
NORMALIZATION OF CORRUPTION IN INDIA: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF ANTI-CORRUPTION LAWS IN INDIA

Sandhiya. V, B. Com., LL.B. (Hons), Tamil Nadu Dr. Ambedkar Law University, School of Excellence in Law, Chennai, India.

Ms. T. Vaishali, B.A., B.L (Hons), L.L.M. Assistant Professor of Law (Department of Criminal Law and Criminal Justice Administration) The Tamil Nadu Dr. Ambedkar Law University, School of Excellence in Law, Chennai, India.

ABSTRACT

Corruption as a crime has become a regularized action around the globalized world. As the world is experiencing a wide range of advancements with AI technology, the phenomenon of corruption pulls back the country's economic growth. In crony capitalism, billionaires' capital is hoarded, which fosters corruption. This paper navigates the normalization of Corruption in India, which investigates the roots, evolution, and the major determining factors that contribute towards corruption. The Empirical study has been conducted by collecting a survey on 102 respondents from different age comprises public servants, private, and other occupation to understand and find out the perspective and beliefs of the citizens and reality towards social acceptance and tolerance of bureaucratic corruption. This study strengthens the political influence and bureaucratic discretion that lay down the path to systematic failure. Notably, it delineates the effectiveness of the implementation of the Anti-Corruption Laws, which serve as a backbone to eradicate the crisis in the economy.

Keywords: Normalization, Social Acceptance, Corruption, Anti-Corruption, Bribery.

INTRODUCTION:

Corruption comes from the never-ending greed. The fight for a corruption-free, ethical society will have to be fought against this greed and replace it with a 'what can I give' spirit. -Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam¹ Eventually, the people have turned a blind eye to the corruption, which is classified as white-collar crime and economic crime.

However, it has emerged as a pervasive social phenomenon across societies worldwide, not confined to India. With respect to India, evolution has not begun from the 19th century, from the Vedic age to the British Raj; it has prevailed in different forms, such as favors to the priests, embezzlement, tax evasion, and bribery in the Mughal Period. Kautilya's "Arthashastra" stands out as a pioneering text, offering systematic anti-corruption strategies, many of which are still relevant².

The deep roots of corruption stem from the way of bureaucratic power, domination of capitalist interest, crony capitalism, and weak enforcement of laws, creating a system where corruption is normalized as a method in everyday life. This normalization of the Corruption is backed by the justification of speeding up the work, time saving, low wages, greed, influence of politicians, etc.

When there is a systematic necessity to accept the bribe, corruption, or any form as a necessary tool to attain a basic service in a quick manner, normalization of corruption becomes socially acceptable for survival in this corrupt society. Moreover, even if it is deeply embedded in the social structure, the social tolerance and resistance to corruption are inevitable factors for banality.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

1. To determine the roots and underlying factors contributing to the normalization of corruption in India from the deviation of crime.
2. To analyze the extent of social acceptance and resistance towards bureaucratic corruption.

¹ A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, quoted in Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, VIGILANCE QUOTES (last visited Jan. 26, 2026).

² Shalini Bharti and Rochna Mittal, The history of corruption in India, 7(6) IJPSG 26-28, 2025.

3. To find out the people's perspective and attitude towards the banality of corruption in India.
4. To focus mainly on the phenomenon of the effectiveness of the implementation of Anti-corruption laws and Institutions in India.
5. To criticize the crony capitalism and political corruption that influence the normalization of corruption in India.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

- I. ***Corruption, Normalization, and the Procrustean Bed: India's Grave Crisis (2025)***. This study relies on the theories of Michel Foucault and Theodor Adorno. Research study rejects the corruption from the view of deviation from the norm, but it is normative. It argues that the legal definition of corruption is insufficient. Through the phrase of the Procrustean Bed, it examines the power, culture, and media influence on corruption. It also highlights the statistical records from Transparency International and the Global Economic Freedom to show India's Position³.
- II. ***Frank Vogl, Waging War on Corruption (2012)***. The Author of this book highlights the Arab Spring movement, which is considered to be a seminal event of corruption. It highlights the devastating effects of corruption on global stability, poverty reduction, and democracy. The book also examines the shaping solution to curb corruption in the world. It points out that the G20 Agenda and Transparency International Conference survey report comprised the leaders' discussion on various aspects, such as Corruption is a crime against humanity, Corruption is an economic crime, and against taxpayers everywhere. It also focused on the victims of corruption consists business victims, victims in leading industrial countries, and political villains.
- III. ***Fritz Heimann Mark Pieth, Confronting Corruption:*** This book chronicles the global anticorruption steps taken since the movement advanced after the Cold War. It defines corruption, documents its effects, discussed the initiatives that changed public perception. It critically analyzed the anticorruption programs and treaties that have accomplished and, most importantly, discussed the OECD role, UNDOC, G20, and International Chamber of

³Corruption, Normalization, and the Procrustean Bed: India's Grave Crisis (2025)

Commerce (ICC). Finally, the need for action for curbing corruption is described, including the different strategies for different Countries based on their stronger and weaker democratic institutions.

- IV. ***Jon S.T. Quah, The normalization of corruption: why it occurs and what can be done to minimize it (2015).*** The study analyzes major anti-corruption approaches and their limitation of it. The research study addressed the CPI 2014 rankings of the speed money phenomenon in public agencies and the most corrupt institutions. It also investigates the common causes of corruption, such as low services of civil servants, red tape, low risk of detection and punishment, cultural values and practices, difficult governance environment. This study compares the effectiveness of corruption control in Singapore, Hong Kong SAR, China, and Georgia.
- V. ***Kalapana Bhardwaj, Corruption in Indian Politics: Roots, Impacts and Mitigation Strategies (2014).*** This study examines the socio-economic factors, governance structures, government ramifications, and cultural aspects of corruption. The Author assesses that effectively implemented mitigation measures have been implemented in an Indian state, and significant obstacles to prevent the adoption of changes to combat corruption. The article concludes by urging a unified and multifaceted strategy that includes institutional development, public awareness campaigns, legal reforms, and societal change in the never-ending battle against political corruption in India.
- VI. ***Sunil Sondhi, Combating Corruption in India (2000).*** This Study aims to emphasize the role of civil society in curbing the emerging issue of Corruption in India. Hypothesis highlights the role of civil society in contributing to major rules towards preventing corruption, which suggests that the development of society is not only a product of political leaders. This study adopts the combined empirical and analytical method, which integrates the worldwide database, in-depth country analysis, and country action program.
- VII. ***Sandip Sukhtankar et al. Corruption in India: Bridging Research Evidence and Policy Options (2015).*** The study examines the bridge gap between media attention, policy options, and academic evidence on corruption. It also observes the challenges and finds that less evidence supports transparency, information, and community-based action to prevent corruption. This study suggests various legislative agendas to combat corruption,

such as the Right to Service and Public Procurement bills. It strongly recommends the implementation of the law rather than remain in paper.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. Whether the public perceives corruption in society as a normal practice rather than a crime?
2. What is the public attitude towards giving and receiving of bribery in society?
3. Which sector is the highest corrupted department in public services in India?
4. Whether the social acceptance and tolerance of the public leads to unreportable corruption and a lack of legal consequences?
5. How often are citizens aware of Anti-Corruption Laws in India, and their perception towards the punishment to deter crime?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The research study adopts the Quantitative empirical research, which used the questionnaire method to collect the public perception towards corruption. The Study has collected the primary data in the questionnaire through Google Forms. This study was conducted on 102 persons across all age groups in and around Tamil Nadu State in India. This study also adopts secondary data for a more accurate study. Reliable sources are books, journals, Articles, newspaper Articles, Statistical Reports, and reports of International Institutions.

DEFINITION OF CORRUPTION: “Corruption” is actually not a term of art. It is rather bound umbrella term for an entire field of concrete offences such as bribery, graft, embezzlement, etc.⁴. The term Corruption is not legally defined in the Prevention of Corruption Act (Amendment), 2018. Implicitly, it has been stated u/s.7 that any public servant who obtains or accepts or attempts to obtain an undue advantage with the intent to cause public duty dishonestly shall constitute an offence of public servant being bribed. It shall be punishable with not less than 3 years, which can extend to seven years, and also a fine.⁵. The Amendment

⁴ Fritz Heimann Mark Pieth, *Confronting Corruption- Past concerns, Present Challenges, and Future Strategies* 31, Oxford (Dec 2017).

⁵ Prevention of Corruption Act (Amendment),2018, S.7.

2018 of the PCA defines Undue Advantage under S. 2(d) as any gratification other than legal remuneration, not being limited to gratifications measurable in monetary terms.⁶

The definition lacks the broad spectrum in consonance with the *UN Convention on Corruption*, and even the term undue advantage has been defined in the Amendment Act. UNCAC encompasses a broad spectrum of offences under the umbrella of Corruption such as

- Bribery and embezzlement in the public sector;
- Bribery and embezzlement in the private sector;
- Trading in influence;
- Abuse of functions;
- Illicit enrichment;
- Money-laundering;
- Concealment; and
- Obstruction of justice⁷.

The Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, doesn't encompass these forms of corruption in the Anti-Corruption Legislation. It has focused only on the aspect of public sector bribery, and neglects the Private Sector Bribery. Moreover, it fails to address crony capitalism, lobbying, and other newer forms of corruption. Anti-Corruption Legislation doesn't differentiate between bureaucratic corruption and political corruption, which seems to be the same punishment, even for high officials and grassroots-level administrators.

The Private Sector Corruption Bill has been pending before the Parliament. The corruption should need a broad definition to address every kind of offence in its form in order to prevent from unreportable crime.

⁶ Prevention of Corruption Act (Amendment), 2018, S.2(d).

⁷ Corruption - Definition and Facts, United Nation Indonesia, 21 Jan 2026 at <https://indonesia.un.org/en/308676-corruption-definition-and-facts?>

A. Corruption - Economic Crime, White Collar Crime:

When corruption raises the cost of goods and services, as it always does, it damages the living Standards and undermines economic growth and the functioning of market forces. In July 2011, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an international official organization, published a report. The most Prominent economic effect of corruption seems to be diversion of money from the governmental budget to expenses with lower multiplier effects. If money that is diverted as an investment in economic development or poverty is diverted as a result of embezzlement or private spending, it will, in most cases, incur a transfer towards expenditures with a multiplier effect, such as imported Hammers instead of medicines in the hospitals, or foreign fittings in newly built middle-class city mansions instead of School materials.⁸

It is classified as an Economic Crime, even the petty corruption or high-level corruption, which drastically affects the GDP of the Country when the money flows have been diverted to oligarchs' wealth. As per the *Global Economic Crime Survey, 2024*, India stands below the benchmark of the global average of 41%. It reports that 59% of the Indian Organizations experienced an economic fraud, which is 7% higher than the global average. Significantly, it has been noted that 33% of the financial crimes are related to Corruption and bribery⁹. 34% of the companies didn't conduct anti-corruption audits of third-party vendors, a serious concern remains in force to identify corruption. With regard to White Collar Crime, it was coined by *Edwin Sutherland* during the presidential address in the American Sociological Society in 1949. Sutherland defined white collar crime as "*Crimes committed by a person of respectability and high social status in the course of his occupation.*" These crimes typically include fraud, tax evasion, insider trading, corruption, and money laundering¹⁰.

NORMALIZATION OF CORRUPTION IN INDIA

Normalized Corruption:

Beyond crime, it has become a systematic adoption of bribery in a regular lifestyle to satisfy

⁸ Frank Vogl, *Waging War on Corruption* 29, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers (2012).

⁹ 59% of Indian organizations faced financial or economic fraud in the past 24 months where procurement fraud emerged as the top threat: PwC survey, PWC (2024) at <https://www.pwc.in/press-releases/2024/59-of-indian-organisations-faced-financial-or-economic-fraud-in-the-past-24-months-where-procurement-fraud-emerged-as-the-top-threat-pwc-survey.html>

¹⁰ Chirstain Wickert, Edwin H. Sutherland – White Collar Crime (1949), soztheo, Jul 2017 at <https://soztheo.com/criminology/key-works-in-criminology/edwin-h-sutherland-white-collar-crime-1949>

survival. The golden words are printed in papers like corruption-free institution, Report corruption or bribe, but in reality, everyone were bend to the systematic routine of bribery. India's every sector is filled with corruption and bribery institutionally. It becomes institutionalized when the normative or systematic process (informal practice) has been adopted as an accepted and standardized part of culture. People believe that systematic corruption is due to disparities in wealth, political influence, and crony capitalism.

On one hand, the public perceives that it is all because of slow, complex systems, and weak enforcement makes bribery the easiest way to get things done. Secondly, people have viewed that corruption is because of political leaders and a weak government with opaque bureaucracy. Some believe that it is due to citizens' fault in addressing it as a crime, considering the robust procedures as an influx of time.

Episodic Corruption: In contrast to Normalized Corruption, it denotes sporadic or isolated corruption activity engaged by public officials, politicians, or individuals. India's Corruption is being developed in a systematic way in all sectors, not episodic corruption.

Theories relating to the Normalization of Corruption:

The persistence and normalization of corruption in India cannot be understood solely through legal analysis. Various social and economic theories explain why individuals continue to engage in corrupt practices despite knowing that such actions are illegal and unethical. Among the most relevant theories are Social Norm Theory, Collective Action Theory, Rational Choice Theory, and Cost–Benefit Analysis¹¹

Social Norm Theory and Normalization of Corruption

Social Norm theory states that human behavior is influenced by the social group's acceptance and disapproval. *Social norms are the invisible architects of our daily choices, shaping our behavior through the perceived actions and expectations of others.*¹² In the Indian Scenario, corruption integrates with this theory as people engage in bribe by societal expectations to complete the work in a faster manner. It is very prevalent in public departments, Police Stations,

¹¹ Ronald L. Akers, Rational Choice, Deterrence, and Social Learning Theory in Criminology: The Path Not Taken, 81 J. Crim. L. & Criminology 653 (1990-1991)

¹² Social Norm Theory, Sustainable Directory, Jun 29 2025 at <https://lifestyle.sustainability-directory.com/term/social-norms-theory>.

Transportation Services, educational institutions, Educational Institutions etc. When it comes to Political parties, money has been kickback; billionaires are off the books by ruling parties.

Social Norm Theory explains human behavior as being strongly influenced by societal expectations and commonly accepted practices. According to this theory, individuals tend to conform to behaviors that are perceived as normal within their social environment, even if such behaviors are morally questionable or legally prohibited.

In the Indian context, corruption often functions as a social norm rather than an exception. When bribery is routinely observed in public offices, hospitals, police stations, and educational institutions, individuals begin to perceive it as an accepted way of getting things done. New entrants into the system, including citizens and public officials, learn through observation that refusing to participate in corruption may lead to delays, harassment, or exclusion.¹³ Over time, corruption becomes morally neutralized and socially justified, contributing to its normalization.

Collective Action Theory: Olson's Theory posits that members of the group will often prefer not to undertake concerted action, although benefit yield to the common interest of the group. They choose to free ride on the efforts of others' actions to let others pay the price of the good¹⁴. In the context of corruption, this theory highlights why people continue to participate in corrupt practices even though they disagree with such practices.

In India, many citizens believe that corruption is so widespread that individual effort cannot change the system. Even if a person wants to resist bribery or report corruption, the belief that "everyone else is corrupt" and their work will be undone without a bribe.

Rational Choice Theory and Corruption

Rational Choice Theory assumes that individuals make decisions by comparing the expected benefits and costs of their actions.¹⁵ Related to corruption, this theory suggests that people engage in corrupt practices when the perceived benefits outweigh the potential risks or punishments.

¹³ Cristina Bicchieri, *The Grammar of Society: The Nature and Dynamics of Social Norms* 11–15, Cambridge Univ. Press 2006.

¹⁴ Collective Action Theory, Pamela Oliver *Sociology* 626, Spring 2004

¹⁵ Gary S. Becker, *Crime and Punishment: An Economic Approach*, 76 *J. Pol. Econ.* 169, 176–78 (1968).

In India, the likelihood of detection and punishment for corruption is relatively low due to slow judicial processes, political interference, and weak enforcement mechanisms. At the same time, the benefits of corruption, such as faster service delivery, financial gain, or career advancement, are immediate and tangible. Therefore, both public officials and citizens may rationally choose corruption as a beneficial option. When such rational decisions are repeatedly made, corruption gradually becomes normalized as a practical and efficient choice.¹⁶.

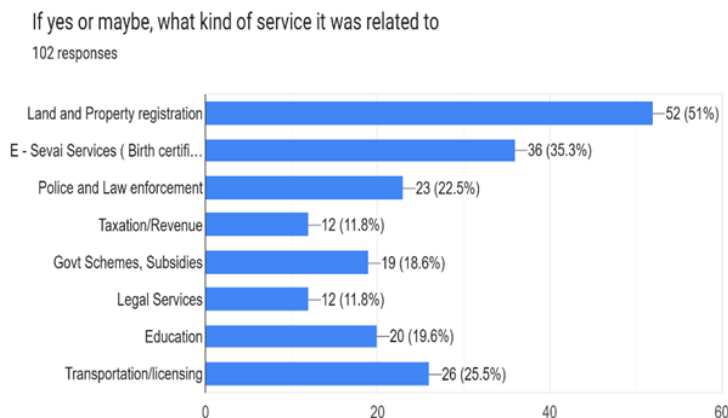
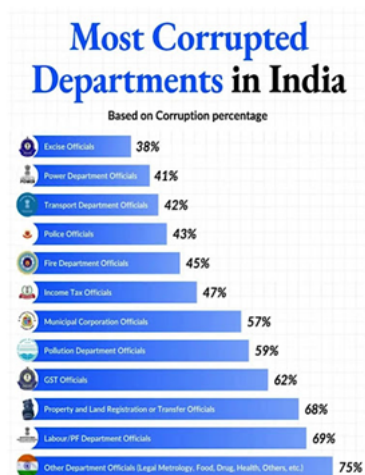
Cost–Benefit Analysis and Normalization of Corruption

The main principle of Rational Choice Theory, cost–benefit analysis, concentrates on assessing the tangible and intangible costs and benefits associated with an action. In the case of corruption, individuals assess factors such as monetary gain, time saved, risk of punishment, social acceptance, and moral consequences.

As per the Primary Data of this Study, citizens perceive that the work remains undone without paying a bribe in Govt Depts and other places. So, People switch to engage in the corrupt activities that provide various personal benefits to them. The cost such as the probability of punishment, arrest, and legal consequences, are relatively lower not seen as serious crimes with regard to petty corruption. The benefit such as timely completion of work, satisfaction, job promotions, a wealthy life, easy enforcement of contract etc. Hence, the benefit or reward in corruption outweighs the cost, which make as normalized behavior. Nearly 67.7% of respondents either *agree or strongly agree* that bribery is unavoidable, strongly favor the contention that corruption is socially accepted as a normalized or institutionalized system for practical necessity rather view it as crime in petty corruption. 68.6% of the persons agree that paying a bribe saves time compared to legal procedures

HIGHEST CORRUPTED DEPARTMENT IN INDIA:

¹⁶ James S. Coleman, Foundations of Social Theory 13–16 (Harvard Univ. Press 1990).



NCIB REPORT (2025)

PRIMARY DATA OF THIS STUDY

According to the National Crime Investigation Bureau (NCIB) Report 2025, Police Station Tops the First position in highest Corrupted Sector in India. It lists down the 10 Department which involved in High Corruption.

1. Police Station

Police Station in India have been asking bribe for mainly registration of FIR, to investigate a case, to close the case without filing a chargesheet. Moreover, Police in all ranks have favors the businessman, politicians, and all people through the easiest way of asking bribe to evade from legal consequences. Significantly, FIR has been closed by police officers as a mutual Settlement though bribe circulation happens. As per the primary data collected in this research paper, 23% of the respondents have said the police departments were corrupted.

2. Municipal Corporations

From birth certificate to Death Certificate cannot be issued without bribe in in a stipulated time. Document includes Aadhar Card, Community Certificate, Income Certificate, PAN Card, Voter Id Card, Death Certificate, and Legal Heir Certificate. The charges have been excessively high in order to speed delivery within a Short Period. Even the person has decided to go with the prescribed time fixed by the Government to receive the service, it has been mothballed by the Municipal Corporations. The Tahsildars and RO's signatures get signed only through bribes

otherwise, process has not in progress. As per the primary data, 36% of the respondents agrees that E-Seva services in Municipal Corporation were corrupted.

3. Revenue Department

This department acts as a main role for Land registration, tax collection, issuance of patta, chitta, mutation certificate, and maintains land records; issues community, income Certificate, and legal heir Certificate. It ranks 2nd position in the highest corrupted dept, where the applicants were asked to provide an extra fee over the fixed charges for issuance of certificates. As per the Primary data (Survey) of this research study, 51 persons have opined that the Land and Property Registration under the Revenue Dept were corrupted, which contributes the most corrupted dept as per the Survey.

SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE OF CORRUPTION:

In the letter of law, it is referred to as an Economic Crime; for over decades, the way of the world has transformed towards a socially acceptable system. When an action is prevalent, it has been observed by people as acceptable behavior. In the Context of Corruption, it is rampant from police stations to Tax Departments, which has been an institutionalized process that nobody can avoid accessing the service. Endemic corruption has been adapted in the people in society for various reasons such as faster process of service, time consumption, avoid real process, which they felt was complex. Actually, the people were very busy with their work for livelihood and frenetic with daily routines. No one is ready to accept the actual process and time duration it takes to deliver the services.

Moreover, the genuine applicants wait for the process, and the public officials start asking for money to progress to the next process. In many cases, middlemen such as agents advised them to be involved in a fast-track process by giving them trust not give a bribe. In every sector, not the agents, the main master who plays a significant role in transferring a file or approving contracts or sanctioning the projects, which is none other than Political Persons. So, the social acceptance transforms the corruption into an institutionalized process, which normalizes it.

Social Learning Theory:

Burgess and Akers founded this theory, which is basically on learning processes operating in social structure, interaction, and situation, which tend to make persons law-conforming or law

deviant. According to Akers, the factors that account for generating crime and deviant behavior mainly include individual observation about how others behave in a given situation, especially following the norms or values of leaders, elders, and family members. This is analogous to what Tarde termed as Imitation.¹⁷ Pursuant to Corruption, individuals were acquainted with the institutionalized process through the social observation of others' attitudes and behavior towards a particular situation. Individuals follow what others do to access the govt services in a faster manner. It is not the fact that there is a weak system; everyone is habituated to the system.

Social Acceptance leads to Unreportable Crime and lacks legal Consequences:

The study has found that the persons have the perception that paying a bribe would save time and quick work when compared to legal procedures. Totally 70 persons have agreed with the statement (68.6%) out of 102 responses collected, and 32 persons disagreed with the statement. This shows that people started accepting it due to these main personal factors, which result in unreported crime. On the other hand, when it comes to Social Tolerance, persons constitute 54.9% were state that they were forced to offer a bribe in order to complete the urgent work.

It reveals that some of the individuals were resist over the systematic way to fulfil the needs. In terms of Reporting of a crime, the 40% were agreed to it; 35.3% have opted maybe and very least have disagreed frankly (25.2%). Since the majority of the persons (35.3%) believe that reporting of crime does not lead to timely action by the relevant authorities

The opinion of the person with regard to reporting found that the majority of the persons said simply this is not in the actual situation. Because there is no doubt that everybody is involved in offering or accepting, it follows that an individual would report a crime. Comparing the reporting data with actual reality, it doesn't exist.

If there had been a report of crime, there would have been no normalization. The underlying reasoning is that whilst society bends against the rules, the reporting of crime because it would be treated as normal practice. As a result, the petty corruptions are unnoticed, and the persons were not punished as per the Law.

¹⁷ Prof N.V. Paranjape, *Criminology & Penology*, Central Law Publication 62, (19th ed. 2023).

TABLE 1

S. No	Question	Yes	No	Maybe	Total
1	Have you ever encountered a situation where you were forced to offer a bribe to complete urgent work?	56 54.9%	20 19.6%	26 25.5%	102
2	Do you think paying a bribe saves time and enables quicker work compared to legal procedures?	70 68.6%	32 31.4%	-	102
3	Have you experienced any instance where a government officer demanded payment beyond prescribed service charges?	55 53.9%	19 18.6%	28 27.5%	102
4	Are you aware of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, and other anti-corruption laws in India?	65 63.7%	25 24.5%	12 11.8%	102
5	Do you think fear of punishment prevents people from engaging in corruption?	38 37.3%	30 29.4%	34 33.3%	102
6	Would you personally report corruption if you encountered it?	40 39.2%	26 25.5%	36 35.3%	102

(Primary Data)

TABLE 2

S. No	Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
1	Do you think bribery is unavoidable to get work done in government departments or other places?	22 21.6%	47 46.1%	20 19.6%	5 4.9%	8 7.8%	102
2	Do you believe reporting corruption leads to timely action by authorities?	–	36 35.3%	35 34.3%	31 30.4%	–	102

(Primary data)

TABLE 3

S. No	Question	Always	Very Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
1	How often are people politically motivated to engage in Corruption?	23 23%	30 30%	41 41%	4 4%	2 2%	102
2	How often do you observe the occurrence in which any person offers to receive a bribe?	10 9%	32 31.4% (Often)	43 42.2%	17 16.7%	12 11.8%	102

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

The data indicate rampant direct subjection to corruption; the majority of the respondents (68.6%) believed bribery saves time. Nearly **67.7%** of respondents either *agree or strongly agree* that bribery is unavoidable, strongly favor the contention that corruption is **socially accepted as a normalized or institutionalized system for practical necessity, rather than view it as a crime in petty corruption**. The study has found that 54.9% of respondents have been forced to pay bribes.

Although awareness of anti-corruption laws among the citizens is relatively high, 63.7%, effectiveness in punishment and reporting mechanisms remains weak. This gap between legal awareness and behavioral compliance reflects social normalization of corruption, where individuals acknowledge illegality but continue participation due to the weakness of the system and mainly cooperative effort. The findings show that corruption is not perceived as an occasional anomaly but as a **common and expected practice**. Over **61 persons** report that officials *always or often* expect payments, while **53%** believe political motivation plays a major role, highlights lack of structural failure. People justified their actions through political corruption, in which they highlight the political parties and members who engage in various scams.

Individuals often observe circumstances where corrupt practices of exchanging bribes occur. Maximum 42 persons claim that they either always or often observe the occurrence in which any person offered or received a bribe. They have mostly forced to pay bribes in land and property registration (51%); 35.3% constitute E-Seva Services; police & law Enforcement contributes 23%, the Taxation and Revenue Department constitute 11.8%; 25.5% constitute transportation Services. This shows that land and property registration is the most corrupt sector in India, which is also supported by the NCIB survey report. The findings show that bribery or corruption is perceived as a practice to satisfy their own necessity rather than being investigated as a crime or not. Because there is no strict mechanism or structure to see it as a crime, it is socially accepted and has become normalized.

EFFECTIVENESS OF ANTICORRUPTION LAWS:

Basically, Law enforcement in the country is a strong foundation for good Governance and the fundamental system of the Nation. If the Laws are not being effectively implemented or enacted

in a republic state, it ruins the democracy of the country, mainly in terms of development. Anti-Corruption laws are those that prevent from reduction in crime rates and try to establish the corrupt free state and deter corrupt practices. Practically, laws were remains in a piece of paper rather than being strictly implemented in civic Society.

Prevention of Corruption Act, 2015

The Prevention of Corruption Act, 2015, aims to prevent corrupt practices and to reinforce the investigation procedure and establishment of the Anti-Corruption Bureau. It is the Central legislation that underlines the framework for other Anti-Corruption Legislation. This Act fails to include the private – private entries, though the Amendment addresses the private sector. It fails to address the crony capitalists involved in a high level of corruption. It also fails to address the difference between high-level (capitalist corruption) and bureaucratic corruption, and the lack of specific provision for bribery by corruption. This Act mainly focused on bribery by Public Corruption. This Act doesn't adapt the new white-collar crimes under the umbrella term of corruption. It neglects to include the newer cybercrime forms of corruption, such as Cryptocurrency corruption, Deepfake impersonation, AI Corruption, Hidden Benefit transfers, etc. Previous Sanction for the prosecution under Section 19 of the PCA is the biggest hurdle for proceed a case against the public servant, which delays the process of investigation.

Section 19 – Prior Sanction for Prosecution

It mandates that no court shall take cognizance of the public servant without providing previous Sanction from the central Govt or the competent authority. Govt has the responsibility to convey the decision of such a proposal within three months to the Court or investigative Agency after the receipt of such a proposal.

Implementation Reality

- a. Sanction Delay:** Sanctions are not provided within the statutory period by following 3 months rule under S.19 of the Act. Authorities just bypass the rule, prolong the process of sanction itself to the extent of over a year or more.
- b. Incomplete Proposals:** Investigation agencies fail in submitting the complete proposal with relevant records like chargesheet and reports, which results in the return of time and time delay.

- c. **Sanction denied:** Survey reveals that 41.3% of the case sanctions were denied by the Government. Due to the political influence and favoritism, sanctions were not accepted, even when money rounds the table.

Vijay Rajmohan v. State (2022) Supreme Court held (Bench of Justices B R Gavai and P S Narasimha) that the period of three months, extended by one more month for legal consultation, is *mandatory*. The consequence of non-compliance with this mandatory requirement shall not be the quashing of the criminal proceeding for that very reason. The competent authority shall be Accountable for the delay and be subject to judicial review and administrative action by the CVC under Section 8(1)(f) of the Central Vigilance Commission Act, 2003¹⁸. *Delays in prosecuting the corrupt breed a culture of impunity and lead to systemic resignation to the existence of corruption in public life*¹⁹. *The Court significantly held that a sanction shall be provided within a period of 3 months, which can be extended by 1 month for legal consultation.*

Constitutionality of Section 17A of the PC Act

Centre For Public Interest Litigation v. Union of India 2026, Division Bench comprising Justice B.V Nagarathna and Justice K.V Vishwanathan delivered a split verdict about the legal validity of Section 17 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988. Justice Nagarathna termed the provision as “old wine in a new bottle” and emphasized that it violates the rule of law and Article 14 of the Constitution. She declared that it opens the doors to the Accused, which provides advance notice to the Accused, and creates the opportunity to destroy the evidence and suppress facts. So, Justice Nagarathna held that it was unconstitutional, and he relied on statistical records that approvals were denied (41.3%) of cases. And she also reasoned that it was for corruption activities. Justice K.V Vishwanathan upheld the provision as constitutionally valid only if the prior approval mechanism is filtered through an independent screening body, specifically the Lokpal at the Central level or the Lokayukta at the State level, whose recommendation must be treated as binding on the government.²⁰. Reading of Section

¹⁸ Prachi Bradwaj, Delays in prosecuting the corrupt breeds a culture of impunity; Sanction requests under PC Act must be decided within 4 months but proceedings cannot be quashed for delay: SC, SCC Online, Oct 13 2022 at <https://www.sconline.com/blog/post/2022/10/13/prevention-of-corruption-delay-in-deciding-sanction-request-no-quashment-time-limit-4-months-mandatory-supreme-court-legal-research-news/>

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ajitesh Singh, Judgment Summary: Supreme Court’s split verdict on constitutionality of Section 17A of Prevention of Corruption Act, leaflet, 17 Jan 2026 at <https://theleaflet.in/criminal-justice/judgment-summary-supreme-courts-split-verdict-on-constitutionality-of-section-17a-of-prevention-of-corruption-act>

17A is in conjunction with the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013.

The Study has analyzed the underlying division bench judgment that it is constitutionally invalid because a previous sanction is denied by the concerned authority, and the aim of legislation is vitiated by political interference over such sanction approvals. Already, a departmental enquiry has been conducted by the Concerned Department of the government, which doesn't require any sanctions from the Government. As follows, the ruling of Justice Nagarathna, Section 17A discriminates between senior officers and lower officers, which violates Article 14 Intelligible differentia and rational nexus of the legislative intent. Because both offices are not treated equally when it comes to approval from the authority.

LOKPAL AND LOKAKYUTA ACT, 2013

This Act aims to investigate corruption cases against the Prime Minister, MPs, MLAs, and includes Public Servants by establishing a Statutory body called Lokpal for the Centre and Lokayukta for the State Govt. The Act has given wider powers to both Lokpal and Lokayukta but it faces criticisms and challenges in appointing the Selection Committee. Section 4 of the Act deals with the Selection Committee, which consists of the Prime Minister as Chairperson; the Speaker of the House, Opposition leader as one of the members. This provision has vitiated the intent of the legislation by having the same persons who would have been prosecuted for corruption if they had committed an offence. So, it contradicts the purpose of the Act by keeping the prosecuted members under the same Lokpal regime. There is no doubt that it would basically investigation procedure been influenced by the Political parties to their Ministers. There is a chance of the Anti-Corruption Institution becoming corrupted again in the systematic process.

Whistle Blower's Protection Act, 2014

This Act was introduced to provides procedure for reporting a complaint relating to corruption by Political Officials or public Servants. But this Act is not in full swing of implementation, it has some discrepancies and ineffective enforcement of laws. The major criticism lies in the concern of neglecting the whistleblower from the private sector, failing to protect against harassment or retaliation against the complainant after reporting, not encouraging anonymous complaints, which facilitate to receive more reports, no rewards or financial relief to the Whistleblower if it consists of fair allegations against the person. These recommendations are

aligned with the Accountability Report on Whistleblower Protection by the G20 Anti-corruption Working Group.

SUGGESTIONS

1. To curb corruption, different strategies were adopted based on the country's democratic institutions. *Countries with Weaker Democratic Institutions*- transparency and accountability are insufficient to bring abuses to the surface until they reach a high level. However Popular support for reforms is aroused by the prominent scandals. Examples include: Greece, *India*, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Mexico, Brazil, Indonesia, Nigeria, Turkey, and South Africa.
 - The focus should be on improving transparency and accountability by strengthening access to information laws, independence of the judiciary and the media, and civil society organizations.
 - To confront corruption should be a top priority for the anticorruption movement, particularly Transparency International and the World Bank.
 - In countries with Weaker Democratic Institutions, improving the existing framework should be manageable and external representatives of NGOs and other International Organizations and offer to undertake anticorruption activities.
 - The chances of success will be much greater than in countries with autocratic governments or in a failed state²¹.
2. To create public awareness and campaigns about the seriousness of the Normalization and Social Acceptance of the Corruption.
3. To declare Section 17A and Section 19, which remain as a shield to the public servant prosecution, as Unconstitutional and Arbitrary.
4. To speed up the Investigation in corruption cases, a time limit should be framed for the

²¹ Fritz Heimann Mark Pieth, *Confronting Corruption- Past concerns, Present Challenges, and Future Strategies* 31, Oxford (Dec 2017).

Investigative Authority or Agency.

5. To ensure speedy trial, Judges should ensure that it shall be completed within 2 years or 4 years in exceptional circumstances.
6. Speedy Investigation and Trial should be strengthened through the proper cooperation of the Government, bureaucrats, and their counsel. If they did not comply with these rules, a strict mechanism shall be introduced for public deterrence and gain public confidence.
7. Effective Whistleblower protection mechanisms shall be established to protect the complainant without retaliation, anonymous complaints, and rewards should be encouraged to report more crimes.
8. Members of the Selection Committee should be amended in the Lokpal and Lokayukta Act; the non-political members, such as Judges, IAS officers, and diverse experts in Vigilance, should be appointed to avoid political interference.

CONCLUSION

Corruption can never be eliminated. Among the reasons is that the line between legal and illegal activities is unclear (Bribery v. Political Contributions), and the practitioners of Corruption will exploit such a lack of clarity. Curbing Corruption will require continuing effort for the indefinite future because the economic, political, and technical conditions keep changing, and practitioners of corruption have become more resilient. Firstly, people should learn that corruption is being normalized and became socially acceptable, institutionalized process.

The Study find that the majority of individuals have an opinion that nothing can be done without money, and bribery is unavoidable in the work done within a time. In order to satisfy their personal necessity, people have resorted to bribery, and due to greediness, dominance, and authoritative power, they are led to receive the bribe. By way of various theories, it can be understood how it's been socially accepted, which normalizes it.

Though People are aware of the Anti-Corruption Laws, reporting of corruption remains very low because they believe that timely action is not taken. So, a strict enforcement mechanism should be implemented rather it remain in paper for so long. The above suggestions are feasible to be enforced in the legislation. The normalization of Corruption is not to be blamed only on

the weak system with less accountability and transparency, ineffective enforcement of laws, political influence, crony capitalism, but also on the social acceptance. Here, the fact is that no one is ready to raise their voice against the corruption; they are minding only their business, not a reform. To conclude, cooperative effort can change the institutionalized system rather than blaming others or Govt.

Anti- Corruption Institutions like the Vigilance Commission should act as a watchdog and strive hard to ensure the corrupt free nation. Transparency International, the NGO's role in combating corruption is appreciated, many programs should be conducted in India to make the corrupt less Country. There is great alarm concerning the corruption rooted in the risk of climate change, as quoted by the UN Climate Change Conference, Transparency International, and other bodies. Corruption should be culminated as it deep rooted in the climatic changes to Drugs.

REFERENCE

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Fritz Heimann Mark Pieth, *Confronting Corruption- Past concerns, Present Challenges, and Future Strategies* 31, Oxford (Dec 2017).
2. Frank Vogl, *Waging War on Corruption* 29, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers (2012).
3. Jennifer Bussell, *Corruption and Reform in India*, Cambridge (2012).
4. V. Paranjape, *Criminology and Penology*, Central Law Publications (2023).
5. Paul H. Cohen, *International Corruption, South Asian Ed*, Thomson Reuters Ltd (2012).

WEBLIOGRAPGHY

1. *Corruption, Normalization, and the Procrustean Bed: India's Grave Crisis* (2025)
2. Jon S.T. Quah, *The normalization of corruption: why it occurs and what can be done to minimize it*, Dept of Economic and Social Affairs, UN (2015)
3. Kalapana Bhardwaj, *Corruption in Indian Politics: Roots, Impacts and Mitigation Strategies*, IJRAR 1 (2) (2014)
4. Sunil Sondhi, *Combating Corruption in India*, World Congress of the International Political Science Association (2000)
5. Sandip Sukhtankar et al. *Corruption in India: Bridging Research Evidence and Policy Options*, India Policy Forum, National Council of Applied Economic Research, 11(1) (2015)
6. Ronald L. Akers, *Rational Choice, Deterrence, and Social Learning Theory in Criminology: The Path Not Taken*, 81 *J. Crim. L. & Criminology* 653 (1990-1991)
7. Nishith Desai Associates, *An Overview of Anti - Corruption Laws in India*, March 2020.
8. *59% of Indian organizations faced financial or economic fraud in the past 24 months, where procurement fraud emerged as the top threat: PwC survey*, PwC (2024)
9. Chirstain Wickert, Edwin H. Sutherland – *White Collar Crime* (1949), soztheo, Jul 2017.
10. Cristina Bicchieri, *The Grammar of Society: The Nature and Dynamics of Social Norms* 11–15, Cambridge Univ. Press 2006.

11. Collective Action Theory, Pamela Oliver *Sociology* 626, Spring 2004
12. Gary S. Becker, Crime and Punishment: An Economic Approach, 76 *J. Pol. Econ.* 169, 176–78 (1968).
13. James S. Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory* 13–16 (Harvard Univ. Press 1990).
14. Prachi Bradwaj, Delays in prosecuting the corrupt breeds a culture of impunity'; Sanction requests under PC Act must be decided within 4 months, but proceedings cannot be quashed for delay: SC, SCC Online, Oct 13 2022
15. Ajitesh Singh, Judgment Summary: Supreme Court's split verdict on constitutionality of Section 17A of Prevention of Corruption Act, leaflet, 17 Jan 2026
16. Viduthalai Virumbi, et al. Critical Analysis of Prevention of Corruption Act With Recent Cases, *IJLRA* 2 (7), 2024.
17. G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group, Accountability Report on Whistleblower Protection, UNDOC, Nov 30 2025.
18. François Valérian, Corruption Perception Index, Transparency International, 2024.
19. Eric M. Uslaner et.al The Historical Roots of Corruption, *Comparative Politics*, Jan 2016.
20. Radhika Jha, et al. How Effective is the Law on Corruption? *Common Cause*, 38(2) 2019.
21. Pawan Kumar, Addressing Political Corruption In India: Fundamental To The Process Of Democratization, *IAPSS*, 20, Jun 2013.
22. Kushal Bindal, Old Wine in a New Bottle? The Constitutional Battle Over Section 17A Of PCA, *Live Law*, 24 Jan 2026.
23. Raj Krishna & Alok Kumar, The Whistle Blowers Protection Act and the Idea of Transparency, SCC Online, April 2025.