
PEOPLE PERSPECTIVE OF CORRUPTION IN CHENNAI

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ABSTRACT:

This study explores the perspectives of Chennai residents regarding corruption and its pervasive impact on daily life. By collecting primary data through surveys from 76 respondents, the research examines how corruption affects various sectors, including government services, education, and employment. The findings reveal that a significant number of respondents perceive corruption as a widespread issue, primarily driven by bureaucratic inefficiencies and political interference. The study highlights the psychological toll of corruption on individuals and the community's growing awareness of the need for accountability. Recommendations such as developing a corruption reporting app, forming community watchdog groups, and promoting civic education are proposed to foster a culture of integrity and transparency. Ultimately, this research contributes valuable insights into the public's understanding of corruption in Chennai and the need for effective anti-corruption measures.

KEYWORDS: Corruption, Public perception, Bureaucracy and Political Interference.

INTRODUCTION:

Corruption is a deep-rooted issue that has plagued societies for centuries, undermining governance, eroding public trust, and impeding progress. Ancient Indian political strategist Kautilya, in his seminal work Arthashastra, famously remarked on the inevitability of corruption in government, comparing it to tasting honey on one's tongue—impossible to resist. He also likened government officials to fish in water, who cannot be observed as they

either drink or refrain from drinking water. This metaphor highlights the difficulty in detecting corruption within governmental systems. In the modern world, former U.S. Vice President Joe Biden aptly described corruption as a “cancer” that erodes faith in democracy and stifles creativity and innovation, crucial for societal growth. Similarly, Shakespeare in Measure for Measure noted that laws, like scarecrows, are set up to deter wrongdoing.

In India, corruption is an entrenched issue, deeply affecting the country’s economy and governance at central, state, and local levels. It permeates all sectors, from government offices and public services to businesses, courts, and even the media. According to a Transparency International survey conducted in 2005, more than 62% of Indians had at some point paid a bribe to a public official to expedite services. A later report in 2008 found that around 50% of Indians had first-hand experience of using bribes or connections to get services delivered by public offices. These figures highlight the pervasiveness of corruption in everyday life, where even basic services are often tied to illicit transactions.

In the most recent Corruption Perceptions Index (2023), Transparency International scored India 39 out of 100, indicating a high level of corruption, and ranked the country 93rd out of 180 nations. Despite legal frameworks and policy initiatives aimed at combating corruption, it continues to erode public trust in institutions, making it harder to achieve meaningful development and reform. Corruption is not confined to a single sector—it affects every aspect of life, from healthcare and education to infrastructure and law enforcement. It also varies in form, encompassing bribery, favoritism, nepotism, under performance, and non-performance by public servants.

In a sprawling metropolitan city like Chennai, the challenges posed by corruption are particularly significant. As the largest city in Tamil Nadu and one of the most populous urban centers in India, Chennai is a critical economic and cultural hub. However, the scale and complexity of its administrative apparatus create fertile ground for corruption. According to a recent survey, Chennai ranks as the third most corrupt city in Tamil Nadu, with widespread instances of bribery, misuse of power, and inefficiency in public services. These practices hinder progress, undermine trust in governance, and add an extra layer of difficulty to daily life for the city's residents.

Chennai’s experience with corruption reflects broader national trends, despite the government’s efforts to curb it through legislation. India has enacted various laws to address the issue, including the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, which criminalizes bribery and the misuse of public office. The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013, sought to establish

independent bodies to investigate allegations of corruption against high-ranking public officials. The Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002, aimed to confiscate the ill-gotten wealth of corrupt individuals, while the Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2011, provided a framework for protecting individuals who expose corruption in government offices. India is also a signatory to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, which calls for a comprehensive approach to prevent and combat corruption worldwide.

Despite these legal frameworks, corruption in Chennai remains a critical issue. The city's complex bureaucratic structure and high population density make it difficult to monitor and prevent corruption effectively. Public services, such as obtaining permits, accessing healthcare, and dealing with law enforcement, are often mired in bureaucratic delays and bribery. Even though anti-corruption laws are in place, enforcement often falls short due to political interference, lack of accountability, and the entrenched culture of corruption within certain institutions.

This research aims to explore the perspectives of Chennai's residents regarding corruption, examining how it affects their daily lives and their confidence in public institutions. By collecting and analyzing data from the city's inhabitants, this study will shed light on the extent of corruption in various sectors and the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures. It will also explore the socio-economic impact of corruption in Chennai, particularly how it affects marginalized groups who may lack the resources or connections to navigate corrupt systems.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE :

According to Dr. M. Govardhana Singh in *The status of corruption in Chennai district (2019)*. Corruption is a complex issue that hampers growth, worsens inequality, and affects development across sectors like agriculture, industry, and finance. In Tamil Nadu, and India as a whole, bureaucratic corruption leads to misappropriation of funds and delays in policy implementation. Amartya Sen points to discretionary powers and lack of clear rules as major contributors, while, B.K. Chaturvedi stresses the need for simplified government procedures. Historically, corruption has stalled progress in key areas like education and industry, with current institutions facing resource shortages, further limiting efforts to combat it effectively. S.Ramakrishna Velamuri in *Resisting Corruption: Alacrity Housing Chennai (Research Case Study)*, This case study explores corruption from a firm's viewpoint, focusing on the history of Alacrity Housing Chennai from its establishment in 1981 to 2002. During this time, under the leadership of Amol Karnad, the company gained recognition for its ethical standards,

notably its refusal to bribe government officials, and captured a 25% share of the Chennai residential construction market. However, starting in 1994, internal challenges, along with a market downturn in the late 1990s, brought the company to the edge of bankruptcy by 2002.

Dr. K. Pushpam and Varsha .V in A Study on Corruption in Chennai City (2023), Corruption has garnered a lot of attention around the world. This study focuses on the characteristics, causes, repercussions, and potential solutions. This research examines whether the cost of corruption varies with the level of government economic intervention. Corruption occurs behind closed doors, making empirical study on corruption problematic.

Aravind Rajan in Chennai at crossroads, It reflects on the qualities and complexities of Chennai, highlighting the contrast between progress and poverty, private wealth and public infrastructure. It illustrates the city's paradoxes through personal vignettes, asking what defines the "real" Chennai – the prosperity seen in modern developments or the struggles of the poor. The author emphasizes that Chennai embodies both extremes, much like India itself, a country of rich cultural diversity and stark inequalities. To improve, the city needs a social compact where citizens take collective responsibility for public welfare.

K.Deepanjali, Sreeya B in Public Opinion on Bribery With Special Reference To Chennai (2019), their research focuses on understanding public opinion on bribery in Chennai, examining its prevalence and factors influencing it. Bribery, defined as the exchange of something valuable to alter a person's actions for personal gain, is illegal and unethical. The research suggests that education may play a role in reducing bribery, and future studies could expand this investigation to other countries to provide a global perspective on the issue.

Kaushik Basu in a Note on Bribery and the control of corruption (1992). Existing models of corruption that consider bribery have often neglected a critical recursive issue. When an auditor or police officer negotiates over a bribe with an individual they have apprehended, they must s a complex layer of decision-making, as the corrupt official must weigh not only the immediate benefits of the bribe but also the potential consequences of being caught in the same corrupt cycle factor in the risk that they, too, might be caught accepting the bribe and could face a similar negotiation—but this time from the opposite side, as the person being accused.

RESEARCH GAP:

Despite existing literature on corruption in Chennai, significant research gaps remain. Earlier studies often ignore the role of cultural norms in shaping public tolerance of corrupt practices. Limited attention has been given to the barriers citizens face in reporting corruption

or engaging in anti-corruption efforts. This study addresses the gap between public perceptions of government integrity and the effectiveness of anti-corruption policies, including views of younger populations.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Corruption in Chennai significantly undermines public trust in government institutions, yet there is limited understanding of how cultural norms influence perceptions and tolerance of corrupt practices. Existing research has not adequately examined the barriers that prevent citizens from reporting corruption or engaging in anti-corruption initiatives. Additionally, there is a gap between public perceptions of governmental integrity and the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures. This study aims to address these issues by investigating the perspectives of various demographic groups, particularly youth, and analyzing sector-specific perceptions of corruption to inform effective strategies for enhancing civic engagement and anti-corruption efforts in Chennai.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- To Examine the barriers that hinder citizens from reporting corruption and participating in anti-corruption initiatives.
- To Assess the disparity between public perceptions of governmental integrity and the actual effectiveness of anti-corruption measures.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:

The people's perspective of corruption in Chennai is the main focus of this research. This study is non doctrinal in nature. This study's foundation is primary data gathered from Chennai residents. The secondary data from sources like books and journals is also used. Using a survey approach, 76 respondents in Chennai residents provided the primary data. The majority of the 76 respondents are young people because the research focuses on the obstacles that young people face when reporting corruption and taking part in anti- corruption initiatives. The survey questions include basic inquiries about respondents' awareness of corruption as well as more in-depth questions about respondents' perceptions of corruption.

RESULT & DISCUSSION:**Table 1:****Demographic Profile**

S.N	Particular	Variable	No. of responses	Percentage
1.	Age	Below 18	10	13.1
		18-20	30	39.4
		21-25	20	26.3
		Above 25	16	21.2
		Total	76	100
2.	Gender	Male	52	68.4
		Female	24	31.6
		Total	76	100
3.	Educational Qualification	SSLC	3	3.9
		HSC	7	9.2
		UG	46	60.5
		PG	19	25
		Others	1	1.3
		Total	76	100
4.	Occupation	Student	39	51.3
		Govt. employee	4	5.3
		Private employee	16	21.1
		Others	17	22
		Total	76	100
5.	Annual Income	Below 60,000	12	15.8
		60,000-1,00,000	16	21.1
		Above 1,00,000	11	14.5
		Student	37	48.7
		Total	76	100

Source: Primary Data

The demographic data collected for this study include age, gender, educational qualification, occupation, and annual income of the respondents. Locality was not considered, as the focus is specifically on the Chennai district. Among the respondents, 10 are below 18 years, 30 are between 18 and 20 years, 20 are aged 21-25, and 16 are above 25 years. Out of the 76 respondents, 52 are male, and 24 are female.

Out of 76 respondents 3 respondents have completed SSLC, 7 have completed HSC, 46 hold an undergraduate degree, 19 have a postgraduate degree, and 1 falls into the others category. 39 respondents are students, 4 are government employees, 16 are private employees, and 17 are engaged in other fields. 12 respondents earn below 60,000 annually, 16 earn between 61,000 and 1,00,000, 11 earn above 1,00,000, and 37 respondents are students.

Table 2: Corruption and its Economic Consequences.

S.N	Statement	Variable	NOR	Percentage
1.	Experience of corruption among respondents	Yes	43	56.6
		May be	11	14.5
		No	22	28.5
		Total	76	100
2.	Impact of Corruption on tax and licensing system	Yes	37	48.7
		May be	26	34.2
		No	13	17.1
		Total	76	100
3.	Impact of corruption on job quality	Yes	57	74
		May	11	14.5
		No	8	10.4
		Total	76	100

Source: Primary Data

This figure illustrates that of 76 respondents, 43 residents in Chennai have experienced the corruption, 22 have not experienced it, and 11 have stated that they may have experienced it. This clearly shows that the corruption places a major role in the Chennai resident's life.

37 respondents, or Chennai residents, felt the cumbersome tax and licensing system should contribute to corruption 13 did not agree, and 26 were unsure and stated it might contribute to corruption.

This also clearly states that the contribution of the corruption in the tax and the licensing field is well established. 57 respondents claimed that corruption will affect the quality of the job, while 8 locals disagreed and 11 thought it may affect the quality of the job which makes us feel the corruption also occupies in the quality of the job.

Table 3: Role of Bureaucracy and Wages in Corruption.

S.N	Statement	Variable	NOR	Percentage
1.	Bureaucrats are often seen as a major cause of corruption	Agree	36	47.4
		Neutral	32	42.1
		Disagree	8	10.5
		Total	76	100
2.	Higher wages for bureaucrats can reduce corruption	Agree	10	13.2
		Neutral	38	50
		Disagree	28	36.8
		Total	76	100
3.	Corruption affects the individual psychological	Agree	51	67.1
		Neutral	20	26.3
		Disagree	5	6.6
		Total	76	100

Source: Primary Data

This Table demonstrates that 36 residents of Chennai agree that bureaucrats are responsible for contributing to corruption in the city. On the other hand, 8 respondents disagree with this viewpoint, while 32 residents choose to remain neutral, neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

When asked whether increasing wages for bureaucrats could help reduce corruption, only 10 residents agreed with this idea. However, a larger group of 28 respondents disagreed, suggesting that they do not believe higher pay would lower corruption. Meanwhile, 38 residents chose to stay neutral on this matter, neither supporting nor rejecting the idea.

In terms of the psychological effects of corruption on individuals, 51 respondents stated that corruption does have a negative impact on a person's mental and emotional well-being. Only 5 residents disagreed with this claim, and 20 respondents stayed neutral, expressing no strong opinion on the issue.

Table: 4 Corruption as a Custom and Economic Growth.

S. N	Statement	Variable	NOR	Percentage
1.	Corruption become a customary practice	Strongly agree	26	34.2
		Agree	28	36.8
		Neutral	19	25
		Disagree	2	2.6
		Strongly disagree	1	1.3
		Total	76	100
2.	Impact of corruption on a nation's economic growth	Strongly agree	27	35.5
		Agree	27	35.5
		Neutral	19	25
		Disagree	2	2.6
		Strongly Disagree	1	1.3
		Total	76	100

Source: Primary Data

This table demonstrates that the statement corruption has become a customary practice in Chennai Strongly agreed by 26 Chennai residents, agreed by 28 responses, strongly disagreed by one person, disagreed by two people, and remained neutral by 19 locals.

27 respondents strongly agreed that corruption has an impact on the nation's economic progress, whereas one resident strongly disagreed, two disagreed, and 19 residents remained neutral.

Table 5: People's Perspective on Corruption.

S.N	Statement	Variable	NOR	Percentage
1.	Reason Behind the corruption	Lack of stringent laws	19	25
		Political interference	40	52.6
		Economic loss	6	7.9
		Low wages	6	7.9

		Others	5	6.6
		Total	76	100
2.	Person affected by corruption	Higher level	4	5.3
		Middle level	57	75
		Lower level	15	19.7
		Total	76	100
3.	Impact of Corruption on Various sectors	Education	11	14.5
		Sports	6	7.9
		Political	37	48.7
		Corporate	8	10.5
		Others	14	18.4
		Total	76	100
4.	Person responsible for corruption	Government officials	34	44.7
		Corporate executives	8	10.5
		Politician	24	31.6
		Others	10	13.2
		Total	76	100
5.	Benefit of corruption on corporate executive	Increased profit	37	48.7
		Avoided regulation	19	25
		Secured government contracts	20	26.3
		Total	76	100
6.	Politician contribution to corruption	Passed favorable laws	31	40.8
		Accepting bribes	29	38.2
		Interference in investigation	11	14.5
		Total	76	100

Source: Primary Data

Out of the inmates surveyed in Chennai, 40 believe political interference is the main cause of corruption, 19 attribute corruption to a lack of stringent laws, 6 cite economic loss, and another 6 point to low wages as causes, 5 respondents had different views on the cause of corruption: 1 believed all of the above factors are responsible. 1 thought that greed for a luxurious life drives corruption. 1 attributed corruption to people who aim to achieve their goals at any cost. 1 cited a lack of transparency as the root cause. 1 believed corruption is accepted across various positions.

57 inmates reported that middle-class people are the primary victims of corruption, 15 believe lower-income individuals are the victims, 4 think higher-income individuals suffer from corruption. 11 residents believe that the education sector is the most corrupt, 6 point to the sports sector, 41 say the political/government sector is the most corrupt, 8 claim the corporate sector is the most corrupt, 10 believe all these sectors are equally corrupt.

34 residents blame government officials for corruption, 8 hold corporate executives 24 think

politicians are to blame, 1 person believes both government officials and politicians share the responsibility, 6 hold all of the above groups accountable, 3 inmates feel the public itself is responsible for corruption.

37 respondents believe corporate executives benefit through increased profit, 29 think they benefit by avoiding regulations, 17 say they gain from securing government contracts, 3 believe corporate executives benefit from all of these factors. According to 31 inmates of Chennai out of 76 inmates pointed that politician passing favorable laws to contribute corruption while 29 inmates hold that they accepting bribes to contribute corruption and 11 feel they interfering in investigation to contribute corruption but 3 believe they take all of these actions to contribute corruption.

Table 6: Public responses and consequences towards corruption.

S.N	Statement	Variable	NOR	Percentage
1.	Public response to corruption	Protest	7	9.2
		Media coverage	34	44.7
		Social media	35	46.5
		Total	76	100
2.	Potential consequences of corruption	Imprisonment	20	26.3
		Fines	18	23.7
		Loss of position	38	50
		Total	76	100
3.	Incident or case that highlighted the role of these groups in corruption	High profile standard	25	32.9
		Court cases	50	38
		Whistle bowler revelation	13	17.1
		Total	76	100
4.	Primary motive of government officials behind the corruption	Personal financial gain	52	68.4
		Political power	20	26.3
		Favoritism towards certain business	4	5.3
		Total	76	100
5.	Occurrence of corruption in society	Day to day	53	69.7
		Occasionally	9	11.8
		Every often	14	18.4
		Total	76	100

Source: Primary Data

In the context of public response 34 residents hold that public uses media coverage as their weapon to the allegation of corruption while 32 pointed social media and 7 reported that public responded through protest and 2 resident feel that they responded through all of these and 2 say that They advocate and lobby for Appropriate policies and anti- corruption laws.

38 Chennai inmates have the opinion that loss of position will be the potential consequences for corruption and 20 hold that imprisonment was the life potential consequences while 18 feel that fines are the potential consequences for corruption.

38 respondents pointed that court cases were the specific incident that highlighted the role of these groups in corruption 29 stated that high profile standard and 13 hold that whistle bowler revealing are the specific incident that highlighted the role of these groups in corruption.

Out of 76 respondents 52 were in the view that personal gain was the primary motive behind the Corruption for government officials, while 20 pointed political power were the primary motive and only 4 hold that favoritism towards certain business were the primary motive of government officials to do corruption. 53 respondents stated that the Corruption occur in day to day life while 14 feels that corruption occurs every often and only 9 holds that corruption occurs occasionally.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

- Corruption as a widespread issue: A majority of respondents in Chennai perceive corruption as a pervasive problem with serious societal consequences.
- Personal experience with corruption: About 56.6% of respondents reported that they have personally encountered corruption in their daily lives.
- Impact on work quality: Nearly 74% of participants stated that corruption negatively affects the quality and efficiency of their work.
- Bureaucratic complexity as a cause: 48.7% of respondents believe that complicated tax and licensing procedures promote corruption by creating bureaucratic hurdles.
- Role of bureaucrats: While only 13.2% feel that increasing bureaucrats' salaries would reduce corruption, 47.4% consider bureaucrats to be major contributors to corrupt practices.
- Psychological impact: Corruption has significant mental health effects, with 67.1% of respondents indicating that it negatively affects their psychological well-being.

CONCLUSION:

The study reveals that corruption is well ingrained in Chennai, with complicated bureaucratic structures and political involvement serving as primary causes. Respondents express frustration and a lack of trust in public institutions, with many suffering psychological consequences. While citizens are aware of the problem, they are dubious of some solutions.

Finally, eliminating corruption necessitates streamlining systems, enhancing transparency,

and empowering citizens through civic education and community engagement. Encouraging patience and trust in government timelines can also help to decrease corruption. These steps are critical to restoring public trust and establishing a more transparent society.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Create a corruption reporting mobile app that allows citizens to anonymously report corrupt behaviors. It can identify corruption hotspots and reward users for their participation, establishing an accountability culture.
- Create local watchdog committees to oversee public services and government operations. These organizations can enable residents to discuss problems and report issues, so improving community supervision and reducing corruption.
- Create engaging programs in schools and communities to promote the value of integrity and ethics. These activities, through workshops and performances, have the potential to build a future generation that is resistant to corruption.
- Promote the idea that residents should trust the deadlines set by officials for completing duties. This can help prevent bribery since managing expectations discourages people from seeking to speed up processes using dishonest methods.
- The younger generation entering the government jobs should make a heartfelt commitment to avoid engaging in corruption. Additionally, laws need to be reformed to reflect the evolving needs of society, ensuring there are no loopholes for corrupt individuals to evade justice because they using the same corruption to escape from that.

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