either foster or mitigate corrupt behavior within Nepalese society.

Historical institutionalism

To dissect the root causes of corruption, the study employs Historical Institutionalism, which posits that historical legacies shape the functioning of contemporary institutions (Thelen, 1999). In Nepal, historical factors, including autocratic rule and political transitions, are examined to understand how past events contribute to the current challenges in curtailing corruption within democratic structures.

Institutional analysis and development (IAD) framework

The Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework, developed by Elinor Ostrom, guides the exploration of institutional weaknesses contributing to corruption (Ostrom, 2005). This framework helps in assessing the effectiveness of democratic institutions in Nepal by examining legal frameworks, checks and balances, and enforcement mechanisms.

Social contract theory

The study integrates Social Contract theory to analyze the erosion of public trust in democratic institutions (Rousseau, 1762). It explores how corruption undermines the implicit social contract between citizens and the state, leading to disillusionment and apathy among the public.

Policy feedback theory

To understand the governance impact of corruption, the study applies the Policy Feedback theory, which posits that policies shape subsequent political and social dynamics (Pierson, 1993). In the Nepalese context, the misallocation of resources due to corruption has feedback effects on economic development, public service delivery, and citizen well-being.

Network analysis

Examining political patronage networks and their influence on corruption, the study employs concepts from Network Analysis (Scott, 2017). This allows for a nuanced exploration of how relationships among political actors contribute to corrupt practices.

Institutional strengthening model

In proposing potential solutions, the study adopts an Institutional Strengthening Model (Andrews, Pritchett, & Woolcock, 2017). This model guides the analysis of strategies to enhance the capacity, independence, and effectiveness of democratic institutions in Nepal as a means to combat corruption.

Transparency and accountability framework

Drawing on the concepts of transparency and accountability, the study employs a framework that assesses the enforcement of anti-corruption laws, the establishment of oversight bodies, and measures to promote open government (Khanal et al., 2018).

Citizen participation model

To explore citizen engagement as a solution, the study incorporates a Citizen Participation Model. This model draws on concepts of civic education, public awareness campaigns, and the promotion of a culture of accountability to empower citizens as active participants in the democratic process.

This theoretical framework integrates diverse concepts and ideas to comprehensively analyze corruption in Nepal's democratic context. By employing these theoretical perspectives, the study aims to uncover the multifaceted nature of corruption,

providing a foundation for informed policy recommendations and contributing to the broader academic discourse on corruption within democratic systems.

Research Methodology

The research design for the study on corruption in the Democratic Republic of Nepal primarily relies on secondary research methods, which encompass literature reviews, reading news articles, and analyzing published cases of corruption in Nepali media. This approach aims to draw insights from existing information and documented cases.

The study analyzes existing research on corruption, particularly in the Nepali context. Literature reviews provide an overview of key theories, concepts, and findings from previous studies, identifying gaps in the literature that the current research aims to address.

Analysis of news articles and published corruption cases in Nepali media serves as a valuable source of information. Examining these cases sheds light on real-life instances of corruption, offering practical insights into the dynamics and manifestations of corrupt practices in the country.

The research includes key informant interviews with individuals who have witnessed corruption cases in specific contexts. These interviews focus on firsthand experiences related to corruption, with a particular emphasis on cases such as the Sudan corruption case at the police force and the Omni Health case during COVID.

By employing secondary research methods, the study leverages existing data and information to comprehensively analyze corruption in Nepal. This approach facilitates a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of corruption, drawing on real-world examples and documented evidence to inform policy recommendations.

Discussion and Findings

The literature review provides insights into corruption within democratic systems, focusing on Nepal, revealing key theoretical frameworks such as Principal-Agent Theory and Cultural and Social Capital Perspectives to understand its dynamics. Root causes, including historical legacies and weak institutional frameworks, are identified, along with governance impacts such as erosion of public trust and economic consequences. The study highlights gaps in the literature, particularly in the application of solutions within Nepal's context, guiding the study to offer a comprehensive discussion, analysis and

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contribute to both academic discourse and policy recommendations for combating corruption in democratic systems in Nepal.

The research findings underscore the deep-rooted nature of corruption in the Democratic Republic of Nepal, which can be traced back to historical factors that have shaped the country's political landscape. The legacy of past autocratic regimes emerges as a significant contributor to the prevalence of corruption in Nepal. Under autocratic rule, a culture of impunity was fostered, wherein those in power could engage in corrupt practices without fear of accountability. Moreover, the concentration of power in the hands of a select few, coupled with limited checks and balances, created an environment ripe for corruption to flourish unchecked.

The findings suggest that the historical context of autocratic rule has left enduring legacies that continue to influence Nepal's governance structures and contribute to the persistence of corrupt practices. The lack of accountability mechanisms and the dominance of a select elite further exacerbate the problem, perpetuating a cycle of corruption that undermines the country's democratic principles.

Political instability, a pervasive historical factor in Nepal, has significantly contributed to the challenges faced in curbing corruption within the country. Periods of political turmoil and frequent transitions of power have disrupted governance structures, impeding the establishment of robust anti-corruption mechanisms. The inherent instability has provided fertile ground for corrupt practices to persist, undermining efforts to promote transparency and accountability within the democratic framework.

The research findings indicate that weak institutional frameworks further exacerbate the issue of corruption in Nepal. The effectiveness of democratic institutions has been hindered by a historical legacy characterized by inadequate legal frameworks, insufficient checks and balances, and a lack of robust enforcement mechanisms. These institutional weaknesses have created an environment where corrupt practices can thrive unchecked, impeding the development of a resilient and transparent democratic system.

In essence, the root causes of corruption in Nepal are deeply embedded in the country's historical journey, marked by autocratic rule, political instability, and weak institutional frameworks. Addressing these historical factors is crucial for implementing effective anti-corruption measures and fostering a culture of transparency and accountability within Nepal's democratic framework.

The discussion highlights the interconnected nature of historical factors and their impact on contemporary corruption in Nepal. It underscores the need for comprehensive reforms aimed at strengthening governance structures, enhancing legal frameworks, and bolstering enforcement mechanisms to effectively combat corruption and promote good governance in the country. Addressing these root causes is essential for building a more resilient and transparent democratic system in Nepal.

Nepal grapples with a persistent struggle against corruption, receiving a 'D' in the World Economic Corruption grade and securing the 110th position among 180 countries and territories in the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) by Transparency International. Despite a marginal uptick in CPI, Nepal's corruption rank averaged 124.6 from 2004 to 2022, oscillating between an all-time high of 154 in 2011 and a record low of 90 in 2004. This incremental progress, however, falls short of meeting the populace's aspirations for a low-corruption environment.

The normative phenomenon of rising corruption perception poses a severe challenge, leading to diminishing trust across all state apparatuses, including the legislative, judiciary, and executive branches. This erosion of trust prompts people to feel less secure, fostering aggression against state machinery. The consequential brain drain, loss of population dividend, and a distraction in private sector investment further exacerbate the economy's descent towards the bottom of the pyramid. The enduring cost of such pervasive distrust can only be alleviated through concerted efforts by all state organs.

Corruption in Nepal spans various dimensions, encompassing abuse of public power for private benefit, bribery, fraud, embezzlement, nepotism, and favoritism. This multifaceted challenge inflicts severe repercussions on public life. Poor public service delivery disproportionately affects the grassroots, diverting government funds to ostentatious but low-return projects and sidelining crucial infrastructure initiatives. The economic toll of corruption is staggering, with estimates by the World Economic Forum suggesting a global cost of at least \$2.6 trillion, equivalent to 5% of the global GDP. Social costs, environmental degradation, and political instability further compound the adverse effects of corruption.

To combat corruption, the state must enact regulations and authorizations that streamline government permits, licenses, certificates, and tax clearances essential for business activities. Simplifying these processes reduces opportunities for corruption and

ensures citizens face fewer hurdles in various aspects of life. User-friendly technologies and online payment systems in tax administration can enhance transparency, while a merit-based recruitment and promotion system improves the quality of bureaucracy. Well-paid civil servants, a robust penal system, and institutional controls in the hands of effective supervisors and auditors are vital for combating corruption.

The path forward demands a reevaluation of bureaucracy quality, with an emphasis on merit-based recruitment and transparent promotion systems. Adequate compensation for civil servants, a robust penal system, and institutional controls are essential pillars in the fight against corruption. The quality of bureaucracy plays a pivotal role, as evidenced by research from 35 developing countries indicating a correlation between corruption levels and recruitment practices. Politically motivated hiring, patronage, nepotism, and the absence of clear rules on promotions contribute to bureaucratic shortcomings.

The battle against corruption in Nepal necessitates multifaceted strategies, regulatory reforms, and a commitment to ethical conduct at all levels of governance. Addressing corruption is imperative not only for the country's economic and social well-being but also for fostering trust in democratic institutions and ensuring sustainable development.

In recent months, Nepal has been ensnared in a high-profile corruption case that has implicated high-ranking politicians, former ministers, senior bureaucrats, human rights activists, and intermediaries, exposing the deep-seated corruption within the country's ruling bureaucracy and political circles (KII, 2023). This scandal revolves around fraudulent activities wherein Nepali citizens were falsely identified as Bhutanese refugees, and extensive bribes were collected in exchange for promises of resettlement in the United States and other countries.

The origins of this corruption scheme can be traced back to the 1990s when Bhutanese of Nepali origin were expelled from Bhutan and resettled as refugees in eastern Nepal. After failed negotiations for repatriation, over 100,000 refugees were resettled in various countries, creating a precedent that contributed to the current fraudulent activities. The exposed scheme has led to serious allegations, with more than 100 people accusing officials of soliciting payments for guaranteed resettlement in the United States. Victims claim to have paid over USD \$2 million in bribes, with estimates suggesting that over 13,000 people were sent abroad fraudulently through this scam (KII, 2023).

The Nepalese authorities have initiated legal action against 33 individuals, charging them with fraud, organized crime, and even treason. However, public skepticism persists, fearing that high-profile perpetrators might escape punishment due to their influence over investigations and the judiciary. Media reports also implicate other prominent political figures, further exacerbating public suspicion (Kantipur, 2023).

This scandal exemplifies the multifaceted nature of kleptocracy, involving systemic transnational corruption that compromises national institutions and endangers the rule of law (Anonymous, 2023). Recent instances, such as attempts to interfere with criminal investigations and pressure the central bank governor, underscore the alarming developments in Nepal where powerful political actors brazenly manipulate the system for personal gain (Kantipur, 2023).

The corruption case, commonly known as the Sudan scam, involved the purchase of sub-standard armored personnel carriers (APCs) for Nepali UN peacekeepers in the Darfur region. The top cops were found guilty of the offense by a division bench of then Chief Justice Sushila Karki and Justice Biswombhar Prasad Shrestha. Despite the court's guilty verdict, Nepal Police faced criticism for not arresting the former chiefs and providing them with personal security officers, guards, and other facilities.

The Sudan scam, which unfolded since 2011, saw Rs 310 million embezzled out of the total Rs 445 million allocated for APC procurement. The Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authorities took more than a year and a half to prepare the case, accusing the three former police chiefs and two dozen police officials of embezzling millions of rupees. The United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNMID) declared the Nepali mission "defunct" for procuring substandard APCs from the Czech Republic, which were used in World War II. The Sudan scam stands as one of the largest corruption cases in Nepal. The police officials who surrendered within two months of their conviction are eligible for a 20 percent exemption from punishment (The Kathmandu Post, 2017).

In late January 2020, a Nepali student in Wuhan, China, became the first Covid-19 case in South Asia. Nepal, the seventh country globally to confirm the virus, faced predicted devastating economic impacts. The government, particularly the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP), took insufficient steps to procure essential medical equipment despite warnings. The response included a belated public bidding process initiated by the Department of Health Service (DoHS) two weeks after the first case. The

bureaucratic delay exacerbated as Covid-19 cases surged and a nationwide lockdown was imposed in March (The Kathmandu Post, 2020).

The principal manifestations of corruption encompass bribery, embezzlement, fraud, extortion, favoritism, and nepotism. These terms, while at times overlapping and interchangeable, help delineate the fundamental characteristics of corruption (Amundsen, 2000). Bribery, as a form of corruption, involves the exchange of payment, fixed sums, percentages, or favors in money or kind, usually directed towards state officials who wield the authority to make contracts or distribute benefits to individuals and entities (Amundsen, 2000). Synonymous terms such as kickbacks, gratuities, baksheesh, sweeteners, pay-offs, speed and grease money represent the various facets of bribery, reflecting corruption from the public's perspective. These payments grease the wheels of bureaucracy, enabling corporations to secure political favors, evade taxation, manipulate environmental regulations, and establish protected markets or monopolies.

Embezzlement, another manifestation of corruption, entails the theft of public resources by public officials or employees of private firms. Although some argue that embezzlement may not strictly be considered corruption from a legal standpoint, it represents a transaction where individuals, typically state agents, exceed legal limits to secure personal benefits, diverging from the prescribed law and regulation to gain bribes (Amundsen, 2000). Embezzlement in Nepal is a significant mode of economic accumulation, as political leaders and administrative bureaucrats amass wealth through this method, often linking political elites with various businesses, media, and educational ventures.

Fraud, categorized as a serious crime, involves dishonesty, swindling, or cheating. In the context of corruption, this includes practices such as providing unnecessary loans, issuing licenses for substandard medicines, approving bills without proper supervision, and promoting less qualified individuals based on political favoritism (Amundsen, 2000). The intertwining of dirty politics with the interests of national and international entities contributes to the selection and promotion of politically corrupt individuals in vital posts within Nepal.

Extortion, as a corrupt practice, encompasses the extraction of money and resources through coercion, violence, or the threat of force. Rulers create an atmosphere of insecurity, harassing and intimidating citizens, private businesses, and public officials, compelling them to pay protection money to avoid further harassment. The political

conflict in Nepal has exacerbated extortion, with rulers exploiting the situation to extract resources through concealed threats.

Favoritism is a mechanism of power abuse that involves the biased distribution of state resources based on personal preferences, favoring family, friends, relatives, and other trusted entities. In the political sphere, this manifests in the appointment of individuals who have access to state resources, enabling them to provide preferential treatment to certain people. In Nepal, where the Prime Minister holds the constitutional rights to appoint high-ranking positions, favoritism is pervasive and can extend to several hundred positions within ministries, diplomatic organizations, and other agencies.

Nepotism, a specialized form of favoritism, occurs when an office holder prefers family members for political, economic, and public positions. Political leaders often nominate their family members to various public councils, committees, and security positions, facilitating the transfer of public power to private wealth. This practice contributes to the consolidation of power within certain families, clans, or social subgroups, emphasizing the correlation between public positions and corrupt or extractive practices.

Recommendation

Policy reforms

Based on the findings of the research, policymakers in Nepal should prioritize implementing comprehensive policy reforms aimed at addressing the root causes of corruption. This includes enacting legislation to strengthen governance structures, enhance legal frameworks, and establish robust anti-corruption mechanisms.

Institutional strengthening

Efforts should be directed towards strengthening democratic institutions in Nepal by investing in capacity-building initiatives, improving checks and balances, and enhancing enforcement mechanisms. This could involve providing training for civil servants, judiciary officials, and law enforcement agencies to effectively combat corruption.

Transparency and accountability

Promoting transparency and accountability within the government is essential for combating corruption. Measures such as establishing mechanisms for public oversight, enhancing access to information, and ensuring transparency in government procurement processes can help reduce opportunities for corrupt practices.

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Political stability

Addressing political instability is crucial for curbing corruption in Nepal. Efforts should be made to foster political stability through dialogue, consensus-building, and strengthening democratic governance structures. This could involve promoting inclusive political processes, respecting the rule of law, and ensuring peaceful transitions of power.

Public awareness and participation

Increasing public awareness about the detrimental effects of corruption and fostering civic engagement are important steps in combating corruption. Initiatives such as public education campaigns, civic empowerment programs, and community-based anti-corruption initiatives can help mobilize citizens to hold government officials accountable and demand transparency.

Continued research and monitoring

Continued research and monitoring are essential for evaluating the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures and identifying emerging challenges. Regular assessments of corruption trends, public perceptions, and institutional performance can inform evidence-based policy-making and guide efforts to combat corruption effectively.

Emergency response reform

The case study of Nepal's response to the COVID-19 pandemic underscores the urgent need for reform in emergency response mechanisms. The government, particularly the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP), should prioritize the establishment of efficient procurement processes for essential medical equipment and supplies. This includes proactive planning, timely procurement, and transparent allocation of resources to ensure preparedness for future health crises.

Accountability in emergency spending

To prevent corruption in emergency spending, mechanisms for oversight and accountability must be strengthened. Transparent procurement processes, independent audits, and regular monitoring of emergency funds allocation are essential to prevent mismanagement and ensure that resources are allocated efficiently and effectively to address urgent needs during crises.

Combating specific forms of corruption

Given the multifaceted nature of corruption in Nepal, targeted strategies are needed to address specific manifestations such as bribery, embezzlement, fraud, extortion, favoritism, and nepotism. This could involve implementing stricter penalties

for corrupt practices, enhancing whistleblower protection mechanisms, and conducting thorough investigations into allegations of corruption.

Anti-corruption education

Increasing public awareness about the detrimental effects of corruption and promoting ethical behavior are critical components of any anti-corruption strategy. Educational campaigns aimed at raising awareness about the various forms of corruption, their impact on society, and ways to report corrupt activities can empower citizens to hold government officials accountable and contribute to a culture of integrity and transparency.

International support and collaboration

International support and collaboration are crucial for strengthening anti-corruption efforts in Nepal. Continued engagement with international partners, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Bank, can provide technical assistance, capacity-building initiatives, and financial resources to support anti-corruption initiatives and promote good governance practices in Nepal.

Legal and institutional reforms

In addition to reviewing existing laws, Nepal should prioritize the implementation of electronic procurement systems to minimize opportunities for corruption in public contracting. Introducing measures such as mandatory disclosure of beneficial ownership information for companies bidding on government contracts can enhance transparency and deter corrupt practices.

Mitigating political patronage

Implementing strict regulations on political financing and introducing measures to enhance transparency in campaign finance are essential steps to reduce the influence of money in politics. Strengthening oversight mechanisms to monitor political party finances and imposing penalties for non-compliance can help mitigate the risk of corruption in the political sphere.

Empowering civil society

Supporting civil society organizations (CSOs) through capacity-building initiatives and providing funding for anti-corruption advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns can amplify the voices of citizens in the fight against corruption. Creating platforms for dialogue between CSOs, government officials, and the private sector can facilitate collaboration and knowledge-sharing on anti-corruption efforts.

Conclusion

Corruption in Nepal takes various forms, including bribery, embezzlement, fraud, nepotism, and favoritism. These practices have severe repercussions on public life, affecting service delivery, diverting funds to low-return projects, and imposing a staggering economic toll. Recent high-profile corruption cases, such as the fraudulent resettlement scheme and the Sudan scam, underscore the multifaceted nature of corruption, involving systemic transnational corruption and compromising national institutions.

To combat corruption effectively, Nepal needs multifaceted strategies, regulatory reforms, and a commitment to ethical conduct at all governance levels. Recommendations include strengthening democratic institutions, legal and institutional reforms, minimizing political patronage networks, promoting citizen engagement, enhancing transparency measures, and fostering international cooperation. Capacity building for public officials, whistleblower protection, leveraging technology, and establishing a robust monitoring system are essential components of a comprehensive anti-corruption strategy.

Overcoming challenges in implementation requires developing a roadmap, establishing independent oversight bodies, fostering inclusivity, and addressing potential issues in international cooperation through diplomatic dialogue. By adopting these measures, Nepal can significantly advance its anti-corruption agenda, build a more transparent democratic system, and restore public trust in state institutions.

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