Sociological investigation of the rule of law, transparency and accountability in relation to corruption in Punjab, Pakistan

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Abstract

Corruption is still a widespread worldwide problem that impacts every sphere of society and keeps getting bigger and more complicated. Because of its complexity, it is hard to pinpoint a single cause, which makes prevention and control efforts more challenging. Given its pervasive effects, scholars, decision-makers, and organizations from both the public and private sectors have underlined how crucial it is to research corruption in order to comprehend its fundamental dynamics and create workable solutions. Using structured survey data from 600 participants representing a range of groups, including government employees, professionals in the private sector, students, and members of civil society. This quantitative study investigates the sociological analysis of rule of law, transparency, and accountability in relation to corruption in Punjab, Pakistan. Interview schedules served as the main method of gathering data for the study, which was carried out in the Punjabi districts of Rawalpindi, Attock, Mianwali, and Faisalabad. Using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques at the univariate and bivariate levels, the data were analysed using SPSS software. The results show that a combination of poor governance, lax law enforcement, a lack of transparency, economic hardships, and political favouritism trigger corruption in Pakistan. All of these elements work together to maintain and exacerbate corrupt practices in government agencies. The study also emphasizes the negative effects of corruption, such as the decline in foreign investment, the deterioration of public confidence in government agencies, the escalation of social inequality, and the slowed rate of economic growth. Numerous respondents expressed grave concerns about the deteriorating standard of public services as well as the growing rates of injustice and poverty that are linked to corruption. The study suggests extensive reforms aimed at bolstering legal frameworks, improving transparency, and encouraging increased civic engagement in light of these revelations. This study gives stakeholders and policymakers evidence-based recommendations for creating focused strategies that promote accountability, integrity, and good governance in Pakistan by identifying the main causes and effects of corruption.
Keywords: *Rule of law, accountability, transparency, meritocracy, and corruption.*

Introduction:

In Pakistan, corruption remains a pervasive problem that poses major obstacles to socioeconomic progress, good governance, and public trust in governmental institutions. It affects many areas and entails the misuse of authority for private benefit, undermining administrative efficiency, justice, and fairness. One of the most damaging social ills is

corruption, which erodes the very pillars that society needs to advance. Its effects are especially detrimental in developing nations, where scarce but essential resources meant for industries like infrastructure, business, health, and education are frequently lost to bribery and exaggerated expenses imposed by public officials, or they are siphoned off or misused. Additionally, jobs and duties are usually given out based on financial clout or personal connections rather than qualifications or merit, which hinders social justice and long-term development (Morris, 2023).

As a result of a number of interconnected factors, corruption has grown in importance on a worldwide scale. It is commonly acknowledged that corruption now affects the public, private, and even non-profit sectors in both developed and developing countries, transcending national and institutional boundaries. Furthermore, accusations and scandals involving corruption have taken centre stage in contemporary political discourse, frequently resulting in the resignation or dismissal of high-profile officials and seriously damaging the reputations of large corporations and organizations (Thompson, 2022).

The unethical pursuit of political or financial personal gain at the expense of the welfare of the group is known as corruption. It is commonly described as "the misuse of public office for personal benefit," a definition that ignores unethical behaviour in private institutions while emphasizing corruption in the public sector. This view supports Nobel Laureate Gary Becker's contention that excessive government intervention should be reduced or eliminated in order to combat corruption (Lace, 2020).

Integrating principles, guidelines, and practices that support honesty, openness, and responsibility into decision-making is known as ethical governance. Its main goal is to promote an ethical culture where people behave in ways that benefit their organizations and stakeholders. In order to preserve academic integrity, safeguard institutional credibility, and guarantee equitable access to education, ethical governance is essential in higher education. Reducing the risks of fraud, corruption, and resource mismanagement requires both financial transparency and ethical governance (Farazmand et al., 2022).

Transparency and ethical governance must be deeply embedded in an organization's strategic objectives, operational procedures, and core values in order to be genuinely effective. This entails creating concise mission statements that express the goals and tenets of the organization as well as taking proactive steps to recognize and reduce ethical risks or conflicts of interest when implementing policies. Aligning institutional actions with common values and expectations is facilitated by actively involving stakeholders in decision-making (Bayo & Red-well, 2021). Such a strategy improves public trust and institutional reputation in addition to fortifying internal governance. Sustaining credibility and satisfying the expectations of students, parents, investors, and consumers especially in highly competitive industries like higher education, finance, and healthcare requires maintaining transparency regarding tuition fees, performance standards, safety procedures, and ethical compliance (Ahmadi, 2024).

Pakistan has experienced repeated cycles of military intervention, democratic governance, and persistent political instability since gaining independence in 1947. Regional differences, religious influences, military domination, and democratic institutions all interact in intricate ways to cause this instability. It is crucial to comprehend this unstable political environment, particularly in light of Pakistan's strategic geopolitical role (Zaman, 2023). With Imran Khan's election in 2018, a government centered on economic reform, independent foreign policymaking, and anti-corruption initiatives came to power. Prior to this time, Pakistan was governed by alternating civilian and military regimes, with the latter frequently supported by supportive institutional and legal frameworks. Between 2008 and 2018, civil administrations, including those of the PPP

and PML-N, faced significant obstacles like ongoing economic instability, religious extremism, and corruption scandals (Mir et al., 2022).

Pakistan's political instability was exacerbated by a number of events in the years before 2018. Growing intolerance and extremism, motivated by inflexible ideas of national identity, weakened social cohesion and widened rifts. Violence became a common response to social or political conflicts because state institutions lacked effective conflict resolution mechanisms. In the meantime, political unrest and uncertainty were further exacerbated by economic vulnerability and deepening internal division (Zaman, 2023). Agriculture, public health, and governance systems were all negatively impacted by the devastating floods of 2022, which revealed Pakistan's inadequate ability to manage climate-related emergencies. At the same time, after the Taliban regained power, extremist activity along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border increased, making regional security worse. Although there was a ceasefire in Kashmir in 2021, tensions and unpredictability's persisted in the region. Further complicating matters, China's growing strategic influence carries the risk of increasing Pakistan's political and economic vulnerabilities while simultaneously providing the possibility of stability through partnership (Farooq et al., 2023).

Since Pakistan's independence in 1947, corruption has been one of the most pervasive and destructive issues the nation has faced, hindering social advancement, economic growth, and governance. It can take many different forms, including nepotism, bribery, and the misappropriation of public funds that affects both public institutions and private businesses (Khan, 2016). Weak institutional structures, inefficient accountability systems, and ongoing political instability are largely to blame for the persistence of corruption, as they have all contributed to the deepening of corrupt practices in law enforcement and public administration. Pakistan continues to rank poorly on international corruption indices, highlighting the urgent need for institutional reform and increased transparency despite the work of anti-corruption organizations like the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) (Transparency International, 2023).

Corruption is a global issue that impacts both developed and developing countries. The World Bank claims that corrupt practices, such as extortion, fraud, embezzlement, and bribery, impede social progress and economic advancement (Awan et al., 2018). Weak civilian governance, ongoing political unrest, and significant military influence all contribute to the problem in Pakistan. One of the biggest militaries in the world, Pakistan's military exerts considerable economic influence, which makes accountability and governance even more difficult (Siddiqa, 2017).

Between 1988 and 1999, when four governments took turns ruling two under Nawaz Sharif and two under Benazir Bhutto corruption reached its height and exacerbated political instability. Both administrations engaged in accusations of corruption against one another rather than concentrating on sustainable development or institutional reform. During Bhutto's second term, corruption cost Pakistan between 20% and 25% of its GDP annually, or about $15 billion, according to Shahed Javed Burki, a former World Bank official and caretaker minister (1996–1997). Fiscal losses also doubled as a result of tax evasion; between 1988 and 1998, tax revenue shortfalls increased from 1.5% to 3% of GDP (Burki, 2019).

Deeper socioeconomic and class-based tensions were reflected in the frequent military takeovers that threatened Pakistan's political stability throughout the 1990s and beyond. When their power seemed threatened, the military frequently stepped in and overthrew civilian governments, replacing them with more obedient ones. Open discussion and examination of military matters are still severely restricted in the nation,

despite the introduction of reform-oriented policies by certain military regimes (Siddiqa, 2017).

According to research, corruption in Pakistan stifles creativity even more than terrorism or educational inadequacies (Nadeem et al., 2021). It deters foreign direct investment (FDI) in addition to terrorism, and international aid, which is crucial to Pakistan's GDP, frequently exacerbates the issue when money meant for counterterrorism or development is embezzled by elites rather than reaching the intended recipients. Systemic corruption and poor governance plague important industries like law enforcement, the judiciary, taxes, energy, healthcare, education, procurement, and land management (Uroos et al., 2021).

In its broadest sense, governance encompasses the procedures, frameworks, and systems that institutions use to self-organize and self-regulate. Both public and private goals are furthered by these mechanisms, which are used by both official and informal organizations in a variety of sectors. The term "governance" refers to a broad category of entities that deal with administrative, political, and economic issues, such as governments, businesses, international alliances, non-profit organizations, and project-based groups. It includes the creation and implementation of laws, the prudent exercise of power, and the efficient use of resources. Additionally, good governance guarantees that all parties involved can express their concerns, defend their rights, fulfill their obligations, and settle conflicts through established institutional channels (Rizal, 2012).

Objectives:

- To ascertain the respondents' socio-economic characteristics.
- To identify the key factors contributing to corruption in Pakistan.
- To examine the role of accountability, transparency and rule of law.
- To analyse the socio-economic consequences of corruption.
- To evaluate existing anti-corruption policies and measures.
- To provide evidence-based recommendations.

Methodology:

A methodology functions as the lens through which the analysis is carried out and provides justification for the selected research approach. It serves as a thorough research framework that describes the methods and approaches to conduct the investigation (Howell, 2012). Four districts in the Punjab provinces served as the study's locations. The districts of Rawalpindi, Attock, Mianwali, and Faisalabad were the sites of the study. A quantitative method was used. A random sampling method was applied. Interviews were used to gather information from a sample of 600 respondents. SPSS software was used to analyse the collected data. The study emphasizes how socioeconomic inequality and structural institutional flaws fuel corrupt practices. According to the analysis, political instability, a lack of accountability, a weak rule of law, and a lack of transparency are the main factors that facilitate corruption. The study ends with actionable suggestions for enhancing transparency, advancing the rule of law, and bolstering accountability in order to successfully fight corruption in Pakistan.

Results and Discussion:

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents according to their age

	Age of the Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
1	20-30	124	20.7
2	31-40	190	31.7
3	41-50	121	20.1
4	51-90	165	27.5
	Total	600	100
	Mean = 42.94		Standard Deviation = 14.25

The distribution of respondents by age is shown in Table 1. According to the data, the largest percentage (31.7%) of the 600 respondents are between the ages of 31 and 40, followed by those between the ages of 51 and 90 (27.5%). Of the sample, 20.7% of respondents are between the ages of 20 and 30, and 20.1% are between the ages of 41 and 50. This implies that the sample reflects a varied age distribution by including participants from both younger and older age groups. The overall mean age of the respondents is 42.94 years, with a standard deviation of 14.25, indicating a moderately wide dispersion of ages around the mean. This suggests that the sample includes participants from both younger and older age categories, reflecting a diverse age distribution.

Table 2: Distribution of the respondents according to their educational category

Education of the Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
1 10 years	42	7.0
2 12 years	130	21.6
3 14 years	145	24.2
4 16 years	198	33.0
5 18 years	85	14.2
Total	600	100
Mean = 14.51		Standard Deviation = 2.30

The distribution of respondents by level of education is shown in Table 2. The majority (33.0%) of the 600 respondents have completed 16 years of education, suggesting that a sizable portion of participants possess at least a bachelor's degree. The majority of participants appear to have secondary to undergraduate-level qualifications, as evidenced by the 24.2% of respondents with 14 years of education and the 21.6% with 12 years. Just 7.0% have 10 years of education, which represents those who completed matriculation, while a smaller percentage, 14.2%, have 18 years of education, which reflects postgraduate-level qualifications. The mean years of education among respondents is 14.51 with a standard deviation of 2.30, demonstrating that educational attainment is relatively high and moderately consistent across the sample, with most individuals falling within higher education levels.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to their current occupation

Occupation of the respondent	Frequency	Percentage
1 Student	33	5.5
2 Employed	373	62.2
3 Unemployed	57	9.5
4 Business	39	6.5
5 Retired	98	16.3
Total	600	100

The distribution of respondents by current occupation is shown in Table 3. Most participants are actively involved in the workforce, as evidenced by the fact that the majority of respondents (62.2%) are employed. A significant percentage of older people who have finished their professional careers are represented by the 16.3% who are retired. A smaller percentage of respondents 9.5% are unemployed, indicating that they are not currently engaged in the labour market. 5.5% of the sample consists of students, who are people who are still in school, and 6.5% are people who work for themselves or in business. The majority of the respondents are working professionals, according to the data overall, but there is also a balanced representation of other occupational groups like retirees, students, and business owners, creating a diverse occupational pool.

Table 4: Distribution of the respondents according to their monthly income

Occupation of the respondent	Frequency	Percentage
1 10000-78000	147	24.5
2 78001-100000	178	29.7
3 100001-150000	130	21.7
4 150001-300000	145	24.1
Total	600	100

Mean = 112636.66   Standard Deviation = 50653.20

The respondents' monthly income distribution is shown in Table 4. According to the data, the majority of respondents (29.7%) make between 78,001 and 100,000, followed by those who make between 10,000 and 78,000 (24.5%) and those who make between 150,001 and 300,000. Furthermore, 21.7% of those surveyed earn between $100,000 and $150,000 per month. The mean monthly income is 112,636.66 with a standard deviation of 50,653.20, suggesting a considerable variation in income levels among the respondents. This diversity reflects the inclusion of individuals from lower, middle-, and higher-income brackets, indicating a socioeconomically varied sample where most respondents belong to middle-income groups but with noticeable representation from both lower and upper-income earners.

Table 5: Descriptive analysis showing frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation of rule of law in the dimension of corruption.   (Rule of law   N = 600)

Rule of Law	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Standard Deviation
Do you believe that rule of law is important for the development of Pakistan?	79 13.2%	58 9.7%	37 6.2%	272 45.3%	154 25.6%	3.60	1.31
Laws are followed and protects individual rights.	86 14.3%	63 10.5%	39 6.6%	218 36.3%	194 32.3%	3.61	1.39
Do you believe that the rule of law is applied equally in Pakistan?	192 32%	211 35%	44 7.3%	91 15.2%	63 10.5%	2.37	1.34
Do you believe that judiciary is independent in Pakistan?	211 35.2%	183 30.5%	53 8.8%	97 16.2%	56 9.3%	2.34	1.34
It is important for citizens to understand the rule of law in Pakistan.	71 11.8%	97 16.2%	49 8.2%	229 38.2%	154 25.6%	3.49	1.34

A descriptive analysis of respondents' opinions regarding the rule of law in relation to corruption in Pakistan is shown in Table 5. The results show that, with a mean score of 3.60 (SD = 1.31), the majority of respondents (45.3%) agreed and 25.6% strongly agreed that the rule of law is important for Pakistan's development. A mean score of 3.61 (SD = 1.39) indicates that most people have a positive opinion of the legal system's role in protecting citizens, with 36.3% agreeing and 32.3% strongly agreeing that laws are followed and protect individual rights. However, the majority of respondents disagreed (32%) or strongly disagreed (35%), yielding a lower mean of 2.37 (SD = 1.34), when asked

if the rule of law is applied equally in Pakistan. This suggests that there is a general perception that there is still inequality in the way the law is applied. Similar trends were seen with regard to judicial independence, with a mean score of 2.34 (SD = 1.34), indicating low public trust in the judiciary's independence, with 35.2% strongly disagreeing and 30.5% disagreeing. Finally, the mean score was 3.49 (SD = 1.34), with 38.2% agreeing and 25.6% strongly agreeing that citizens should understand the rule of law. In general, the findings show that although respondents acknowledge the importance of the rule of law and its function in defending rights, they have doubts about its impartiality and the independence of Pakistan's judiciary.

The results shown in Table 5 are in line with earlier studies that looked at how people in Pakistan perceived the rule of law, corruption, and judicial independence. Citizens in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan value legal frameworks but saw justice institutions as weak and applied unevenly, which is similar to the current results, where the majority of respondents agreed that the rule of law is crucial for national development but expressed scepticism about its equal application and judicial independence (United Nations Development Programme, 2021). Similar to the low mean scores in equality and judicial autonomy, Pakistan's pervasive corruption, lack of transparency, and uneven application of the law contributed to its low ranking in the Rule of Law Index (World Justice Project, 2016). Consistent with respondents' unfavourable opinions of the justice system's fairness and impartiality, political influence and systemic corruption continue to erode judicial independence and public trust in legal institutions (Khan and Yousaf, 2023). When taken as a whole, these studies support the conclusion that although Pakistanis value the rule of law, they continue to question its institutional integrity and practical application.

Table 6: Descriptive analysis showing frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation of transparency in the dimension of corruption. (Transparency N = 600)

Transparency	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Standard Deviation
Do you believe that transparency is important in governmental organizations?	63 10.5%	99 16.5%	38 6.3%	216 36%	184 30.7%	3.59	1.34
Your government is transparent in decision making process.	192 32%	184 30.7%	39 6.5%	113 18.8%	72 12%	2.48	1.41
There are barriers to transparency in Pakistan.	78 13%	61 10.2%	34 5.6%	223 37.2%	204 34%	3.69	1.37
Do you support measures to increase transparency in Pakistan?	59 9.8%	81 13.5%	42 7%	208 34.7%	210 35%	3.71	1.32
Lack of transparency affect your trust in governmental organizations.	64 10.7%	91 15.2%	56 9.3%	179 29.8%	210 35%	3.63	1.37

The descriptive analysis of respondents' opinions regarding transparency in relation to Pakistani corruption is shown in Table 6. With 36 percent agreeing and 30.7% strongly agreeing that transparency is crucial in governmental organizations, the results show that a sizable majority understand the significance of transparency in governance (Mean = 3.59, SD = 1.34). However, the majority of respondents disagreed (32%) or strongly

disagreed (30.7%) when asked if the government is transparent in its decision-making processes. This resulted in a significantly lower mean of 2.48 (SD = 1.41), indicating discontent with the transparency of governmental actions. With a comparatively high mean score of 3.69 (SD = 1.37), a significant percentage of participants (37.2% agreed, 34% strongly agreed) acknowledged the existence of barriers to transparency in Pakistan. Furthermore, 34.7% of respondents agreed with initiatives aimed at increasing transparency, and 35% strongly agreed (Mean = 3.71, SD = 1.32). Additionally, 64.8% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their trust in governmental organizations is negatively impacted by a lack of transparency (Mean = 3.63, SD = 1.37). The results show that the public strongly supports transparency as a fundamental governance principle, but there is also a great deal of scepticism regarding its real implementation and worry about its lack, which erodes public confidence in government agencies.

Table 6's results are consistent with earlier research highlighting the vital role that transparency plays in lowering corruption and boosting public confidence in governmental institutions. in line with the current findings, which show that while the majority of respondents appreciated transparency, they had reservations about its application in Pakistan. Since limited access to information erodes accountability and increases mistrust in political institutions, citizens view a lack of transparency as a significant obstacle to good governance (Ahmed and Nawaz, 2020). Although reforms to increase transparency are widely supported by the public, bureaucratic and structural obstacles still stand in the way of their actualization (United Nations Development Programme, 2021). Institutional credibility is directly improved and corruption risks are decreased by increasing transparency and citizen participation in governance (World Bank, 2019). When taken as a whole, these studies support the idea that, despite the fact that transparency is generally accepted to be crucial for efficient governance, Pakistan's poor application of it still undermines public confidence and impedes anti-corruption initiatives.

Table 7: Descriptive analysis showing frequency distribution, mean and standard deviation of accountability in the dimension of corruption.　　(Accountability　N = 600)

Accountability	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Standard Deviation
Accountability is important in governmental organizations.	57 9.5%	69 11.5%	42 7%	249 41.5%	183 30.5%	3.72	1.27
Do you believe that government or its organizations are accountable in its decision-making processes?	57 9.5%	81 13.5%	40 6.6%	175 29.2%	247 41.2%	3.79	1.35
There are obstacles to accountability in Pakistan.	63 10.5%	47 7.8%	29 4.8%	220 36.7%	241 40.2%	3.88	1.30
Do you believe that leaders to be held accountable for their actions?	57 9.5%	85 14.2%	44 7.3%	221 36.8%	193 32.2%	3.68	1.31

Lack of accountability can cause corruption.	75 12.5%	88 14.7%	62 10.3%	189 31.5%	186 31%	3.53	1.38
Do you believe that accountability mechanisms or policies are properly working in Pakistan?	208 34.7%	220 36.7%	38 6.3%	75 12.5%	59 9.8%	2.26	1.31

The descriptive analysis of respondents' views of accountability in relation to Pakistan's corruption dimension is shown in Table 7. With a mean score of 3.72 (SD = 1.27), the results show that a significant majority of respondents (41.5% agreed and 30.5% strongly agreed) think accountability is crucial in governmental organizations. Likewise, the majority of respondents (29.2% agreed and 41.2% strongly agreed) believed that government agencies ought to be held accountable for their choices (Mean = 3.79, SD = 1.35). However, a high mean of 3.88 (SD = 1.30) indicates that a sizable portion of respondents (36.7% agreed and 40.2% strongly agreed) also acknowledged the existence of major barriers to accountability in Pakistan. Additionally, 62.5% agreed or strongly agreed that a lack of accountability leads to corruption (Mean = 3.53, SD = 1.38), and a majority (36.8% agreed and 32.2% strongly agreed) supported the idea that leaders should be held accountable for their actions (Mean = 3.68, SD = 1.31). Conversely, the majority of respondents (34.7% strongly disagreed and 36.7% disagreed) thought that the current accountability policies were not working as intended, indicating that opinions regarding the efficacy of accountability mechanisms were overwhelmingly negative (Mean = 2.26, SD = 1.31). Overall, the findings show that although people in Pakistan strongly believe in accountability and acknowledge its vital role in fighting corruption, they are deeply dissatisfied with the way accountability systems function in their country, viewing them as inefficient, weak, and hampered by structural issues.

The results shown in Table 7 are in line with earlier studies emphasizing the vital role that accountability plays in advancing good governance and thwarting corruption in Pakistan. comparable to the current study, in which participants stressed the value of accountability but voiced discontent with how it was being applied. Political meddling and inadequate accountability systems continue to be major causes of corruption in government institutions (Transparency International Pakistan, 2023). The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and other anti-corruption organizations have been established, but their efficacy is frequently questioned because of their selective accountability and lack of transparency (Ahmad and Saleem, 2021). Pakistan's progress toward transparent governance is hampered by institutional flaws and insufficient enforcement of accountability frameworks (World Bank, 2019). Stronger accountability measures are generally supported by the public, who believe that corruption and public mistrust are exacerbated by a lack of equitable and consistent accountability (Hassan and Khan, 2020). When taken as a whole, these studies support the conclusions in Table 7, which indicates that although accountability is widely acknowledged to be important, Pakistan's accountability systems are seen as inefficient and politically compromised.

Conclusion:

Almost every element of Pakistan's socio-political and economic structure is impacted by the complicated and pervasive problem of corruption. According to this research, the main causes of corruption are low public sector wages, political meddling, a lack of accountability, weak institutional frameworks, and a culture that tolerates unethical behaviour. These elements have produced a climate in which unethical

behaviour is accepted and frequently goes unchecked. It is challenging to start significant reform because of the lax enforcement of anti-corruption laws and the lack of political will.

Corruption has wide-ranging effects that are harmful to Pakistan's progress. It results in ineffective public service delivery, erodes public confidence in government institutions, and threatens the rule of law. Economically, corruption exacerbates poverty, deters foreign and domestic investment, and fuels growing inequality. Socially, it increases the distance between the people and the government, promotes injustice, and erodes moral principles. The public's mounting dissatisfaction with institutional corruption is a reflection of how urgently society needs to undergo structural and cultural change.

In conclusion, combating corruption in Pakistan necessitates a thorough and long-term strategy that incorporates institutional, legal, cultural, and economic changes. Fighting corruption requires bolstering accountability and transparency systems, enabling oversight organizations, guaranteeing merit-based hiring, and encouraging civic education. Furthermore, by exemplifying honesty and sound governance, political leadership must show a sincere commitment to anti-corruption initiatives. Pakistan can only hope to lessen corruption and clear the path for a more just, equitable, and prosperous future by making sincere and concerted efforts.

Recommendations:

Strengthening institutional frameworks and enhancing governance mechanisms are crucial for tackling the underlying causes of corruption in Pakistan. This involves guaranteeing the autonomy and effectiveness of accountability organizations like the Auditor General's Office, Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), and National Accountability Bureau (NAB). Political meddling and favouritism can be decreased in public institutions through open hiring practices, merit-based promotions, and performance reviews. Furthermore, civil service reforms that provide clear career paths and competitive salaries would lessen the financial incentive to participate in corrupt activities.

Encouraging openness and information availability are equally crucial. The Right to Information laws should be fully implemented and enforced by the government, requiring that financial records, project details, and procurement procedures be made publicly available. By reducing human interaction and discretionary power, e-governance tools and the digitization of public services can drastically cut down on opportunities for bribery and red tape. To change societal perceptions that accept or condone corruption, educational initiatives and public awareness campaigns must be implemented at all levels.

Lastly, ethical development and civic engagement must be the main focuses of long-term anti-corruption initiatives. To establish a culture of accountability, it is essential to support civil society organizations, promote media independence, and incorporate anti-corruption content into school curricula. Laws protecting whistleblowers ought to be reinforced so that people can expose wrongdoing without worrying about reprisals. Pakistan can create a more open, equitable, and resilient society that successfully fends off the damaging effects of corruption by fusing institutional reform with cultural transformation.

Note: This research article has been derived from my PhD research thesis titled (investigation of causes of corruption and its implications on governance in Punjab, Pakistan).

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