



From transparency to trust: Key determinants of corruption perception in Thailand

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Abstract

This study examines public perceptions of corruption in Thailand using a qualitative research approach, incorporating in-depth interviews and thematic analysis to identify key influencing factors. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, including citizens with government service experience, policymakers, journalists specializing in corruption, and legal experts in anti-corruption efforts. The findings indicate that factors shaping corruption perceptions include government transparency, law enforcement, citizen participation, and the media's role. Additionally, social media plays a crucial role in disseminating corruption-related information, though it can sometimes lead to exaggerated perceptions or misinformation, affecting public trust in the government. The insights from this study provide practical implications for enhancing government transparency through improved information disclosure policies, leveraging technology to minimize corruption risks, and strengthening the role of media and civil society in monitoring government accountability.

Keywords: public perception, government transparency, media, social media, law enforcement, citizen participation

Background and significance

Corruption and Public Perception in Thailand: An Analysis of Influencing Factors Corruption is a deeply rooted issue that significantly impacts government administration and society as a whole, particularly in countries where political systems and institutions lack stability. This problem not only

causes economic damage but also erodes public trust in the government, weakens the transparency of public institutions, and hinders social development (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016; Achim & Borlea, 2018).

Public perception of corruption serves as an indicator reflecting both the actual level of corruption and the government's ability to address the issue. Various factors influence corruption perception, including social structures, governance systems, organizational culture, and access to information (Treisman, 2007; Kolstad & Wiig, 2009; Zhang, 2022). According to Transparency International's 2023 report, Thailand's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) stands at 35/100, significantly lower than ASEAN countries with strong anti-corruption measures, such as Singapore (83/100) and Malaysia (47/100). Additionally, the Edelman Trust Barometer (2023) revealed that public trust in the Thai government has declined by 12% over the past five years due to corruption and a lack of transparency in policymaking.

In Thailand, corruption is deeply rooted in governance and administration, especially during political instability and when government decision-making lacks transparency (Mutebi, 2008; Ma et al., 2022). Key factors shaping corruption perception include limited government transparency, entrenched patronage systems, and ineffective oversight mechanisms. Factors Influencing Corruption Perception: Role of media and social media mass and social media significantly shape public perceptions of corruption. In countries with high media freedom, corruption cases are reported more frequently, increasing public awareness (Treisman, 2007). However, excessive negative coverage can distort perceptions, making corruption seem more widespread than it is and potentially undermining trust in the government (Stapenhurst, 2000). Culture and Power Distance Thailand's high-power distance culture reinforces hierarchical structures and respect for authority, leading many to accept power inequalities. This normalization of corruption reduces motivation to challenge or expose corrupt practices.

Government Transparency and Information Disclosure Transparency plays a crucial role in shaping corruption perception. While access to government data and oversight mechanisms can reduce corruption concerns, Thailand faces practical limitations in data accessibility and quality, despite existing disclosure laws (Transparency International, 2023; Besley & Prat, 2006). Fairness in Government Decision-Making Public perception of corruption is closely tied to the fairness of government actions, particularly in resource allocation and service delivery. When citizens view the government as fair and equitable, trust in public institutions strengthens, leading to lower corruption perception.

Objective

1. To analyze the key factors influencing public perceptions of corruption in Thailand and their impact on trust in government institutions.
2. To examine the primary factors shaping corruption perception, focusing on the roles of government transparency, law enforcement, media influence, and cultural norms in determining public attitudes toward corruption in Thai society.
3. To assess the impact of law enforcement and media on corruption perception, evaluating how the effectiveness of legal enforcement, accessibility of government information, and media reporting influence public opinions regarding government legitimacy and accountability.

Achieving these objectives will provide deeper insights into the key determinants of corruption perception in Thailand and serve as a foundation for developing effective strategies to prevent and mitigate corruption.

Literature review

Corruption perception refers to an individual's belief about the level of corruption within institutions scholars define corruption perception as encompassing bribery, patronage systems, and the misuse of public resources Previous studies indicate that governance quality, media coverage, and personal experiences significantly influence how people perceive corruption Comparing models from different countries, Singapore, Indonesia, and European nations present varying approaches to corruption perception. In Singapore, the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) enforces strict anti-corruption measures, leading to high levels of public trust. In contrast, Indonesia, despite having anti-corruption policies, faces challenges in law enforcement, resulting in persistent skepticism among its citizens (Transparency International, 2023). Principal-Agent Theory, the concept of corruption can be explained through Principal-Agent Theory (Agency Theory), which highlights conflicts of interest and information asymmetry between agents (government officials) and principals (citizens). In weakly regulated systems, officials may exploit their positions for personal gain rather than acting in the public's best interest. Information asymmetry prevents citizens from effectively monitoring government actions, increasing corruption risks. Rose-Ackerman (1978) suggests addressing this issue by enhancing government transparency, introducing positive incentives, and establishing independent oversight agencies to mitigate corruption. This study applies Principal-Agent Theory to explain why Thai citizens perceive high levels of corruption despite existing anti-corruption measures. Such perceptions may reflect declining trust in accountability mechanisms and government transparency, which are crucial to the effectiveness of anti-corruption policies. Collective Action Theory Collective Action Theory argues that corruption is deeply embedded in society and driven by shared perceptions of others' behavior. If individuals believe that others engage in corruption, they are more likely to participate, making corruption a normalized behavior that is difficult to change. To address this issue, fostering public engagement through transparency promotion programs and civil society participation is essential. When people perceive that strong anti-corruption measures are in place and widely supported, their likelihood of resisting corrupt practices increases. This study employs Collective Action Theory to analyze how structural factors such as patronage systems and deference to authority shape corruption perception in Thailand. The persistence of patronage networks normalizes favoritism and nepotism, making anti-corruption efforts challenging. Effective solutions must focus on changing social norms and incentivizing public participation to combat corruption at the societal level. Research highlights those countries leveraging technology for transparency experience higher public trust. For instance, Estonia's e-Government system enables real-time access to government spending, fostering public confidence in governance. Measuring Corruption Perception in Thailand, corruption perception is influenced by social structures, bureaucratic systems, and government transparency. Previous research has measured corruption perception through various dimensions, including

power distance, government transparency, and decision-making fairness, which help explain corruption within the Thai context. According to Transparency International (2023), Thailand's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) stands at 35/100, reflecting deeply rooted corruption within bureaucratic and political systems. Despite government anti-corruption efforts, citizens continue to perceive corruption as a structural problem that is difficult to eliminate. Empirical Evidence of Corruption in Thailand, several high-profile corruption cases illustrate the systemic nature of corruption in Thailand. One prominent example is the rice-pledging scheme scandal, involving high-ranking officials and resulting in massive economic losses. Additionally, corruption in public procurement highlights the abuse of authority and challenges in reforming oversight mechanisms. These cases contribute to persistent public skepticism toward government integrity and reinforce corruption perceptions across Thai society.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative exploratory research design using in-depth interviews to examine factors influencing corruption perception in Thailand.

1. Population and sample

Purposive sampling was used to select participants from four stakeholder groups: general citizens with firsthand experiences in dealing with government agencies, government officials involved in administrative and policy-related roles, journalists and media experts specializing in corruption-related reporting, and legal professionals and anti-corruption policy experts with expertise in legal frameworks and enforcement. This study used purposive sampling to select 17 key informants, ensuring diverse perspectives on corruption perception and governance. Participants were categorized into four groups: General citizens (7 participants) with direct experience in government interactions, Government officials (4 participants) involved in policy and administration, Journalists and media experts (3) specializing in corruption reporting, and Legal professionals and anti-corruption experts (3 participants) focusing on legal frameworks and enforcement.

2. Research tools

This study utilized semi-structured interviews as the primary research tool. The interview guide was designed to cover key themes such as corruption perception, governance, transparency, legal enforcement, and media influence. The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility in probing deeper into participant responses while ensuring consistency across interviews.

3. Data collection

Interviews, lasting 45 to 90 minutes, were conducted confidentially, either in person or via online platforms, and were audio-recorded with participant consent, with additional field notes taken.

4. Data analysis

The data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis, a robust method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Thematic analysis involves six key steps: (1) Familiarization with the data, (2) Generating initial codes, (3) Searching for themes, (4) Reviewing themes, (5) Defining and naming themes, and (6) Producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Interview transcripts were transcribed verbatim and coded using NVivo software, which facilitated systematic coding and theme development. Codes were initially generated from the conceptual framework but remained open to new themes emerging directly from the data. This analytical approach allowed the study to move beyond merely describing data to interpreting the deeper meanings and implications of participants' responses.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were meticulously addressed to ensure the study adhered to academic and institutional standards. The research proposal was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee Panel 2 at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, under the Certificate Number: COE. 2-025/2025. This approval process involved evaluating the study's adherence to ethical principles, including informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any stage of the research. Participants were provided with detailed information about the study's objectives, procedures, and potential risks before consenting to participate. To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were used in interview transcripts, and identifiable data were securely stored with restricted access. The study also adhered to the Belmont Report principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice, ensuring that the research process was ethical and participants' rights were protected.

Results

This study conducted in-depth interviews with a sample of 17 participants, consisting of: 1) General citizens (7 participants) who have had experiences interacting with government agencies. 2) Government officials (4 participants) working in public sector organizations related to administration and policy implementation. 3) Journalists and media experts (3 participants) who play a role in reporting and analyzing corruption-related issues. 4) Legal professionals and anti-corruption policy experts (3 participants) with expertise in law and enforcement. Most interviews indicated that corruption is deeply embedded in the bureaucratic system and state administration, leading to a lack of public confidence in the government's ability to control and resolve this issue. General citizens (Interviews 3, 6, 9) perceived corruption as a "normal" aspect of bureaucracy, making them feel that they have no other option but to offer bribes to receive services that should be readily available. Government officials (Interviews 12, 15) stated that corruption is not only prevalent at lower levels but is also embedded in policy-making processes, making it difficult to address effectively. Interview 9 commented: "When major corruption scandals occur, they often end with no one being held accountable, which further erodes public trust in the legal system and government administration. "Corruption is viewed as an intrinsic part of the bureaucratic system that has persisted for a long time, resulting in a widespread lack of trust in state agencies and skepticism about the government's ability to manage the issue effectively. Lack of Effective Oversight Mechanisms and Weak Legal Enforcement Many interviews indicated that state oversight mechanisms remain ineffective and lack stringency, enabling offenders to escape punishment. Journalists and media experts (Interviews 7, 11, 14) emphasized that the media plays a crucial role in exposing corruption cases, but sometimes, they face pressure from the government to limit their reporting. Legal

experts (Interviews 16, 17) noted that weak legal frameworks and inconsistent enforcement allow those in power to evade accountability.

Interview 17 explained: "Corruption-related trials often take a long time and usually result in penalties that are not severe enough to deter repeat offenses. "Several interviews pointed out that corruption persists due to loopholes in oversight mechanisms and law enforcement. The absence of an independent agency capable of conducting unbiased investigations into government operations perpetuates the cycle of corruption. Increased Public Awareness of Corruption Through social media. Social media has become a crucial platform for the public to quickly and widely access information about corruption. However, it also facilitates the spread of misinformation. General citizens (Interviews 2, 5, 8) reported that they receive more information about corruption through Facebook and Twitter than from traditional news sources.

Journalists (Interviews 10, 13) warned that some corruption-related reports lack sufficient evidence, which could lead to public misunderstandings. Interview 8 stated: "Social media has helped uncover more corruption cases, but there should be a system to verify the accuracy of information before news is disseminated. "While social media has enhanced public awareness of corruption, the spread of unverified information may contribute to misconceptions about the actual situation. The Impact of Corruption on Citizens and the Economy Corruption directly affects people's daily lives and imposes a significant burden on the country's economy. General citizens (Interviews 1, 4, 6) stated that they had to pay extra fees to receive government services more quickly, such as obtaining official documents. Government officials (Interviews 12, 15) acknowledged that bribery culture exists in various government offices due to gaps in oversight. Interview 4 noted: "Corruption increases business operation costs, making it difficult for small entrepreneurs to compete. "Corruption has adverse effects on economic growth and national development, leading to unfair resource allocation and increased social inequality. It also discourages foreign investment and raises operational costs for businesses in Thailand. Strategies to Combat Corruption Interviews suggested various strategies to reduce corruption, with a strong emphasis on enhancing government transparency and promoting public participation. Legal experts (Interviews 16, 17) proposed increasing penalties for corruption-related offenses. Government officials (Interviews 12, 15) supported the implementation of whistleblower protection measures to encourage citizens to report corrupt activities.

Interview 17 stated: "Protecting whistleblowers is essential. If people feel safe when exposing corruption, it will significantly contribute to reducing this issue." Stronger law enforcement, increased government transparency, and greater public participation are key approaches to mitigating corruption. Additionally, educational initiatives should be implemented to instill integrity and transparency values from an early age.

Word frequency analysis and word cloud were detailed as follows: Word Frequency Analysis of Corruption Perception in Thailand as follows:

1. Word frequency

The word frequency analysis provides insights into the most commonly discussed terms related to corruption perception in Thailand. The most frequently occurring word is “corruption”, which highlights its central role in public discourse (Hübler et al., 2020). Other significant words include “governance,” “transparency,” and “government”, indicating that issues related to institutional structures, public administration, and accountability are highly relevant (Khoman, 2015). Words related to economic and social impacts, such as “economic,” “justice,” and “stability,” suggest concerns about how corruption affects financial systems and societal fairness. The presence of terms like “media,” “digital,” and “whistleblower” emphasizes the role of communication channels and public awareness in shaping corruption perceptions. Additionally, words such as “policies,” “law,” and “compliance” highlight the importance of legal and regulatory frameworks in addressing corruption (Pannasil et al., 2016). The frequency distribution of these terms reflects key areas of concern, including governance efficiency, institutional transparency, legal enforcement, and public participation. The role of corruption in influencing ethical behavior is also significant, as studies indicate that individuals who perceive corruption as widespread tend to engage in unethical actions (Hübler et al., 2021). Moreover, corruption perception is often shaped by governmental anti-corruption measures and citizen engagement. The implementation of anti-corruption systems, such as the Fraud Deterrence System, has been explored to mitigate corruption in Thailand. However, the effectiveness of such measures remains questionable due to bureaucratic inefficiencies and political interference (Prateppornnarong, 2020). This analysis serves as a foundation for understanding public attitudes and developing strategies to combat corruption effectively. Strengthening governance structures, increasing transparency, and fostering public participation are crucial in addressing corruption perception and promoting ethical governance in Thailand. The analysis results are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. Ranked themes in corruption perception and governance

Rank	Theme	Frequency
1	corruption	50
2	governance	35
3	transparency	30
4	government	28
5	economic	22
6	justice	20
7	stability	18

Table 1 presents the key themes related to corruption perception and governance, ranked by frequency of occurrence. The most frequently mentioned term is "corruption" (50 times), highlighting its central role in public discourse. This is followed by "governance" and "transparency", indicating the significance of institutional structures and government openness in addressing corruption. Additionally,

the terms "government", "economic", and "justice" are frequently mentioned, reflecting concerns about the relationship between corruption, public administration, economic impact, and social justice. The presence of "stability" suggests concerns about how corruption affects political and economic stability. This ranking provides an overview of the key issues in corruption perception in Thailand and serves as a foundation for developing policies to combat corruption and enhance effective governance.

2. Word cloud

The Word Cloud illustrates the frequency of words related to corruption perception in Thailand, with the size of each word reflecting its frequency of occurrence. The larger the word, the more frequently it appears in the study's context. The most prominent terms, such as "corruption," "governance," "transparency," "government," and "economic," indicate that corruption is a major issue directly linked to governance and government transparency. Additionally, the frequent mention of economic-related terms highlights concerns about the impact of corruption on the country's financial system. Words related to governance and legal frameworks, such as "policies," "law," "compliance," "accountability," "integrity," and "ethics," emphasize the crucial role of laws, policies, and ethical standards in reducing corruption. Accountability and integrity within public institutions and government officials are seen as essential for fostering good governance. The social and economic impacts of corruption are reflected in words like "justice," "stability," "trust," and "public," indicating concerns that corruption undermines fairness, societal stability, and public trust in the government. The perception that corruption affects economic and political stability may contribute to declining confidence in institutions. The role of media and technology in oversight is highlighted by terms such as "media," "digital," and "whistleblower," demonstrating that mass media and digital technologies play a vital role in exposing corruption. Whistleblower systems are considered an important mechanism that allows citizens to participate in monitoring and preventing fraudulent activities. Anti-corruption measures and public sector reforms are reflected in words such as "anti-corruption," "prevention," "monitoring," and "reform," underscoring key approaches to preventing and mitigating corruption, including government oversight, preventive strategies, and structural reforms to enhance institutional efficiency. In the context of public administration and bureaucracy, words like "leadership," "bureaucracy," and "policy" indicate that the effectiveness of the government, bureaucratic systems, and political leadership plays a significant role in shaping corruption levels in the country. This Word Cloud helps identify key trends in corruption perception in Thailand, with an emphasis on governance, transparency, legal enforcement, justice, media influence, and anti-corruption measures. The insights from this visualization can serve as a foundation for shaping policies and strategies to effectively combat corruption and build a more transparent society with greater public trust in government institutions.



Figure 1. Word cloud representing corruption perception in Thailand

3. Factors Influencing Corruption Perception in Thailand

Corruption perception in Thailand is shaped by multiple interrelated factors, including governance quality, transparency, media influence, legal enforcement, and cultural norms. These elements collectively determine how individuals and institutions perceive the prevalence and impact of corruption in the country.

One of the most significant factors is governance quality, which directly affects public trust in state institutions. Poor governance, characterized by inefficiency, bureaucratic red tape, and weak accountability, increases the perception that corruption is widespread and difficult to control. Transparency and access to information also play a crucial role; when government agencies lack transparency or restrict access to public data, it reinforces the belief that corruption is hidden within the system. Countries with strong transparency measures tend to have lower corruption perception scores (Hussain et al., 2022).

Media influence, particularly through digital and social media platforms, significantly affects how corruption is perceived. While investigative journalism and public whistleblowing help uncover corruption cases, the spread of unverified or misleading information can distort public perception, sometimes exaggerating or underestimating actual corruption levels (Awale & Kulmie, 2024). Legal enforcement and the rule of law are additional critical factors; weak legal frameworks and inconsistent application of anti-corruption laws contribute to the public perception that corruption remains unchecked and that offenders can evade punishment. Conversely, when anti-corruption policies are strictly enforced, corruption perception tends to decline (Muktiyanto et al., 2019). Lastly, cultural and social norms influence corruption perception in Thailand. Hierarchical societal structures, patronage networks, and tolerance of informal payments in bureaucratic processes normalize corrupt practices, making corruption appear more ingrained and difficult to eradicate (Munteanu et al., 2024). These factors collectively shape how Thai citizens, policymakers, and international observers assess corruption, highlighting the need for stronger governance reforms, increased transparency, stricter legal enforcement, and a cultural shift toward integrity and accountability.

Discussion

Corruption remains a deeply entrenched issue in Thailand, significantly shaping public trust in government institutions and impacting national development. The findings of this study highlight multiple factors influencing corruption perception, including government transparency, law enforcement, media influence, and cultural norms. The hierarchical structure of Thai society fosters a strong acceptance of power, even when decision-making processes lack transparency (Pannasil et al., 2016). This issue is exacerbated by weak transparency measures and limited public access to government information, which directly impact public trust and reinforce the perception that corruption is deeply rooted and difficult to eradicate. When government institutions fail to ensure fairness in resource distribution and decision-making, citizens tend to view corruption as an unavoidable aspect of governance, particularly within patronage systems and favoritism networks. Mass media and social media play a crucial role in shaping corruption perception, as investigative journalism serves to expose misconduct. However, the rapid spread of unverified information on social platforms often leads to misinformation or exaggerated claims, further distorting public perception. While media exposure is essential for accountability, excessive negative reporting can create the impression that corruption is more widespread than it actually is, contributing to heightened skepticism and distrust in public institutions (Stapenhurst, 2000). Therefore, media freedom must be accompanied by responsible journalism and fact-checking mechanisms to ensure that corruption-related discussions remain well-informed and balanced.

The economic consequences of corruption are also substantial, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which often face pressure to engage in bribery to facilitate business operations (Ionescu, 2013). Corruption not only increases the cost of doing business but also weakens market competitiveness, discourages foreign investment, and contributes to inefficiencies in economic development. Additionally, corruption perception influences individual ethical behavior, as research suggests that individuals who perceive corruption as widespread are more likely to engage in unethical actions themselves, perpetuating a continuous cycle of corruption (Hübler et al., 2020). Addressing these issues requires a proactive anti-corruption approach that emphasizes transparency, accountability, and public participation (Prateppornnarong, 2020). Furthermore, evidence suggests that as a country's GDP increases, corruption perception tends to decline, reinforcing the idea that economic growth plays a critical role in shaping public attitudes toward corruption (Birdsall et al., 2018). From a theoretical perspective, the study aligns with Principal-Agent Theory, which suggests that when information asymmetry exists between government officials and the public, corruption perception tends to rise. Despite Thailand's ongoing anti-corruption efforts, inconsistent law enforcement and weak oversight mechanisms continue to fuel public skepticism, further supporting prior research that a lack of legal accountability undermines trust in governance (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016). Strengthening judicial independence and imposing stricter penalties on corruption-related offenses would be crucial in restoring public confidence in the legal system. Cultural norms further shape corruption perception, particularly in high power-distance societies where deference to authority is deeply ingrained. In Thailand, patronage networks and informal payments are often normalized, making it difficult to challenge corruption and

reducing public motivation to engage in anti-corruption efforts. Shifting these societal attitudes requires fostering a culture of integrity through civic education, public awareness initiatives, and greater participation in governance oversight. Given these findings, several policy recommendations emerge. Strengthening government transparency through real-time budget tracking platforms, open data initiatives, and blockchain-based procurement systems can significantly enhance accountability and limit corruption opportunities. Improving legal enforcement by increasing penalties for corruption-related offenses, ensuring independent oversight of investigations, and reinforcing whistleblower protection programs would serve as effective deterrents against misconduct. Furthermore, promoting responsible media practices and digital literacy through fact-checking initiatives and journalistic integrity standards can prevent the spread of misinformation regarding corruption. Encouraging civic engagement via community-led oversight programs, participatory budgeting mechanisms, and secure reporting platforms will empower citizens to take an active role in monitoring governance. Moreover, integrating anti-corruption education into school curricula and providing ethical training for public officials can instill long-term cultural shifts toward integrity and accountability. Implementing these measures will not only address corruption perception but also contribute to broader governance improvements and restore public trust. One limitation of this study is the reliance on purposive sampling, which, while effective in selecting participants with relevant expertise, may introduce selection bias and limit the generalizability of findings. Since the sample is chosen based on specific criteria, certain perspectives, particularly from underrepresented groups, may not be fully captured. To mitigate this limitation, future research should consider incorporating random or stratified sampling methods to ensure more diverse viewpoints. Additionally, employing triangulation techniques, such as combining qualitative interviews with survey data or secondary data analysis, could enhance the validity of findings and reduce potential biases, leading to more robust and comprehensive insights into corruption perception in Thailand. Ultimately, this study highlights the interconnected nature of governance, law enforcement, media influence, and social norms in shaping corruption perception. The persistence of high corruption perception in Thailand suggests that systemic reforms are needed to address institutional weaknesses and enhance public confidence in governance. By adopting transparency-driven governance models, enforcing stricter anti-corruption policies, fostering ethical awareness, and increasing public participation, Thailand can move towards a governance system that is more accountable, transparent, and trusted by its citizens.

Body of knowledge

This research has generated new knowledge regarding the factors influencing Thai citizens' perceptions of corruption, which can be used to develop effective policies to reduce corruption and enhance public trust in the government. The findings indicate that government transparency directly affects the level of corruption perception among citizens. When people can easily access budgetary and administrative information, they tend to have greater trust in the government. Conversely, a lack of transparency or restrictions on government information disclosure leads to a heightened perception that corruption is widespread, even if the actual situation may not be as severe.

Additionally, the study highlights that Thailand's social structure places significant emphasis on hierarchy and authority, which contributes to the normalization of patronage systems and nepotism. Many citizens perceive these practices as customary, making it difficult to challenge corruption. When individuals feel that resisting corruption is difficult and could negatively impact their personal or professional lives, they may lack the motivation to report or expose unethical behaviors. Another crucial factor affecting corruption perception is the role of mass media and social media in disseminating corruption-related information. While media outlets play a vital role in exposing corruption, the way news is presented can shape public perception. If news reports focus excessively on corruption cases without discussing government efforts to combat them, the public may develop an exaggerated sense of the severity of corruption in the country. On the other hand, social media platforms enable rapid dissemination of corruption-related information, making it easier for citizens to stay informed. However, these platforms also pose risks related to misinformation and unreliable sources. This research further reveals that public trust in the government increases when citizens perceive decision-making processes as fair and equitable. When resource allocation appears unjust or favors specific groups, corruption is seen as deeply embedded in the system. Additionally, a strong and independent oversight mechanism can help reduce the perception that government officials can evade accountability. The study also emphasizes that corruption perception extends beyond governance, affecting the economy and society. A lack of trust in the government discourages public participation in social and political activities, potentially destabilizing national governance. Corruption also raises business costs, forcing companies to navigate bribery and favoritism, ultimately diminishing Thailand's competitiveness compared to countries with lower corruption levels.

The knowledge gained from this research can be applied across multiple domains. In public policy, the findings provide insights for improving anti-corruption policies, emphasizing government transparency, enhancing regulatory oversight, and promoting public engagement. In education and ethics, this knowledge can serve as a foundation for developing curricula or training programs aimed at fostering anti-corruption awareness among government officials and students. In technology and media, both the public and private sectors can leverage digital tools and online platforms to enhance transparency, such as blockchain-based procurement records or whistleblower applications that allow citizens to report corruption anonymously. In economic development, this research serves as a tool for assessing the impact of corruption on business operations, helping design policies that reduce corruption-related costs and strengthen investor confidence. The findings of this study not only explain the mechanisms behind Thai citizens' perceptions of corruption but also provide practical applications for designing effective anti-corruption measures at both the policy and operational levels. Implementing these insights can contribute to a more transparent society and foster greater public trust in government institutions.

Suggestions

To effectively address corruption perception in Thailand, a multi-faceted approach integrating governance reforms, legal enforcement, media responsibility, and cultural transformation is essential. Strengthening government transparency through real-time budget tracking, open data initiatives, and

blockchain-based procurement systems can significantly reduce corruption risks. Legal enhancements, such as reinforcing independent anti-corruption agencies, imposing stricter penalties, and implementing robust whistleblower protection laws, are critical to ensuring accountability. Given the media's dual role in both exposing corruption and spreading misinformation, promoting fact-checking mechanisms and media literacy programs will help ensure responsible reporting. Additionally, fostering a cultural shift through ethical education in schools, integrity training for public officials, and civic engagement programs can gradually reduce societal tolerance for corruption. Encouraging public participation via community-driven oversight mechanisms, citizen-led audit programs, and secure reporting platforms will empower people to actively monitor governance. By adopting these measures, Thailand can enhance transparency, rebuild trust in institutions, and create a more accountable governance system, where corruption is less tolerated and integrity becomes a fundamental societal

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