# Exploring Public Opinion on Corruption: Insight across Sectors and Society

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**ABSTRACT:** *Corruption is an exploitation of given responsibility for personal gain and can take many forms, including bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, favoritism, and abuse of power. Corruption is not limited to a single area; it affects various sectors such as government, business, law enforcement, education, and healthcare, harming both the functioning of these institutions and citizens' daily lives. This study seeks to collect public opinion on corruption, providing insights into many industries and groups of society. The study aimed to examine public awareness of corruption and its various expressions such as bribery, embezzlement, abuse of power, nepotism, and fraud. It also examines the perception of corruption in important sectors such as government, business, healthcare, education, law enforcement, and judiciary. The study uses the quantitative approach to evaluate how corruption affects economic stability, social well-being, and government. A special focus is placed on public attitude towards corruption and the perceived effectiveness of existing anti-corruption efforts. By collecting a wide variety of societal perspectives, the research aims to reveal gaps in awareness, trust, and accountability, as well as to make policy recommendations targeted at increasing transparency and public participation in the campaign against corruption.*

## I.INTRODUCTION

Corruption is defined as *'the abuse of entrusted power for private gain' (Transparency International).*
Corruption is a global issue that inhibits growth, destroys belief in public institutions, and affects the foundations of democracy and good administration. In various cultures, corruption has been so deeply rooted in the institutional framework that it is regarded as a necessary means of obtaining basic services or furthering one's interests. The generalization of unethical practices risks social fairness, economic progress, and institutional integrity. While governments and organizations have launched several anti-corruption campaigns and policies, the effectiveness of such attempts is strongly dependent on public awareness, perception, and involvement.
Understanding how the public perceives corruption—its presence, causes, effects, and readiness to expose or oppose it—is critical for developing effective prevention tactics. Public opinion acts as both a mirror and a catalyst: it reflects the level of corruption in a society and, when stimulated, can promote reform and justice.

**Various forms of corruption**
Various types of corruption are defined by The Global Infrastructure Anti-corruption Centre (GIACC) and they are,
***Bribery*** is where a benefit is offered, given, requested, or accepted with the intention of inducing a person to perform a function improperly, or being a reward for performing a function improperly.
***Extortion*** is where someone demands money or other benefit in return for not inflicting personal harm or damage.
***Fraud*** is when a person deceives another person to gain some financial or other advantage.
***A cartel*** is where two or more organizations secretly collude in relation to bidding for contracts or pricing of equipment, services or materials.
***Abuse of power*** is where a person in public office or a position of trust misuses her/his power so as to benefit herself/himself or someone else.
***Embezzlement*** is where a person misappropriates funds that she/he must safeguard.

*Money-laundering* is where a person deals with cash or assets knowing or suspecting that they, or the original source of funds, were obtained by criminal activity.

**Significance of this study**

This study is important in recognizing and handling the ongoing issue of corruption from the perspective of the people. While several anti-corruption measures have been launched both internationally and locally, their success is generally dependent on public support, awareness, and participation. This study examines public opinion to determine how corruption is seen in several areas, including government, business, law enforcement, and education, and which organizations are most feared or viewed as vulnerable to corrupt practices. The study additionally provides insight into the public's understanding of various forms of corruption, the perceived effect on societal well-being, governance, and economic stability, and the social and psychological barriers that hinder people from reporting corrupt actions. Policymakers, anti-corruption agencies, and civil society organizations can use these insights to create more informed and targeted awareness campaigns, preventive strategies, and public engagement programs.

**Statement of the problem**

Although several laws, regulations, and institutional systems aimed at eliminating corruption in India, remain across multiple sectors, affecting governance, growth, and public trust. While corruption is widely accepted, there is limited empirical evidence on the public's level of awareness, perception of sector-specific corruption, and attitudes toward reporting and prevention. A better understanding of how citizens perceive corruption, particularly in sectors such as government, business, healthcare, education, and law enforcement, is critical for developing effective anti-corruption policies. This study aims to address the space by investigating public opinion on the nature, prevalence, and impact of corruption on societal well-being, economic stability, and governance.

## II.RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

➢ To study the level of awareness about corruption and its various forms among the public.
➢ To analyze the public perception of corruption across different sectors, including government, business, enforcement, and education sectors.
➢ To examine the impact of corruption on societal well-being, economic stability, and governance.
➢ To explore public attitudes toward reporting and prevention of corrupt practices.

## III.METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes the quantitative approach. A survey was conducted in online and offline mode by using standardized questionnaires designed to examine the public awareness of corruption. In the online mode google form is shared with the respondent and in offline mode the printed question paper is distributed to the individual with the consent. The sample of this study is the public which includes government workers, private workers, the general public, students, businessmen, and women. The random sampling technique was employed to select the sample. The 100 collected samples were analyzed using IBM SPSS.

## IV.FINDINGS

*Demographic information*
- The respondents of this study ranging in from the **18-56 years**, with the majority **(64%)**.
- In terms of gender distribution, **57%** of the participants were **male**, while **43%** were **female**.
- Regarding educational qualifications, the maximum number of respondents is **postgraduates (39%)**.
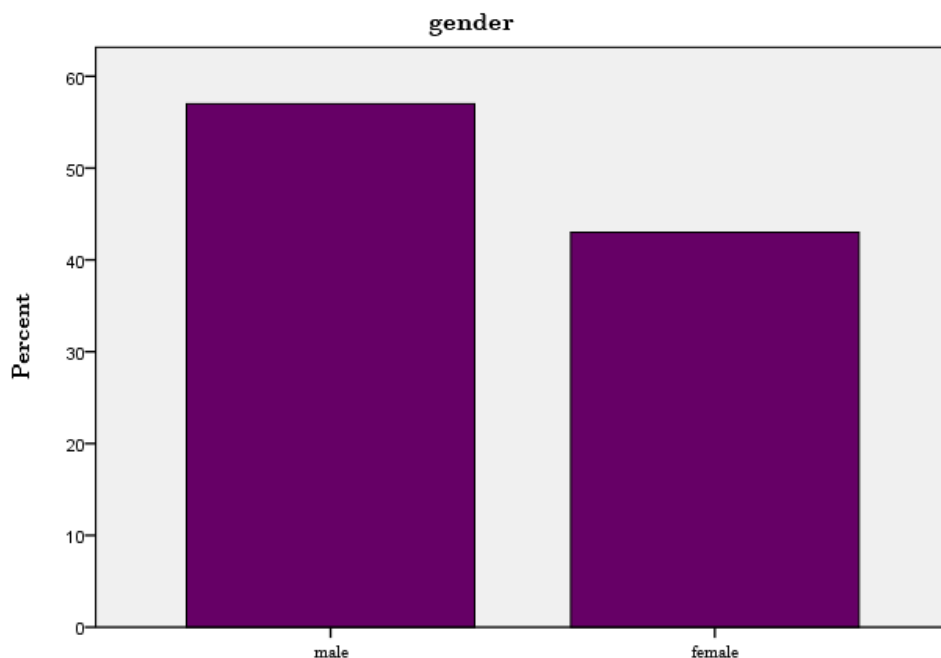- In respect of occupation, the majority of respondents identified as **students (46%).**

**gender**



Table 1. Age of respondents
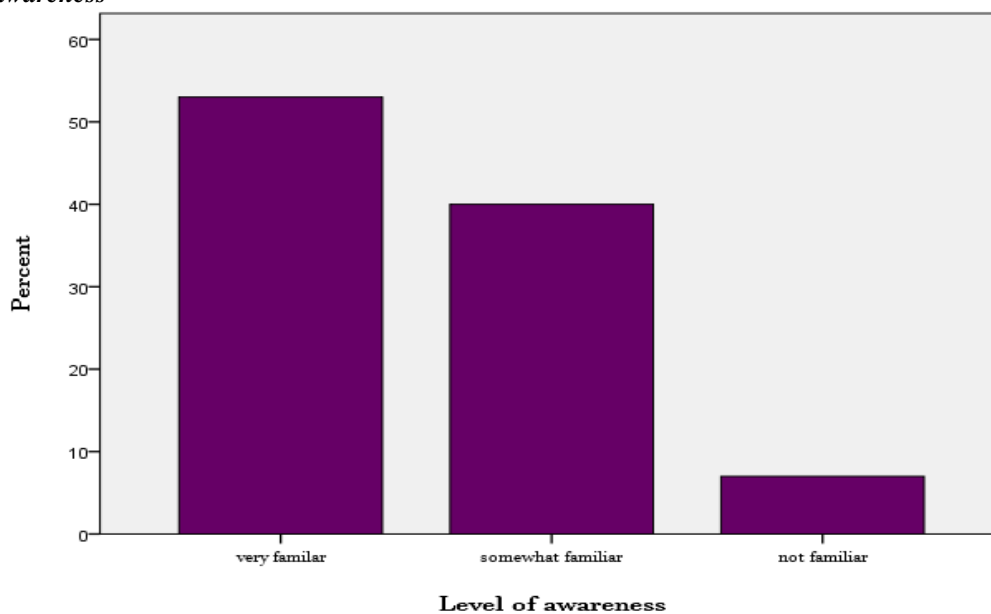
*Level of awareness*



Table 2. Level of Awareness

**53%** of the respondents were **very familiar** with corruption, **40%** of the respondents were **somewhat familiar** followed by **7%** of participants were **not familiar** with corruption. Furthermore, the majority of respondents **93% of the public** were **aware of corruption.**
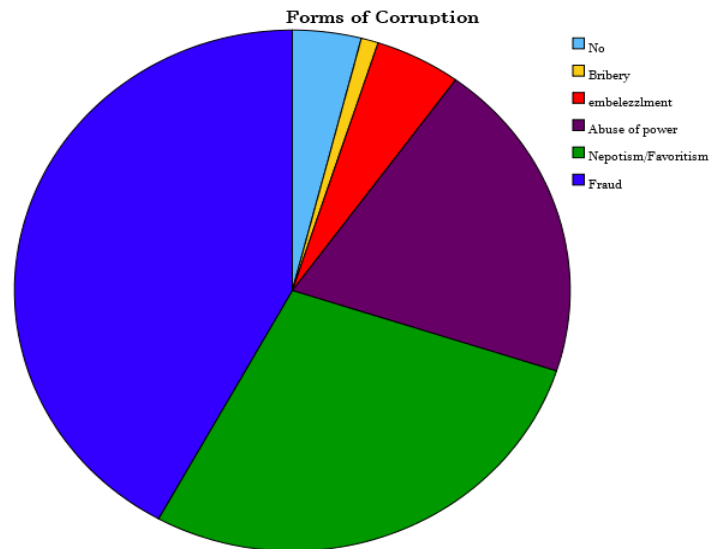
**Forms of corruption**



*Figure 2. forms of corruption*

The awareness in all **the five types of corruption** which include bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, fraud, and abuse of power has a **majority of 42%** followed by the **awareness** of **four types of corruption is 28%.**

**Corruption across various sectors**

|  | Mean Rank |
|---|---|
| government | 2.61 |
| business | 3.12 |
| Law | 3.46 |
| healthcare | 3.88 |
| education | 3..88 |
| judiciary | 4.07 |

Table 1. Rank of corruption across various sectors

The **government sector** (Mean = 2.61) was view as the **most corrupt**, followed by **business (Mean = 3.13) and law enforcement (Mean = 3.47)**. **education and healthcare (both Mean = 3.88)**. the **judiciary sector** was view as the **least corrupt (Mean = 4.07).**

| N | 100 |
|---|---|
| Chi-Square | 44.281 |
| Df | 5 |
| Asymp. Sig. | .000 |

Table 2. Friedman Test

This test revealed a statistically significant difference in perceived corruption levels across various sectors, $\chi^2$ **(5) = 44.281, p <0.001**.

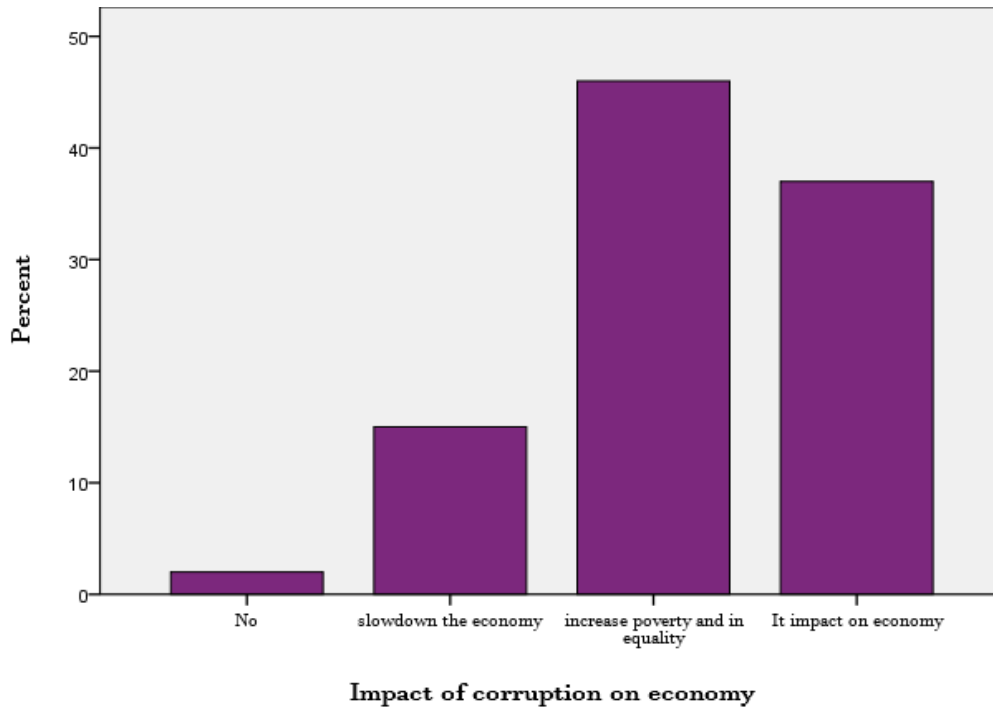*Impact of corruption on Economic stability*
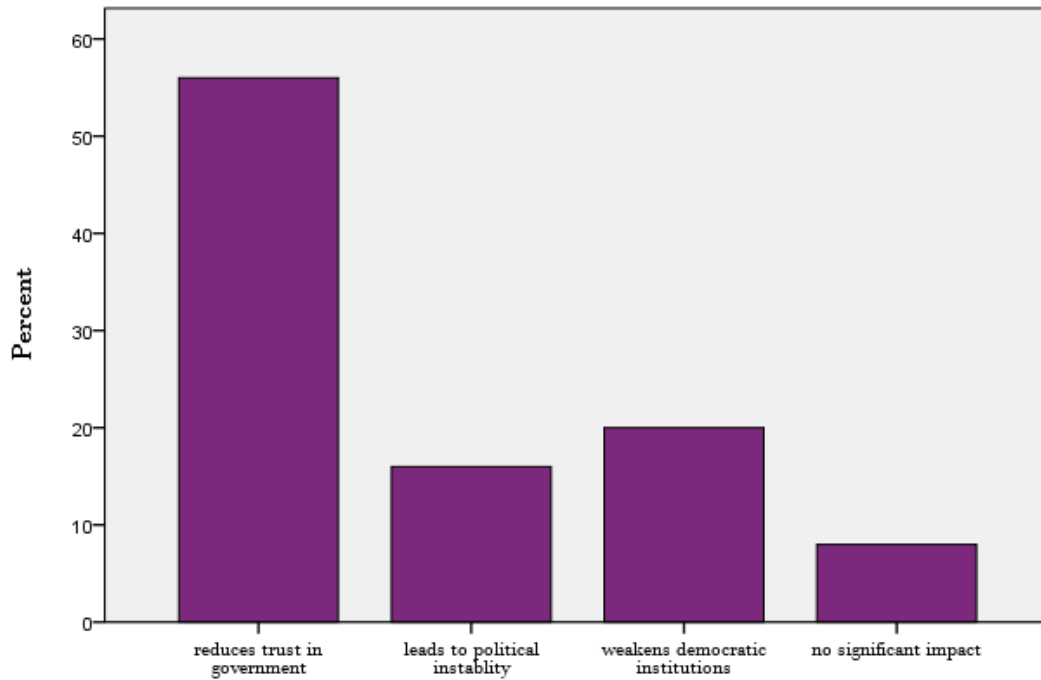


Figure 3. Corruption affects the economy

**48%** of the people were reported that corruption **increase the poverty and inequality** followed by it also **impact the economy (42%)** and the corruption lead **economy slow down (6%).**

| | | slowdown | poverty |
|---|---|---|---|
| Slowdown economy growth | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .370** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .001 |
| | N | 100 | 100 |
| Increases poverty and inequality | Pearson Correlation | .370** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .001 | |
| | N | 100 | 100 |

Table 3. Correlation between economy slowdown and increase poverty and in equality

Corruption is contributing to an economic slowdown and increasing poverty and inequality. The **p-value is 0.001** which is less than 0.05 so the correlation is **statistically significant at r=0.370\*\***
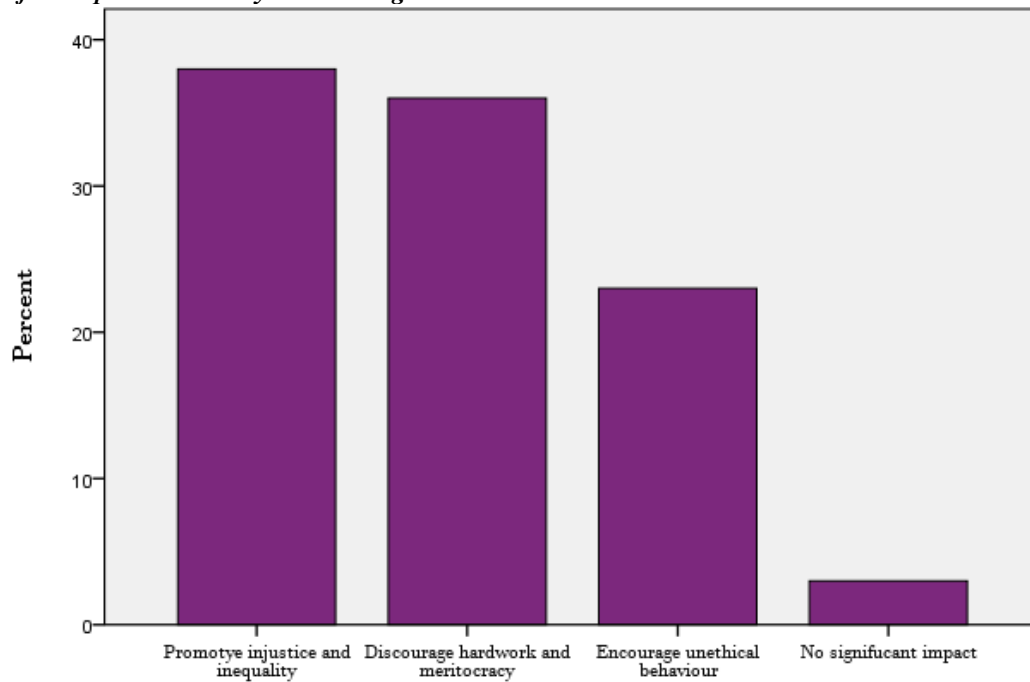
***Impact corruption on governance and public trust.***



Figure 4. Impact of corruption on governance and public trust

The maximum number of the public said that **corruption reduces the public trust in government (56%),** and it **weakens the democratic (20%)**

***Impact of corruption on society's well-being***



Figure 5. Impact of corruption on societal well-being

Corruption **promotes the injustice and inequality (38%)** as well as it **discourages hard work and meritocracy (36%)** and it also **encourage the unethical behavior (23%).**
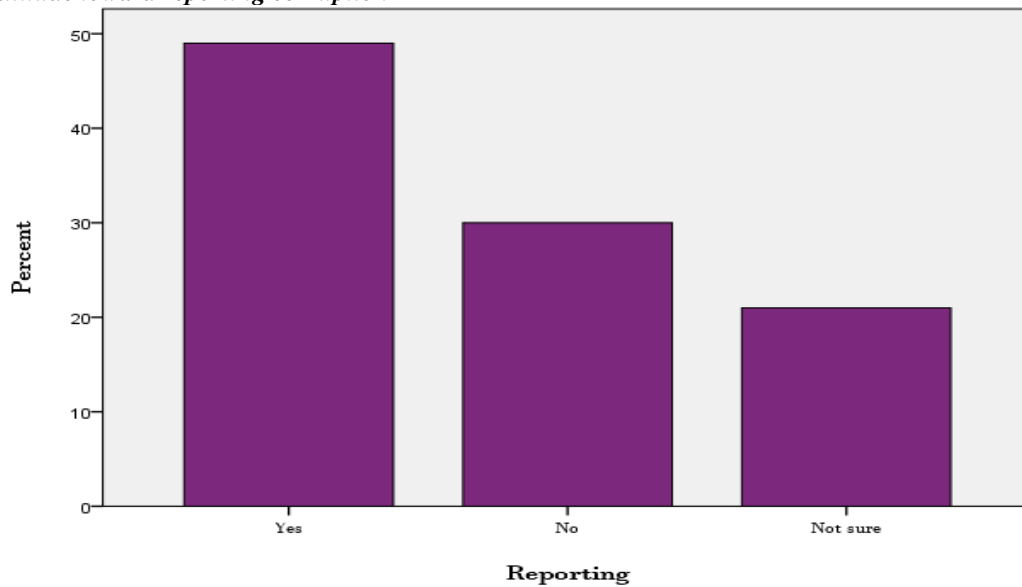
*Public attitude toward reporting corruption*

Figure 6. Public attitudes towards reporting corruption

Nearly half of them **reported corruption (49%),** and the people who **did not report** the case of corruption **(30%).**

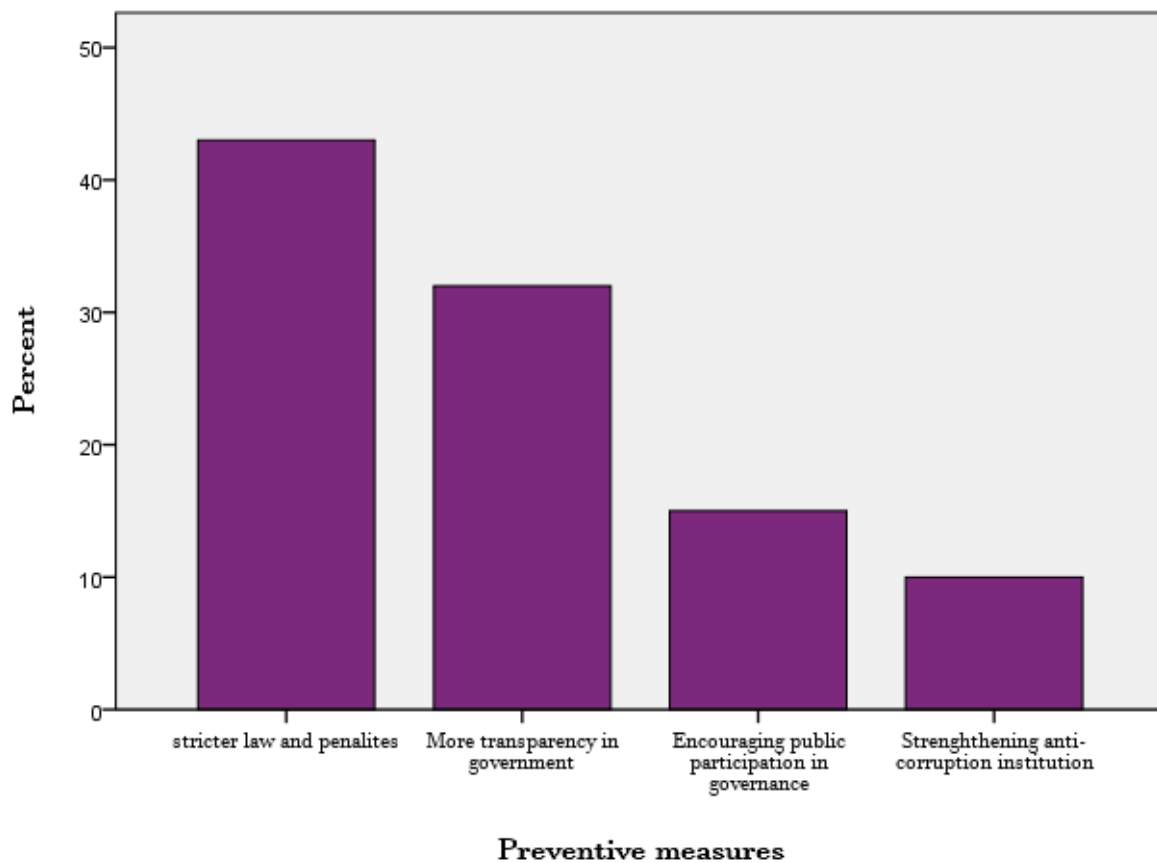*Public attitudes toward the prevention of corruption*

Figure 7.  Preventive measures against corruption

For preventing corruption, the maximum number of publics said that the **law and penalties must be strict (43%)** which is followed by the **government must be more transparent (32%).** Additionally, corruption can be prevented by **encouraging the public participants in governance (15%).**

## V.DISCUSSION

Corruption remains an epidemic challenge for government and various organizations, it causes the loss of public trust. It weakens democracy, and the rules of law and suppresses economic growth. In developing countries such as India, where administrative delays, political influence, and a lack of transparency continue, corruption is seen to be deeply established in many industries. This survey seeks to investigate public opinion on corruption, with a focus on the level of awareness, sector-specific opinion, and attitudes toward reporting and prevention.

This study provides a distinctive insight into public perception on corruption which include the level of awareness, corruption in various sector, the impact of corruption on economic stability, governance and public trust, and societal well-being. Additionally, this study focused on the public reporting attitudes and preventive measures toward the corruption.

The findings of this study demonstrate that a vast majority of respondents are aware of corruption (93%) with 70% of the respondents aware of more than four forms of corruption such as bribery, nepotism, embezzlement, favoritism, abuse of power, and fraud. This paper also found that the government sector is the most corrupt sector followed by the business, law, and judiciary is the least corrupt. A significant number of respondents stated that corruption promotes inequality and injustice in societal well-being.

In this study, the awareness level of the public is 93% which is consistent with the findings of the Transparency International India (TII) 2021 report, which states that public awareness of corruption is constantly increasing, particularly in metropolitan and semi-urban areas. Likewise, the Centre for Media Studies (CMS-India Corruption Study 2022) discovered that more than 85% of respondents understood what constitutes corrupt behavior and could identify multiple forms of it, which is consistent with the 70% of respondents in the study were aware of more than four forms of corruption.

According to the Lokpal Annual Report and the Central Vigilance Commission, the majority of complaints received in a year involve public personnel and government departments, particularly in tax collection, public procurement, and administrative services. This supports the finding of this study that the government is the most corrupt sector. The business sector placed second in the rank of corruption which is parallel to the findings of KPMG India's Anti-Bribery and Corruption Survey 2021, which indicated issues related to unethical business dealings, influencing, and collaboration with regulatory authorities. The judiciary is the least corrupt which is consistent with public trust statistics from DAKSH's People's Survey on Judiciary (2021), which discovered that, despite long-term delays, a major section of the public still regards the judicial system as fair and unbiased. However, issues regarding delayed justice and access still exist and should not be neglected.

Education and healthcare sectors earned moderate level of corruption. The corruption in these two service-oriented sectors reflecting worries about unethical practices such as admissions favoritism, under-the-table payments, or purchase scams. The judiciary shows lowest mean score which indicates popular trust in legal institutions to function as checks on executive and executive branch authority.

The study found that the majority of respondents reported corruption increases inequality and injustice, which supports the conclusions of the World Bank and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) publications. These investigations have frequently stated that corruption disproportionately impacts those in poverty, diverts public resources away from vital programs, and results in unequal access to rights and opportunities.

The study found that the majority of the respondent feels that the corruption leads injustice, inequality, increase poverty, weaken the democracy and loss of public trust. This opinion is supported by a World Bank (2020) examination indicated that corruption expands wealth gap and diverts resources away from public welfare programs. Similarly, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2019) claimed that corruption disproportionately impacts underprivileged people and reinforces social and economic differences.

Additionally, the study focused on public understanding and willingness to report against corruption. Although most participants had a general understanding of corrupt practices, the findings revealed low levels of reporting, owing to fear of retaliation, a lack of trust in the system, or the idea that reporting would result in no action. This highlights the imbalance between awareness and action, which indicates the need for greater safety protections and awareness initiatives. Lack of trust in authorities, fear of retaliation, and belief that nothing will change are the factors that play a major role in contributing to preventing the public from reporting corruption.

Overall, the findings add to a better understanding of how corruption is seen in various aspects of society. This information is critical for policymakers, governance authorities, and civil society organizations as they make targeted initiatives to decrease corruption and enhance transparency.

## VI. RECOMMENDATION

➢ Governments and public sector institutions should implement greater transparency laws, such as mandated public disclosure of transactions, transparent procurement processes, and digital record-keeping. Periodic audits and impartial assessments should be required in all high-risk industries, including government procurement, healthcare, and education.

➢ Enacting and properly executing whistleblower protection laws is critical for encouraging the reporting of unethical behavior. Creating anonymous and safe avenues for reporting corruption can greatly increase public participation in anti-corruption efforts.

➢ Public awareness efforts should be established through the media, schools, and community initiatives to educate people about what constitutes corruption and how to report it. Citizens should be educated on their rights, as well as the existing anti-corruption bodies and legislative provisions.

➢ Introducing integrity and morality education at the school, college, and employee training levels, particularly in public service, law enforcement, and healthcare, can help to foster an honest and socially responsible culture. Sector-specific training programs should be created to teach employees how to reject and report fraudulent activities.

➢ Strong anti-corruption authorities such as the Lokpal, Vigilance Commissions, and CVC must have the autonomy, resources, and legal authority to fight against corruption without political intervention. Rapid investigation and prosecution have been essential for regaining public trust.

➢ E-governance tools, digital payments, and online service portals (such as licenses, certifications, and bill payments) all help to reduce interactions between individuals and bribery. Encourage the use of blockchain and AI-powered monitoring tools in sectors such as finance for the public, procurement, and administration.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The government sector is considered the most corrupt, followed by the business, law, healthcare, education, and the judiciary as the least corrupt. The findings also show that there is a high degree of public awareness about corruption but a low level of reporting, due to fear of revenge, a lack of trust in authority, and a belief that nothing will change. This study reveals a considerable gap between awareness and action, implying that efforts to prevent corruption must go beyond awareness-raising to include institutional reforms, better legal safeguards, and active public participation. Combating corruption necessitates a concerted effort from the public, private, and civil society sectors to develop a culture of honesty, responsibility, and transparency. Furthermore, this study extends our understanding of how corruption is perceived across sectors and lays the groundwork for targeted interventions and policy reforms. Future studies can investigate the core causes of sector-specific corruption and assess the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts across time.

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