

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/cognition.v7i1.74767>

An Analytical Study on Political Patronage Corruption in Nepal

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Abstract

This paper delves into Nepal's intricate political patronage and corruption landscape, focusing on its historical context, driving factors, and implications. The study examines the evolution of patronage and corruption, tracing its roots to the Rana and Panchayat regimes and highlighting how these systems nurtured patronage networks. The key results suggest that lack of political stability, poverty, transparency and accountability, and weak institutions are the leading causes of corruption. On the other hand, corruption leads to economic decline and undermines citizens' trust in the political system. Patronage networks only strengthen this process, with politicians trading votes for positions, leading to a culture of corruption and underpinning meritocracy. Despite anti-corruption measures like the Right to Information Act and the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA), challenges persist due to political interference and enforcement deficiencies. Addressing these deeply entrenched issues is crucial for Nepal's progress and development.

Keywords: Corruption, Development, Governance, Institutions, Nepal, Patronage, Politics

Introduction

Corruption has been an intractable problem for Nepal, and it has made its way into the headlines internationally, especially considering foreign aid and investments. The donor agencies have also been able to exert pressure on the government to fight against corruption, resulting in some degree of transparency and accountability (Kondos, 2009). However, the extreme speculation of anti-corruption control in Nepali politics at present is still not part of crystal clarity. Political instability and the omnipresence of patronage networks are two areas that create obstacles to progress. Moreover, there is a crucial empirical gap in studying the success of any anti-corruption efforts or changes in corruption patterns and practices, given the context of Nepal's changing political environment (Kondos, 2009).

Corruption, which refers to the misappropriation of public office or resources for personal advantage using deceitful or illegal practices, is a multifarious phenomenon that afflicts Nepali politics to a large extent. These include bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and cronyism. Bribery, which is the transaction involving offering, giving, receiving, or soliciting something of value (often money) in return for the official's or a person in a position of influence's performance, is a pervasive feature in the political scene in Nepal, netting its impact from local officials to high-ranking political leaders. Embezzlement, the fraudulent utilization of money or other assets entrusted to a person's care for the person's private gain, is a problem that can take place in government organizations by the officials reallocating the funds that are supposed to be used in public for their use (Subedi, 1970).

The paper is dedicated to studying historical corruption and patronage in Nepali politics. It vividly delineates the rise and persistence of these phenomena. The study is set up to critically examine specific historical moments and times to demonstrate how corruption and patronage have become integral parts of the political canvas.

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However, corruption and patronage have been the main issues in Nepali politics and have become historical facts. The kings were mighty during their rule in the monarchy, and thus, this was the cause of the patronage system (Acharya, 2017). During the Rana era (1846-1951), families ruling the state were involved in nepotism and corruption by enriching themselves with state resources (Sharma, 2004). However, although democracy changed after the Rana dynasty was overthrown, government corruption persists. King Mahendra introduced the Panchayat system (1960-1990), which strengthened centralized power and brought about more corruption during this period (Baral, 2000).

Although reforms eventually brought back multiparty democracy in 1990, corruption continued to pose a severe problem. Corruption and patronage became embedded as the civil war (1996–2006) between government forces and Maoist insurgents deepened animosity (Hutt, 2011). It was short-lived, albeit transitional — the 2006 People's Movement came with demands for abolishing the monarchy and having ourselves a lovely little republic instead. However, bribery and patronage still affect Nepali politics, undermining government trust and preventing effective governance (Transparency International, 2023). It will be a need of the hour for all stakeholders in Nepal's political arena to look into these deeply embedded issues.

Literature Review

Many academic articles have examined Nepalese corruption and the political impact of its patronage. For example, Acharya (2017) and Adhikari (2005) provide a great starting point for exploring patronage and corruption. They illustrate how patronage networks skew the allocation of resources and the accountability of institutions. In light of this, Kondos (2009) analyzes how patronage corruption and the erosion of egalitarian growth go hand in hand with the proliferation of public skepticism.

Intensive reviews of the complex corruption in Nepal have been provided by Adhikari (2016, 2020, 2021), Bhattarai (2018), and Dixit (2018, 2020). They examine how bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and cronyism undermine government institutions and service delivery.” Research with a focus on corruption includes the work by Chaudhary and Dixit (2022), who have examined the detrimental effects of nepotism and cronyism in the public sector; Adhikari (2020) and Karki (2022), who investigate specific corruption cases.

Gyawali (2019, 2021) highlights the impact of corruption on Nepal's growth. They discuss how corruption diverts resources, disincentivizes investment, and entrenches inequality, all inhibiting economic development and social progress. Crony capitalism stalled growth and left markets uncompetitive (Dahal, 2021, pp. 120–138; Karki, 2021, pp. 123–142)

Very few studies looked at governance issues other than corruption. Adhikari (2016) (civil society in good governance), Adhikari (2020), and Bhattarai (2018) analyze the negative impacts of political instability—transparency and accountability in governance: Nepal (Bhattarai, 2018).

This literature analysis sets the stage for understanding the social-political access by TPC that Nepal is more competent in patronage and access to corruption. This demands immediate and thorough reforms to build better institutions, enable transparency, and provide accountability for a more equitable and prosperous Nepal.

Research Method

This study utilizes a qualitative method to explore the complexities of political patronage and corruption in Nepal. It examines the history, causes, and effects of political patronage and corruption through an extensive literature review of books, journals, reports, and news articles.

It also explores the evolution of patronage and corruption since the mid-19th century, making parallels with the Rana and the Panchayat regimes under which the patronage networks flourished. It looks into different types of corruption, such as bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and cronyism, and their influence on the politics of Nepal.

Moreover, the study investigates socio-economic factors contributing to corruption, such as poverty, lack of transparency, and weak institutions. Additionally, it reviews civil society's and the media's functions in combating corruption.

This study uses a qualitative approach to advance human understanding of Nepal's political patronage and corruption quagmire. It contributes to the literature on corruption in the global south and its implications for governance and development.

Findings and Discussions

Corruption in Nepali Politics

Corruption is defined as using public office or resources for private benefits (Adhikari, 2016, pp. 171–194), and it remains a prevalent concern in Nepali politics. Such behavior is often seen in bribery, embezzlement, and patronage.

Bribery is giving or receiving something of value, such as cash or gifts, intending to influence political outcomes (Transparency International, 2023). Embezzlement is the wrongful taking of public funds for unreasonable advantage (Basnyat, 2013, pp. 1–14). On the other hand, patronage refers to allocating political goods, such as positions or contracts, based on personal loyalty rather than merit (Sharma, 2018, pp. 56–72). This encompasses nepotism, where family members or allies are favored in jobs, and cronyism, where 'friends are offered places of power that qualified individuals could otherwise fill while transparency and accountability suffer further losses' (World Bank, 2022).

Such corrupt practices have hampered the governance of Nepal, impacting its equitable development (UNDP, 2021). They destroy citizens' trust, dig the foundation of law and order, and bring an ambiance of corruption. This discourages investment, stifles economic growth, and helps to keep inequality alive.

Forms of Corruption in Political Patronage in Nepal

The pervasiveness of corrupt political patronage in Nepal has emerged as the primary challenge to its governance and development (Transparency International, 2023). These are the forms of corruption in Political Patronage in Nepal, such as bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, cronyism, and resource misallocation. One of the significant forms of corruption, bribery, usually occurs as a result of officials of the state who demand or receive a bribe to give a string or pull a card for the entrepreneurs, the authorities, or regulatory agencies (Adhikari, 2020, pp. 45–62). Such dishonesty shakes public trust, and time and resources are diverted from offering the necessary services that people require.

When government officials steal money for personal enrichment, this can be called embezzlement (Bhattarai, 2018, pp. 25-42). Through their politicians, these skims can occur from fake contracts, nonexistent workers, or phony projects and contribute to drawing state funds away from where they should be allocated, inhibiting socioeconomic growth. Chaudhary (2022) remarked that these factors are occasions of nepotism, where family and close relatives are appointed for ministries along with enticing contracts, irrespective of their capability. This undermines meritocracy and keeps suitable individuals from public service.

Dahal (2021). Cronyism occurs when politicians or other individuals collude and leverage government institutions to disadvantage competitors in the market for personal gain in circumstances involving prominent business elites and government officials. This breeds disparity and discourages fair competition.

According to Gyawali (2019), resource misallocation occurs when public funds are directed toward projects that benefit political purposes rather than the public good. This creates gaps in the infrastructure and slows progress in sectors like education and healthcare.

These are the two most pernicious forms of corruption within political patronage that must be tackled for progress in Nepal. Combating these activities and engaging in sustainable development requires multiple avenues of remedial action—implementing transparent and accountable governance structures, enforcing anti-corruption laws, and promoting a culture of integrity—which is necessary (Karki, 2023, pp. 34–51).

Drivers of Corruption in Nepali Politics

Corruption in the politics of Nepal is a multi-faceted problem that has been well-settled problems, due to systematic factors. One thing that stands out is weak institutions. However, post-war Nepal was politically volatile and marred with unstable governments that did not allow institutions to solidify or become more responsive to citizen demands (Adhikari, 2020, pp. 45–62). Such turbulence allows for a rampant environment of corruption.

It is even more troubling when paired with a lack of transparency. Nepali politics is typically a secretive affair with little access to the public and media (Bhattarai, 2018, pp. 12-28). Such opacity allows politicians and bureaucrats to indulge in corruption with little accountability.

Corruption lies at the root of impunity—and vice versa. Different reasons lead to the non-punishment of numerous instances of corruption, ranging from political patronage to an inundated slow legal mechanism (Ghimire, 2022, pp. 98–108). The absence of accountability signals that corrupt behavior will go unpunished and invites individuals to partake in those practices.

The socio-economic factors of Nepal also matter. Poverty is rampant in many of these regions, and access to critical services has often been denied or delayed, contributing to an environment where people see corruption as a means of survival and access to essential goods (Transparency International, 2023). The current state of the political landscape, defined by significant political polarization and violent internal conflict in recent history, makes it even more challenging to forge a common path toward consensus on comprehensive anti-corruption approaches (World Bank 2021). Moreover, external influences like trading across countries and neighboring countries' regaining power are related to corruption in Nepali politics (Ghimire, 2022, pp. 98–108).

Patronage Networks in Nepali Politics

Nepali politics has been intertwined with an informal system of patronage over the years, where power is determined through social relations and nepotism at all levels of public life (Adhikari, 2005, pp. 1–22). These symbiotic co-operations among the actors of favor exchange, most of the time between politicians, bureaucrats, and business owners, are actually nothing but different means to the same end. They are tools to seize power and control resources (Bista, 1991).

It is the capability of political PR (public relations) to gain support and loyalty and, at the same time, to eliminate opposition that politicians feed on (Sharma, 2017). This way, politicians and their political parties may deepen their connections with voters, thus increasing their chances of

re-election. The patronage system is advantageous since it is the pathway through which resources are distributed to like-minded allies. In this way, government supporters have created wagers on them. On the other hand, the executive can then consolidate their power by giving back to their fans and, in the process, collecting financial aid for themselves (Thapa, 2004). At the same time, this practice is often the source of the unequal distribution of available resources among certain groups, consequently preventing their development (World Bank, 2018).

A prominent form of patronage is for a politician to give development funds to their constituency. To increase their popularity and get re-elected, politicians are also known to allocate more resources towards their home regions, which could compromise allocation to other areas in greater need of services (Centre for Investigative Journalism Nepal, 2021). The other includes hiring government officials based on political connections rather than merit, weakening public institutions, and fueling corruption and inefficiency (Transparency International Nepal, 2022). Even schedules for appointing the relatives or close people of politicians in key posts are called patronage choke points that consolidate power to a limited circle (Nepotism, 2014; Khanal, 2013).

However, patronage networks are still prevalent in Nepali politics, which helps politicians use them as tools for retaining political office, support, and control of strategic assets. Although they assist politicians in entrenching their power, they lead to corruption, inequality, and detached governance efficiency (UNDP Nepal 2020). Reforming and increasing the transparency of these political processes is a critical way to tackle these issues and lay the groundwork for a fairer and more accountable Nepali political system.

Anti-Corruption Efforts in Nepal

Nepal has seen both advances and regressions in its fight against corruption. Having established bodies, such as the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA), has also been a step in the right direction. The role of the CIAA in combating corruption The CIAA is important for investigating corruption cases and removing public officials from their positions (Aryal, 2023, pp. 43–59). We have seen this with some high-profile people being convicted, so there is a potential for real anti-corruption.

Additionally, Nepal has advanced progress in transparency and accountability. The enactment of Right to Information (RTI) laws has given citizens a tool to access information about their governments (Shah, 2019, pp. 273–292). This encourages accountability and the people's oversight of the government.

However, challenges persist. Problems with law enforcement, political involvement, and a slow judicial system make it hard to prosecute corruption (Shah, 2019, pp. 273–292). It has created a widely held idea that the rich and powerful get away with it, undermining faith in the political system. This is also visible in the corruption scandals surrounding political leaders at all levels of government, exposing systemic weaknesses to prevent and address corruption (Aryal, 2023, pp. 43–59). Political patronage networks that afford politicians mutual support in dodging accountability are still the principal roadblock to efforts against corruption (Aryal, 2010).

Nevertheless, Nepal has achieved pioneering growth in anti-corruption institutions and laws. Suppose more meaningful and durable outcomes are to be generated. In that case, it is essential to continuously build on the existing efforts of institutions, ensure transparency, and reduce political interference from anti-corruption mechanisms (Shah, 2019, pp. 273–292).

The legacy of corruption and patronage in Nepal's politics is old. Such practices have created a culture where political loyalty precedes competence, jeopardizing an effective and accountable public institution (Tiwari, 2019, pp. 320–338).

The case of former House of Representatives Speaker Krishna Bahadur Mahara, who was implicated in the sexual assault of a female parliament worker in 2018, is an illustrative example. The case highlighted both gender-based violence and the abusive use of power with impunity from the political elite (Adhikari, 2018).

The Lalita Niwas land fraud, the most significant land corruption scandal of our time, was exposed in 2019. Many politicians and high-ranking officials purchased public property for less than a tenth of its market value (The Kathmandu Post, 2019). The lawsuit revealed endemic corruption in the land administration and threw the moral integrity of public property administrators into doubt.

That kind of corruption and favoritism carries real consequences. Corruption undermines economic development, destroys public confidence in the political system, and increases inequality (Transparency International, 2023). The immediate result of general discontent or frustration directed toward political leaders is political instability and social unrest (Khanal et al., 2018, pp. 39-58).

These all require broad governance reforms in and out of the party, stopping corruption and a change of political culture. To create a fair and equitable society, the government should strengthen the rule of law, transparency, accountability, and targeted meritocracy in the political system (World Bank, 2020).

Corruption in Nepali politics has hurt the country's internal matters and has external impacts, harming international relations and foreign aid. Nepal lost many natural resources and its international image to corrupt people involved in cross-border corruption, laundering the money they earned illegally in foreign banks (Bhattarai, 2018, pp. 12-28). Despite the origin of a substantial part of development projects in foreign aid, corruption scandals undermine donors' confidence in more aid and further delay development (Transparency International, 2023).

International organizations such as the UN and the World Bank should be considered key players to drive Nepal towards transparency and accountability. They support the government in anti-corruption, capacity-building, and governance programs. They can bridge the gap often caused by corrupt practices during elections and other forms of decision-making. At the global level, MNCs like EITI help participating governments and stakeholders understand the impact of resource opaqueness and contribute to its reduction. Moreover, they encourage sustainable natural resource use in communities. EITI also allows non-compliant firms to withdraw from the initiative and hence be subject to sanctions (EITI, 2023).

In Nepal, corruption is a big problem that stops the country from developing, making people mistrust the government. The main difficulties in fighting corruption are inadequate government systems and political interference. Much improvement is worried about. The rich and powerful are protected by their powerful connections and the lack of punishment for their crimes. They use their power to get what they want, which makes life unfair for everyone else, resulting in unequal access to important resources and a lack of respect for what the law says. To win the war against corruption, Nepal needs a significant overhaul; the institutions should be airtight, transparency must be pushed, and a culture of accountability must be fostered. There should be unity and dedication in solving this problem from all walks of life.

Corruption Trends in Nepal

Corruption trends in Nepal have been complex and constantly changing, with the perceived level of corruption increasing and decreasing during different periods. These trends have been greatly influenced by the frequent shifts in government and the country's political instability (Bhandari, 2024, pp. 16-24).

When power changes hands, corrupt practices typically increase as individuals and groups take advantage of the instability for personal gain (Transparency International, 2023). Such activity is known as "rent-seeking" and maybe bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, etc.

Despite this, there have also been periods when governments and anti-corruption organizations in Nepal have taken steps towards controlling corruption. While these efforts have brought limited success, especially in areas such as health and education, where initiatives to enhance transparency and accountability are underway (Adhikari, 2021, pp. 67–82), they have merely been stop-gap measures.

On the other hand, areas like land administration and law enforcement have long been subjected to corruption and remained a recurrent challenge (Bhandari, 2023, pp. 43-59). The success of these anti-corruption mechanisms differs by sector, indicating the need for context-specific interventions.

International assistance and donor countries have also affected Nepal's anti-corruption efforts. Reforms induced by these external pressures are valuable, but their sustainability relies on political will and institutional capacity within the domestic arena.

Measuring perceptions of corruption is, by nature, a subjective exercise that can mean that general trends are difficult to measure conclusively (Transparency International, 2017). Nepal has a complicated corruption landscape that requires close monitoring, research, and analysis.

Everyone needs to find a solution to the problem that has existed for a long time. The development and application of principles of good governance are assumed the role of a mechanism of the control of anti-corruption institutions, political stability, and others, such as institutions of Civil Society, by obeying and doing the duties they are called to do by the citizens; therefore, they are the other paramount constituents of the new institutional change.

Consequences of Corruption in Nepal

Nepali society and democracy have significantly suffered from corruption. Politically, it turns citizens away and limits support for leaders who can enact meaningful change (Transparency International, 2023). This imprecision in fund allocation does not allow for increased economic growth and the sedimentation of poverty. Moreover, corruption discourages foreign investment owing to concerns over transparency and accountability, which in turn hampers economic development (World Bank, 2022).

Corruption has broader implications, aiding the erosion of public confidence in institutions and leaders. Consequently, citizens also feel that their governments are self-serving and lack accountability, leading to the populace's disillusionment (Adhikari, 2020, pp. 45–62). Such loss of confidence can reduce social cohesion and deteriorate the relationship between the government and the people (Dixit, 2018).

Corruption undermines meritocracy, breeding nepotism, patronage networks, and political favoritism, jeopardizing social stability through unsavory practices (Thapa, 2021, pp. 1–14). Also, Political parties and leaders may place their interests above the country as a whole, which increases ethnic and regional fragmentation (Bhattachan, 2019, pp. 1–18).

Furthermore, corruption helps maintain the status quo of inequity, where the privileged can use their power to escape prosecution while disadvantaged communities pay a higher price (UNDP, 2023). Corruption has to be dealt with in Nepal. The most crucial ways to promote a more united and prosperous society in Nepal are redefining the anti-corruption measures, improving transparency, and ensuring accountability in public life. If public confidence is developed, economic growth is restored, policy differences are resolved successfully, and a more prosperous future is brought to the people of this tiny Himalayan country.

Corruption in Nepal is one of the system's main problems, leading to a loss of public trust, halting economic development, and causing social unrest. It weakens democratic institutions, deepens inequality, and is best faced with a united front to adopt transparency and be accountable for a more flourishing future.

Civil Society and Media in Addressing Corruption

The limitations exist in their functioning; civil society organizations (CSOs) and the media remain in the spotlight when it comes to exposing corrupt practices and favoritism in Nepal. CSOs are the main actors in highlighting corruption and patronage in Nepal. Public campaigns, workshops, and advocacy for transparency and accountability of government and the private sector further them (Adhikari, 2016, pp. 171–194). In addition, the participation of Transparency International Nepal and the National Vigilance Center has been highly appreciated not only in the examination of corruption but also in pulling people towards the anti-corruption movement (Transparency International, 2023). CSOs lack more resources and a negative stance from the government, which are significant obstacles to their activities.

Media

The media is a relentless instrument that focuses on corruption issues in Nepal. Media activism through investigative journalism is crucial, raising public outrage against corruption cases with calls for action (Khanal, 2018). For instance, Media such as Kantipur and The Himalayan Times have led the efforts (Shrestha, 2022). However, these media face limitations in reporting freely and independently due to self-censorship, threats, and financial pressure (Reporters Without Borders, 2023).

Effectiveness and Challenges

Civil society organizations (CSOs) and the media have made considerable efforts to raise awareness of and stimulate public debate over corruption in Nepal. They have put enough pressure on politicians to speak out against corruption. However, despite the new awareness, turning that into action and holding corrupt officials to account remains a challenge (Gyawali, 2021). In addition, corruption can be slow and inefficient via legal processes, significantly if political patronage networks often hinder attempts to bring corrupt actors to justice (World Bank, 2022).

Present Scenario of Corruption in Nepal

Nepal has been long undermined by the corruption problem, which has emanated in various sectors of the country (Transparency International, 2023). The most recent changes could involve more corruption, but Nepal has historically dealt with corrupt governance, law and order, and public services (Adhikari, 2016, pp. 171–194). Nepal's political chaos and fickle government rule have only worsened the corrupted situation (Bhattarai, 2018, pp. 12-28). The weak enforcement of rules and regulations and the absence of transparency and accountability mechanisms have made it quite challenging to control the evil practices of corruption (Dixit, 2020, pp. 1–15). Allegations of

corruption against the officials covered a wide range of offenses, from bribery and embezzlement to nepotism (Karki, 2022, pp. 1–12).

Countries have taken steps to deal with corruption: governments have set up anti-corruption agencies and adopted laws (Sharma, 2019, pp. 1–14). However, progress has been hampered by resource constraints, political meddling, and a culture of impunity (Thapa, 2021, pp. 1–12). Thus, today, there are some measures to tackle corruption, which remains a significant problem for Nepal in its development and governance (World Bank, 2023).

A serious problem in Nepal is corruption, deeply embedded in sectors. Notwithstanding the attempts of CSOs and the media to reveal and combat it, advancement is slow due to political interference, scarce resources, and a culture of impunity. Dealing with corruption requires a stronger political will, heightened accountability, and full-fledged plans for transparency and proper governance.

Future Research Implications

This review of the literature highlights potential avenues for future research.

Integrated Anti-Corruption Strategies: Research is also needed on the effectiveness of institutional anti-corruption systems, including law reform, capacity-building between authorities, and civil society activations such as law, institution, and civil society acting together to combat transgressions against the law. It would be helpful to glance at the synergies for various techniques from the perspective of designing anti-corruption initiatives.

Corruption Leveraged by Technology: As technology becomes more prominent in corrupt acts, emerging technologies such as blockchain and artificial intelligence (AI) to deal with corruption should be investigated, including applications for perpetrating/combating corruption offenses.

Corruption Dynamics by Geography: Corruption Dynamics by Geography is a broad subfield that could be filled out over decades. Comparing Christopher's national and sectoral comparisons will help arrive at more particular corruption drivers, which could yield better-targeted responses.

Dig deeper into Media, Civil Society, and Anti-Corruption: A more nuanced exploration of the intersections between media and civil society-eradication efforts is critical. A closer look at how traditional and digital media can influence public perception and spur citizen engagement may improve advocacy tactics.

The Gaps in Corruption Research

Although research on corruption is enlightening, it provides several opportunities for future research. However, the nature of technology often develops rapidly toward blockchain, cryptocurrencies, and particularly AI, which requires us to understand better how any given technology will be used and whether it can help combat corruption. Likewise, research concentrates on formal economies, neglecting miles and miles of light terrain about where corruption exists in informal economic structures.

More research is required concerning psychological and behavioral approaches to corruption. This involves knowing what motivates corrupt people, how and why they make their decisions, and those pushing back against corruption and continuing to improve sophisticated approaches to capture corruption, most notably in environments characterized by opacity. This research must be accompanied by attempts to collect more active and disaggregated data to give a clearer picture of this multifaceted challenge.

Recommendations for Future Research

The Relation Digitization and Corruption: Learn how digitization has contributed to or mitigated corruption in Nepali politics. This research should examine how adopting e-governance initiatives reduces or increases corruption risk. It also looks at the promise of blockchain and AI technologies to facilitate government accountability.

Local-Level Corruption: Review of local-level corruption in Nepal, with an analysis of the extent to which patronage networks exert influence. Explore the political economy of decentralization and its implications for corruption and audit at the local level – how do we improve accountability and transparency?

Investigative Journalism and Whistle Blowing: Analyse the status of whistleblower protections before highlighting information in Nepal. Discuss how the media exposes corruption, including challenges that journalists face. Moreover, it explores using digital platforms to support investigative journalism and engage citizens in anti-corruption.

Conclusion

The review of extant literature has used discourse on the complexity of corruption to highlight how deeply embedded and far-reaching its effects are; nothing that these interconnections become pervasive, creating a new order at the national scale. Corruption can take myriad forms, from bribery and embezzlement to nepotism and patronage networks, a complicated issue for any nation. However, those in developing economies such as Iraq struggle even more against it, which slows economic growth, reduces faith in the integrity of government institutions, and worsens inequality between citizens. Combating the pervasive influence of corruption requires international legal frameworks and a degree of cooperation scattered around the globe.

For example, Successful anti-corruption strategies must be multifaceted, involving legal reforms, institutional strongholds, active civil society, and vigilant media. Dealing with this transboundary threat requires international cooperation via treaties and agreements. Moreover, it highlights a double-edged sword of technology—on the one hand, a proven tool for corruption and, on the other, an innovative weapon to combat this corruption index.

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