
An Introduction to "Corruption and Media: Scandals, Actors, Trends and Analysis"

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Most people perceive corruption as an act of earning wealth for personal benefit by those holding public office, misusing their power and authority. It is often thought of as an act of acquiring movable and immovable wealth and assets or engaging in monetary transactions. However, the scope of corruption is much wider than what is commonly perceived. Transparency International defines it as an "act of misusing powers bestowed on one for the sake of personal gain,"¹ while the World Bank defines it as the "misuse of public office for personal gain"² covering a wide range of issues from bribery to the theft of public wealth. The Asian Development Bank defines corruption as the misuse of public or private office for personal gain and further states that "corruption involves behaviors on the part of the public and private sectors in which they improperly and unlawfully enrich themselves and/or those close to them, or induce others to do so, by

misusing the position in which they are placed."³

A single definition does not appear to be sufficient to encompass all aspects of corruption, but all available definitions focus particularly on officials in public office. Anti-corruption laws also emphasize this aspect. In other words, anti-corruption laws are formulated with a focus on the conduct and behavior of those holding public offices. It is true that as public officials exercise and enjoy more power and authority, there is a greater likelihood of them being involved in corruption. However, corruption is related to the conduct and behavior of each individual. Therefore, there is often a call to analyze corruption from a much wider and more comprehensive perspective.

Corruption erodes trust in public officials and institutions, weakens democracy, adversely affects economic development, and creates social inequality, poverty, and divisions. Various forms of corruption can be observed in practice, including government employees

¹ Transparency International. (n.d.). *What is corruption?*
<https://www.transparency.org/en/what-is-corruption>

² World Bank. (2020, February 19). *Anticorruption fact sheet*.
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/factsheet/2020/02/19/anticorruption-fact-sheet>

³ Asian Development Bank. (1998). *Anticorruption policy*.
<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/32026/anticorruption.pdf>.

demanding money or gifts for providing services, politicians misusing public funds, political leaders awarding contracts to donors, friends, or family members, and large companies bribing government officials to secure favorable deals or policies.⁴

From this perspective, corruption can occur in government, media, civil society, business, trade, education, and sports sectors. Politicians, government officials, employees, businesspeople, and even ordinary citizens may be involved in corruption. Corruption has become ubiquitous and global—present in developed and developing countries, public and private sectors, and non-governmental and philanthropic organizations. Recent debates have focused on the thriving corruption in the political sector. There are examples of corruption leading to the fall of governments and the erosion of trust in respected personalities and public institutions. Corruption affects a country and its people in multidimensional ways, hindering economic development, exacerbating inequality, poverty, social divides, and environmental crises.⁵ This is why combating corruption is essential for strengthening democracy and ensuring development.

The media plays a crucial role in controlling corruption by uncovering

⁴ Transparency International. (n.d.). *What is corruption?* <https://www.transparency.org/en/what-is-corruption>

⁵ Kharel, A. B. (2021). *Challenges of anti-corruption and its impact on the society*. Researcher, 5(1). <https://nepjol.info/index.php/RESEARCHER>

corruption cases, reporting them, and demanding transparency and accountability. It is the media that brings to light the illegal practices and opaque dealings of those in power. Through investigative journalism, the media exposes wrongdoing, making its role vital in fighting corruption. The media also sensitizes people about corruption, helps build critical thinking, and provides information about administrative, government, and business sectors, making them more accountable. By exposing the adverse impacts of corruption, the media builds a critical faculty in society.⁶

As trust in public institutions and politics erodes, society increasingly relies on the media to expose the wrongdoings of the corrupt and bring them to justice. Even the most powerful individuals are alarmed when their negative coverage appears on the front page of a newspaper.⁷ Investigative journalism is a pillar against corruption, as it exposes hidden wrongdoings in the public forum in a way that cannot be ignored. Courageous journalists uncover cases ranging from small bribes to large-scale scams involving corporate sectors, leading to action against wrongdoers and holding them accountable.⁸

⁶ Mendes, M. (2013). *Overview of corruption in the media in developing countries*. Transparency International.

⁷ Moene, K., & Søreide, T. (2019). *Combating corruption: Investigative journalists on the frontlines*. In R. Krøvel & M. Thowsen (Eds.), *Making transparency possible: An interdisciplinary dialogue* (pp. 109-135). Cappelen Damm Akademisk. <https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.64.ch11>

⁸ Hamilton, J. T. (2016). *Review of democracy's detectives: The economics of investigative journalism*. Harvard University Press

To expose corruption and punish the corrupt, it is essential to understand how corruption occurs and the mechanisms that enable it. Steps taken to prevent, control, and oppose corruption, as well as to minimize its negative impacts, are part of corruption control measures.⁹ The media plays an important role in this process by covering these steps, thereby promoting good governance and controlling corruption. The media not only raises public awareness about the causes, consequences, and possible solutions to corruption but also investigates and reports on it.¹⁰ By exposing the wrongdoings of the government and others, the media can influence the behavior of voters, discipline corrupt governments, and shape social and political norms to discourage corruption.¹¹

The media acts as a watchdog against corruption, establishes and promotes truth, and involves citizens in anti-corruption efforts. By monitoring the activities of the legislative, executive, and judiciary branches, the media is often referred to as the fourth estate of democracy, adhering to the principles of checks and balances.¹² In many developed and developing countries, a responsible and investigative press has

contributed to exposing wrongdoings and limiting corruption by acting as a watchdog.¹³

Research and studies are needed to understand both the immediate reactive measures and the long-term impacts triggered by media reporting on corruption. Government investigations, resignations of officials accused of corruption, arrests of the accused, and policy changes are among the immediate reactions to investigative reporting by the media. However, consistent efforts are needed to raise civic awareness, develop critical thinking, strengthen norms and values against corruption, and boycott the corrupt. This is why the media must continuously sensitize society through consistent reporting, articles, editorials, and the dissemination of various materials. For this, however, the media must also be accountable for its own role and duty. It is crucial to examine how effective the media has been, identify its shortcomings, and determine how to minimize them. This book is a step in that direction.

The book contains seven articles that explore corruption cases occurring in different phases, including measures taken for corruption control through laws, policies, and institutional mechanisms, as well as how the media has raised corruption issues. It provides a comprehensive discussion on the role Nepali media has played, whether

⁹ Kharel, A. B. (2021). Challenges of anti-corruption and its impact on the society. *Researcher*, 5(1).

<https://nepjol.info/index.php/RESEARCHER>

¹⁰ Sowunmi, F. A., Raufu, A. A., Oketokun, F. O., Salako, M. A., & Usifoh, O. O. (2010). The role of media in curbing corruption in Nigeria. *Research Journal of Information Technology*, 2(1), 7-23.

¹¹ Deane, J. (2016). *The role of independent media in curbing corruption*. Policy Brief 16. BBC Media Action.

¹² Schauseil, W. (2019). *Media and anti-corruption*. U4 Anti-Corruption Helpdesk and CMI.

¹³ Myint, U. (2000). Corruption: Causes, consequences and cures. *Asia-Pacific Development Journal*, 7(2).

through investigative journalism or cartoons. The articles are diverse in subject matter, ranging from sociological perspectives to reportage-style writings and legal studies. Due to the diversity of disciplines and sources, the writing styles and citation methods vary.

The article by Deepak Aryal and Rajiv Ranjan Singh explores the historical insights of how corruption became linked to the process of state formation and how it spread and solidified over time. It examines laws from different historical phases and how they interpreted corruption differently. The article focuses on laws and rules framed after the restoration of multiparty democracy in Nepal in 1990. While the government and political parties have prioritized the corruption issue since then, the writers argue that corruption has become deeply rooted in all state mechanisms, and the roles of anti-corruption watchdogs have often been questionable.

The article looks at corruption cases from a multidimensional perspective, shedding light on the types of corruption and the categories of the corrupt. It states that there are various causes of corruption in Nepal, rather than a single cause. The article documents debates and analyses on corruption control laws, hurdles in making such laws, and missing links in those laws. It also discusses the role of anti-corruption watchdog authorities, and the measures needed to control corruption. The authors argue that a single approach is insufficient

and that multiple strategies are required, including the implementation of existing anti-corruption laws, capacity building of institutions, raising public awareness, political will, coordination among authorities, ending impunity, access to information, and the interventionist role of the media and civil society.

The second article, written by senior journalist Hari Bahadur Thapa in a reportage style, traces corruption issues raised by the media after the political change of 1990. It covers the biggest corruption cases and scams and how the media turned a blind eye to these issues over time, leading to their fading from public memory. Thapa documents laws, rules, and institutions established in different phases—from monarchy to multiparty democracy to republic—to punish those involved in corruption. He argues that when corruption cases are reported, discussed in the public sphere, and the guilty are punished, it should be considered a success story in a democratic society. Thapa's article provides a passing description of 14 major corruption cases from the last three decades, including the Dhamija scam, Levi's sugar scam, LC scam, and Lauda Air scam. It also details how some ministers, such as Gopal Man Shrestha and Surendra Hamal, resigned amid allegations of bribery.

The article also includes incidents of the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) being used as a tool for revenge. For example, after the CIAA acted

against loan defaulters, the then-governor of Nepal Rastra Bank, Bijay Nath Bhattarai, was targeted. The article also discusses the controversial appointment of Lok Man Singh Kari as CIAA chief commissioner and his eventual exit, as well as how CIAA commissioners themselves became defamed. It mentions infamous scandals such as the Sudan scam, the 700-million-rupee misappropriation in the printing press purchase scam, tax evasion by Coca-Cola, gold smuggling using brake shoes and vape, the wide-body jet purchase scam, the fake Bhutanese refugee scam, and the Lalita Niwas land grab scam.

Under the title "Corruption Coverage in Media," Bhuwan KC, Chetana Kunwar, and Janardan Nepal explore the role of the media in exposing corruption cases. The article argues that deep and investigative reporting by the media on corruption scandals contributes to legal action against those involved, policy changes, and good governance. It examines questions such as: What kind of news reports, analyses, editorials, opinions, features, and interviews were published? Are the materials related to the federal government, provinces, or local levels? Which authorities are implicated? The article subtly analyzes the sources quoted and the depth of the materials. It presents a comprehensive analysis of 215 materials published in *Kantipur*, *Gorkhapatra*, *onlinekhabar.com*, *ekagaj.com*, and *lokantar.com* over two months—two weeks before and after International Anti-

Corruption Day and the anniversary of the CIAA.

The research reveals that the media prioritized corruption-related news reports (79.2%), but coverage of interviews was low (0.5%). Most reports were related to Bagmati Province (72.8%), with the least coverage of Gandaki Province (1%). The majority of reports were without bylines (74.4%), and event-based reporting topped the list (86.2%). Of the published reports, 31.4% were related to financial irregularities, with the majority (55.1%) linked to the government sector. More than a quarter of the reports (26.8%) were related to taxation, revenue, and administration. In terms of government spheres, the majority of media materials (36.7%) were related to local governments, with 99.5% of reports citing news sources, 93.8% of which were known sources. The article concludes that CIAA has been the main source in corruption-related news reports.

In the article "Tax Evasion Scam of Coca-Cola Company and Media Trend," Dr. Dipesh Ghimire argues that while the media has played a significant role in exposing corruption in public office, it remains apathetic toward tax evasion in the private sector. The article, based on quantitative research, explores the causes behind this apathy. It focuses on the case of the Department of Revenue Investigation filing a case against Bottlers Nepal and Bottlers Nepal (Terai) Limited for tax evasion amounting to Rs. 3.71 billion, referred to as the Coca-Cola scam. The article examines

the media's lack of coverage and the potential causes behind it.

The study concludes that mainstream media either chose not to report the Coca-Cola tax evasion case or gave it minimal priority. The causes identified include expectations for advertisements, corporate relations, and political acquiescence. The article argues that threats received by media outlets and journalists, as well as economic inducements, prove this claim.

The article "The CCTV Footage Scam: Search for Evidence in Investigative Journalism" by Bhuwan KC and Sakuntala Lothyal examines media coverage of the CCTV footage scam involving Finance Minister Janardan Sharma. Sharma was accused of involving unauthorized persons in the preparation of the 2022/23 budget and removing CCTV footage to hide evidence. The main opposition party, CPN-UML, obstructed parliament for months, demanding a parliamentary inquiry committee. The media failed to expose evidence of footage removal, and the probe committee could not prove Sharma's involvement, leading to his reinstatement. The article analyzes 103 media materials published in Annapurna Post, Kantipur, and Gorkhapatra.

The study reveals that Kantipur published 41.8% of the materials, followed by Annapurna Post (40.8%) and Gorkhapatra (17.4%). While 74.6% of the materials were related to the case, 50.6% insinuated Sharma's complicity in altering tax rates. The majority of the contents (80.5%) had

bylines, and 44.6% were placed on the front page. Informal and investigative reports accounted for 42.9%. The article concludes that the newspapers covered the incident with priority, continuous follow-up, and investigation. Most reports included more than five sources, adding to their reliability. The reports highlighted budget tampering in 11 sectors but did not provide space for rebuttals from the Ministry of Finance, raising questions about the validity of the parliamentary probe committee.

The article "Cartoons and Images Against Corruption" by Dr. Kundan Aryal explores how cartoons have been used in the media to expose corruption. The writer argues that cartoons highlight societal ills, question the conduct of authorities, raise awareness, and spread messages of reform. The article analyzes 50 cartoons displayed in exhibitions organized by the Cartoonist Club under the title Nisana in Kathmandu, Biratnagar, Janakpur, Pokhara, Butwal, Surkhet, and Dhangadhi from April to August 2022. The cartoons addressed issues such as policy corruption, abuse of power, financial transactions, bribery, corruption in education, exploitation of natural resources, health sector ills, agricultural problems, and judicial anomalies. The symbols used in the cartoons were diverse, including octopuses, giants, money, weightlifters, inauguration events, pig farming, shadows, machines, chairs, sacks, scales, computers, students, unidentified creatures, houses, fish, food, coronavirus, classrooms, seas, slippers, statues, operation theaters, pockets, planes,

bridges, boulders, snakes, money bags, trees with extended roots, men with six hands, and volcanoes. The writer concludes that the cartoons were effective in spreading anti-corruption messages due to their diversity and creativity.

The article "Legal Provisions on Corruption Control in Nepal" by Tejman Shrestha argues that as society becomes more developed and cultured, ensuring good governance becomes more challenging. The writer states that corruption is a complex problem in less economically developed countries and has negatively impacted Nepal's economy. The article highlights Nepal's legal and constitutional commitments to prohibit, control, and punish corruption, as well as its endorsement of international anti-corruption conventions. However, the writer notes that serious problems persist with existing laws, policies, and structures. The article emphasizes the importance of anti-corruption laws and institutions, discusses corruption control measures, and examines international practices and Nepal's institutional structures.

The writer concludes that corruption in Nepal has become institutionalized and that if it is not rooted out, the misuse of power and resources will push the country toward ill fate. Amnesty given in the name of policy decisions has created accountability gaps, breeding corruption. The writer argues that those found guilty of corruption should not be granted immunity, regardless of their rank or class, and that public officials should

declare their property upon entering and exiting office. Anti-corruption agencies must play a greater role with responsibility.

The book provides a comprehensive picture of corruption in Nepal, the efforts to control it, and the media's role in covering corruption issues. Corruption has become deeply rooted in the country, spreading from federal to local levels and affecting all sectors. It is imperative to keep the public informed about the extent and impact of corruption. However, the state alone cannot combat corruption effectively. Anti-corruption campaigns require the collective efforts of the media, civil society, and the general public. As a watchdog, the media must monitor state authorities, point out flaws in laws and policies, and advocate for citizen participation. Civil society, in coordination with the media, should launch pressure campaigns to support anti-corruption efforts.

Transparency is key to fighting corruption. It involves ensuring that people have easy access to information and understand what is happening. Seeking and obtaining information is a basic human right that, when implemented effectively, builds public trust in decision-makers and institutions. The media plays a vital role in this process by simplifying complex corruption issues and advocating against them. Investigative journalism remains crucial, as it uncovers wrongdoing, collects evidence, and holds the corrupt accountable.

While social media has gained popularity, mainstream media must not compete with it in spreading fake news. Instead, it should fact-check social media content and explain the truth to the public. This will help regain public trust and counter disinformation. In the fight against corruption, mainstream media and social media are not rivals but complements. Social media can amplify the anti-corruption

campaigns of mainstream media, creating a public sphere that discusses corruption and holds the powerful accountable.

Note: This article, originally written in Nepali, is the introduction of the book: Pathak, T. & KC, B. (2024). *Corruption and Media: Scandals, Actors, Trends and Analysis*. Center for Media Research – Nepal. DOI: 10.62657/cmr10214

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