

CORRUPTION IN GOVERNMENT: KNOWLEDGE AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Luh Komang Merawati^{1*}, I Ketut Yadnyana², Ni Made Dwi Ratnadi³, Putu Agus Ardiana⁴

Universitas Udayana ^{1,2,3,4}

Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar ¹

¹Corresponding author: mettamera@unmas.ac.id

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ABSTRAK

Korupsi dan upaya pemberantasannya melalui tata kelola yang baik telah menjadi isu utama, namun masih terdapat beragam sudut pandang, konsep dan pengukuran korupsi, terutama di sektor pemerintahan. Studi ini bertujuan melakukan sintesis literatur secara sistematis untuk mengidentifikasi kesenjangan penelitian dan peluang untuk penelitian di masa depan. Tinjauan literatur sistematis (SLR) terhadap 44 artikel telah dilakukan, dengan fokus pada tema-tema terkait tata kelola seperti transparansi, akuntabilitas, partisipasi, dan perannya dalam mengatasi korupsi. Studi ini menyoroti perlunya pendekatan multidisiplin serta studi lebih lanjut tentang pengukuran korupsi, perubahan regulasi, dan aspek budaya serta perilaku. Studi ini merekomendasikan pendekatan interdisipliner dan perbaikan kerangka pengukuran korupsi. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada wacana akademis dengan menawarkan sintesis terstruktur dari literatur terkini dan mengusulkan jalur baru untuk penelitian mengenai tata kelola pemerintahan dan korupsi.

Kata Kunci: akuntabilitas, korupsi, pemerintah, transparansi, partisipasi

ABSTRACT

Corruption and its eradication through good governance remain a major issue, yet there are still diverse perspectives, concepts, and measurements of corruption, especially in the government sector. This study aims to systematically synthesize the literature to identify research gaps and future research opportunities. A systematic literature review (SLR) of 44 articles was conducted, focusing on governance-related themes such as transparency, accountability, participation, and their role in combating corruption. This research highlights the need for a multidisciplinary approach and further studies on corruption measurement, regulatory changes, and cultural and behavioral aspects. It recommends an interdisciplinary approach and improvements in corruption measurement frameworks. This report contributes to academic discourse by offering a structured synthesis of recent literature and proposing new directions for research on governance and corruption.

Keywords: accountability, corruption, government, transparency, participation

1. Introduction

The United Nations identifies corruption as a significant barrier to the fulfillment of human rights (UN, 2015; 2018). It remains a challenge for both developed and developing nations. While the functionalist perspective suggests that corruption can facilitate economic activities in weak governance systems by streamlining bureaucratic and political processes, empirical studies largely support the Weberian viewpoint (Rieznik & Lee, 2021). According to this approach, corruption not only harms the financial sector but also undermines governmental efficiency in delivering public goods and services in a fair, equitable, and effective manner (Bertrand et al., 2006; Cooray & Schneider, 2018; Krueger & Anne, 1974; Krueger Shleifer et al., 1993; Spyromitros & Panagiotidis, 2022).

There is currently no universally accepted definition of corruption in the public sector, as it can take various forms (Lyrio et al., 2018). Transparency International defines corruption as the misuse of entrusted power for personal benefit, encompassing practices such as bribery, embezzlement, misappropriation, diversion of public assets, influence peddling, misconduct, and illicit enrichment. Corruption can be categorized into three types based on its scale and the sectors involved: grand corruption, petty corruption, and political corruption. Grand corruption occurs at the highest levels of government, where officials manipulate policies and state functions for personal gain at the expense of the public interest. Petty corruption involves lower- and mid-level officials exploiting their authority in routine public services, such as healthcare, education, and law enforcement. Political corruption refers to the exploitation of policies, institutions, and public resources by political leaders to maintain their power, influence, and wealth.

Despite extensive research on corruption, the literature does not provide a clear definition (Jiang, 2017). Many researchers continue to debate the differences in measuring and defining corruption. This shows that a range of ways were utilized to define the idea, leading to varied conclusions on the origins and consequences of corruption (Mangafić & Veselinović, 2020). In addition, corruption fundamentally undermines good governance (Vian, 2020). Kim (2008) asserts that numerous issues related to corruption in the public sector stem from insufficient transparency and accountability. Essential principles of good governance, including transparency, accountability, participation, responsiveness, inclusivity, and consensus, serve as effective mechanisms for preventing and addressing corruption. The relationship between governance and corruption has also been widely discussed by researchers (Lustrilanang et al., 2023; Putri et al., 2024; Su et al., 2023; Waheduzzaman & Khandaker, 2022). This shows that the phenomenon of good governance also corruption in the public sector is an intriguing topic to discuss. Studies on corruption in government sectors like villages are less common than those on corruption at higher local government levels and national levels, even in developing countries. In addition, most research on corruption focuses on economic and political aspects.

Therefore, this study was undertaken to explore the relationship between accountability, transparency, and participation in corruption in the government sector over the last 10 years by analyzing professional journal publications. The study's objective is to present the current state of research, highlight key findings from previous studies, and propose an agenda for research in the future. To accomplish this, the study is guided by the following research questions: RQ1: How has research on government corruption evolved in the literature? RQ2: How are governance aspects, such as transparency, accountability, and participation linked to corruption in government in the literature?

This study also places significant emphasis on the methodological aspects of organizing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). Specifically, it outlines the criteria for selecting articles, the inclusion and exclusion process, the databases used, and the analytical framework applied to synthesize the findings. By detailing the SLR approach, this research ensures methodological rigor, allowing for a structured and comprehensive assessment of existing literature on corruption and governance.

This review examines the evolution of research published in reputable journals by categorizing studies based on topics, research environments, methodologies, and data analysis procedures. Additionally, it aims to identify future research directions. The study provides the construction of knowledge on corruption in the government sector, offering insights into how this discourse has evolved. For academics and researchers, it provides a historical overview of studies on accountability, transparency, and participation as components of good governance in relation to corruption, along with recommendations for future exploration. For practitioners, this review systematizes key lessons learned, facilitating the application of governance models and enhancing their understanding of the social, political, and economic implications of corruption.

2. Literature Review

Corruption is a persistent challenge that undermines economic development, weakens institutions, and erodes public trust in governance. Scholars define corruption as the abuse of power for private gain, often involving bribery, fraud, embezzlement, and favoritism. Transparency International (TI) broadens this definition, considering corruption as any abuse of entrusted power, whether in public or private sectors. Studies emphasize that corruption is deeply embedded in political, economic, and cultural structures, making its eradication complex and requiring comprehensive governance reforms (Svensson, 2005). While good governance is widely recognized as a key strategy for reducing corruption, the United Nations (UN), and World Bank identify accountability, transparency, participation, and rule of law as crucial governance principles to combat corruption. Research highlights that countries with strong institutional frameworks, independent judicial systems, and open access to government information experience lower levels of corruption (Kaufmann et al., 2011; Koeswayo et al., 2024). Furthermore, the FOI's implementation has been linked to increased government accountability, though the effectiveness of such policies varies across regions (Vadlamannati & Cooray, 2016).

The relationship between good governance and corruption is explored through various theoretical lenses, including institutional theory (Putri et al., 2024; Sofyani, et al., 2022), public choice theory (Jin, 2016), and principal-agent theory (Brusca et al., 2017; Baez-Camargo et al., 2020; Rieznik & Lee, 2021). Institutional theory emphasizes that strong legal frameworks, independent judiciaries, and efficient bureaucracies help reduce corruption by limiting discretion and ensuring accountability. Public choice theory views politicians and bureaucrats as self-interested actors, arguing that corruption thrives when unchecked power and weak monitoring mechanisms exist. The principal-agent theory explains corruption in terms of unbalanced incentives between citizens as principals and government officials as agents, where poor oversight enables corrupt practices. Beyond institutional and economic models, cultural theories suggest that corruption is shaped by societal norms and values (Torsello & Venard, 2015; Dipierro & Rella, 2024). In societies where patronage and nepotism are accepted, corruption may persist despite formal governance structures. Addressing corruption, therefore, requires more than legal reforms; it necessitates shifting social attitudes through civic education, ethical leadership, and public

awareness campaigns. E-governance and social media also have strengthened anti-corruption efforts by enhancing public participation and government oversight.

The role of technology and digital governance in reducing corruption has gained attention in recent years. E-government initiatives, such as online public procurement systems and digital financial transactions, enhance transparency by minimizing direct human interaction, which reduces opportunities for bribery (Khan et al., 2021). Similarly, the rise of social media has provided citizens with platforms to expose corruption, hold officials accountable, and demand better governance (Stamati et al., 2015). However, researchers caution that while digital tools can improve transparency, they do not always translate into meaningful citizen participation in decision-making (Waheduzzaman and Khandaker, 2022). Cultural and behavioral perspectives also play a crucial role in understanding corruption. Some studies argue that corruption is not merely a legal or institutional failure but is influenced by social norms and cultural perceptions (Torsello & Venard, 2015). In some societies, informal exchanges and patronage networks are accepted as part of everyday life, making anti-corruption efforts more challenging. Therefore, a holistic approach that integrates legal reforms with behavioral and cultural changes is essential for long-term governance improvements.

The literature suggests that combating corruption requires a multifaceted approach, incorporating strong institutions, digital innovations, legal frameworks, and cultural shifts. While good governance principles are critical in reducing corruption, their effectiveness depends on contextual factors such as political will, institutional capacity, and societal engagement. Future research should explore how interdisciplinary strategies—combining economic, legal, technological, and cultural perspectives—can enhance governance and sustain anti-corruption efforts globally.

3. Research Method

From a methodological perspective, a systematic literature review is employed to provide a comprehensive analysis of a research field through explicit, rigorous, and transparent procedures (Cooper, 2010), allowing for easy replication of evaluations (Tranfield et al., 2003). Webster & Watson (2002), emphasize that a literature review not only examines past research but also outlines directions for future studies. An ideal review contributes to the field by justifying the research topic, clarifying its significance, defining key concepts, establishing research boundaries, analyzing relevant previous studies, developing models to guide future research, presenting theoretical frameworks, summarizing past empirical findings, providing practical examples, and concluding with implications for scholars. Figure 1 illustrates the systematic literature review, which consists of three primary stages.

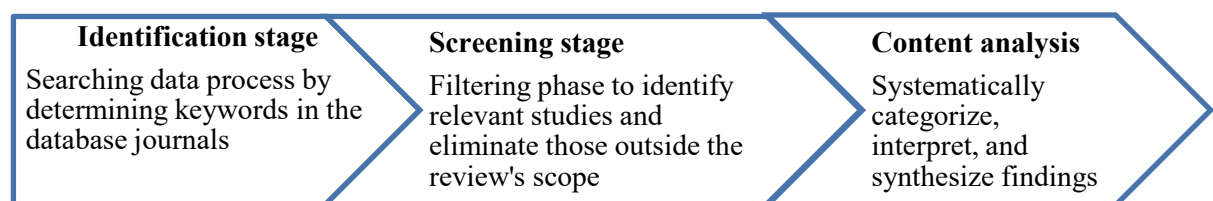


Figure 1. Systematic Review Process

The first stage of a systematic literature review starts with the identification stage or the search data process. The identification stage focuses on selecting appropriate keywords relevant to the research topic and determining suitable databases for article searches. In this study, the chosen keywords were "corruption," "government," and "corruption perception," which were searched within article titles and abstracts, as these terms directly relate to the subject under investigation.

While the literature review was also conducted in relation to village governance and corruption, the keywords used were "transparency", "accountability", "participation" and "village governance". The search was conducted using the Publish or Perish application on the Scopus database with a time span of 2015-2024 until 275 manuscripts were collected. The ten years were chosen to examine the current picture of corruption research in the government sector. In addition, around 90 countries in 2015 also adopted Freedom of Information (FOI) laws intending to facilitate citizen access to various types of government information that need to be provided as soon as possible by government agencies (Vadlamannati & Cooray, 2016). This certainly has an impact on the practice of government transparency and accountability, in an effort to reduce corruption. At this stage, redundancies were eliminated, and non-article-related text such as reviews or book chapters were also excluded.

The initial search process yielded 275 articles. After removing duplicates, 229 unique articles remained, which were subjected to a title and abstract screening to assess their relevance according to the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. This screening stage aimed to identify studies that specifically addressed the impact of governance practices on corruption and eliminate those that were clearly outside the review's scope. As a result, 58 articles were selected for a full-text review, where a more in-depth assessment was conducted to evaluate the studies' methodologies, findings, and relevance. Through a rigorous screening process, a total of 44 articles were identified as meeting all inclusion criteria and deemed appropriate for synthesis.

The screening stage involves filtering articles to identify a relevant portfolio for further analysis. This process includes reviewing article titles and abstracts to assess their alignment with the research theme from both theoretical and conceptual perspectives, as well as selecting empirical studies. To determine whether an article is worth a detailed review, the skimming method (Grellet, 1981; Nation, 2009) is applied. Skimming can be conducted through the following steps: (a) reading the introduction or first paragraph in its entirety, (b) examining each subsection (if available) to identify connections between them, (c) reviewing the first sentence of each remaining paragraph, (d) identifying explicit references related to the research topic, and (e) reading the final paragraph or conclusion in full. Selected articles are then downloaded and organized using a reference manager for efficient data processing (Tamsi et al., 2013).

The screening procedure ensured consideration of articles that addressed the theme, with articles that were inaccessible and narrowly focused on the theme excluded. The completion of the identification and screening stages according to the eligibility criteria resulted in a sample of 44 articles that will be reviewed with the content analysis in this literature review. Content analysis is a systematic approach to categorizing, interpreting, and synthesizing findings from selected studies. This method involves identifying recurring themes, patterns, and relationships within the literature to develop a deeper understanding of the research landscape. The process includes coding key topics, methodologies, theoretical frameworks, and research contexts across studies to ensure a structured and objective review of existing literature, providing a comprehensive understanding of the topic while minimizing bias. It enhances the reliability of findings and supports evidence-based recommendations for advancing research in the field.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents a content analysis of published studies, a discussion of knowledge gained from existing studies, and opportunities for future research. Table 1 lists the journals where the sample articles were published, with 26 articles (59.1%) appearing in Scopus Q1-ranked journals. Figure 2 illustrates the annual distribution of published articles, showing that research on this topic peaked in 2022 and 2023, each contributing eight articles. In contrast, only three articles were included from 2024, as data retrieval was conducted in early 2024.

Table 1. Articles Published in Journals with ranks (SJR)

No	Journal Name	Amount	Ranks
1.	Financial Accountability & Management	3	Q1
2.	Social Indicator Research	2	Q1
3.	Journal of Financial Crime	2	Q1
4.	Regulation & Governance	2	Q1
5.	Public Integrity	1	Q1
6.	Australian Journal of Public Administration	1	Q1
7.	Systems Research and Behavioral Science	1	Q1
8.	Administration and Society	1	Q1
9.	Territory, Politics, Governance	1	Q1
10.	Sustainability	1	Q1
11.	Technological Forecasting and Social Change	1	Q1
12.	Government Information Quarterly	1	Q1
13.	Policy and Society	1	Q1
14.	European Journal of Political Economy	1	Q1
15.	Journal of Management Inquiry	1	Q1
16.	Journal of Development Studies	1	Q1
17.	Millennial Asia	1	Q1
18.	Public Administration Review	1	Q1
19.	Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice	1	Q1
20.	Governance	1	Q1
21.	African Studies	1	Q1
22.	International Review of Administrative Science	1	Q2
23.	International Journal of Public Administration	2	Q2
24.	Cogent Business & Management	2	Q2
25.	Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja	1	Q2
26.	Public Performance & Management Review	1	Q2
27.	Journal of East Asian Studies	1	Q2
28.	Frontiers in Psychology	1	Q2
29.	Journal of Accounting and Organizational Change	1	Q2
30.	Access to Justice in Eastern Europe	1	Q2
31.	Administrative Sciences	1	Q2
32.	Forum for Development Studies	1	Q3
33.	Public Policy and Administration	1	Q3
34.	Public Organization Review	1	Q3
35.	Croatian and Comparative Public Administration	1	Q3

No	Journal Name	Amount	Ranks
36.	Cogent Economics and Finance	1	Q3
37.	International Review of Public Administration	1	Q3
Total		44	

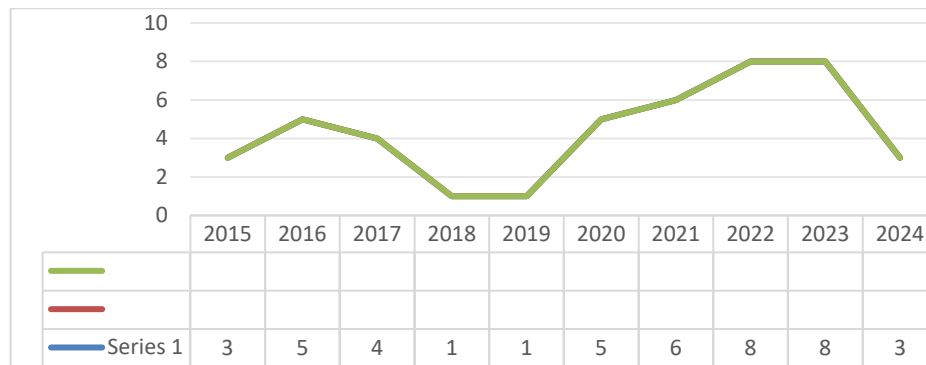


Figure 2. Frequency Distribution of Articles by Year of Publication

To classify the selected articles, the following category analysis was applied: (a) research topic, (b) research context, (c) theoretical framework, (d) research methodology, and (e) data analysis techniques, as outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of Articles by Analytical Categories

<i>Research Topics</i>	Total	(%)
Aspects of good governance with (perceived) corruption	15	34,1
The relationship between transparency, accountability, participation and trust	8	18,2
The relationship between governance with perceptions of corruption and trust	6	13,6
Concept of corruption, analysis, classification, and dimensions	3	6,8
Concept of transparency and accountability	3	6,8
Individual and behavioral factors as determinants of corruption	3	6,8
Corruption's impact on growth	2	4,5
A cultural and systems model approach to corruption	2	4,5
The relationship between perceived corruption and trust	2	4,5
TOTAL	44	100
<i>Research Environment</i>		
Within Country	26	59,1
Cross countries	12	27,3
Other	6	13,6
TOTAL	44	100
<i>Theoretical framework</i>		
None	15	34,1
Varied	13	29,5
Agency Theory	6	13,6
Legitimacy theory	3	6,8
Institutional theory	2	4,5
Affordance theory	1	2,3
Organization Theory	1	2,3

<i>Research Topics</i>	Total	(%)
Citizen control theory	1	2,3
Democratic Theory	1	2,3
Social Psychological theory	1	2,3
TOTAL	44	100
<i>Research methods</i>		
Survey	32	72,7
Analytical	9	20,5
Case/field studies	3	6,8
TOTAL	44	100
<i>Data analysis</i>		
Quantitative	16	36,4
Regression	11	25,0
Other	8	18,2
Qualitative	6	13,6
Mixed Methods	2	4,5
Correlation	1	2,3
TOTAL	44	100

Source: Article Analysis

The research topic category defines the central focus of each study, guiding its investigation into corruption and governance-related themes. Corruption emerges as the most frequently explored topic, with 34.1% of studies examining perceptions of corruption and its link to transparency, accountability, and participation as key elements of good governance. The second most common area of research, comprising 18.2% of studies, evaluates the relationship between good governance and trust. Additionally, other studies explore the interplay between corruption and trust, as well as the influence of behavioral and cultural factors on governance and anti-corruption efforts.

The research environment refers to the location of the research; specifically in this study, it is distinguished in research involving cross-country data as much as 27.3%, dominated by research in one country, 59.1%, both in national government and local government. A total of 13.6% of studies are classified as other, taking into account analytical, theoretical, and critical research that does not specifically define a particular research environment, namely the type of organization, activities sector, or level of government where the research is conducted.

The theoretical framework category pertains to the theories that serve as the conceptual foundation of the research. Research that merely explains concepts or variable definitions without explicitly mentioning the theoretical basis falls into the None category, amounting to 34.1% of all research. While some articles may not explicitly present the theory, this does not imply that the concepts tested lack theoretical assumptions. These articles employ concepts such as the New Public Management, Expectancy-Disconfirmation Model (EDM), and TASP (types, activities, sectors, and places) frameworks to analyze corruption cases. Studies that employ multiple theories fall into the varied category, for 29.5%. The principal-agent relationship in agency theory is the most widely used theoretical framework (13.6%), followed by legitimacy theory and institutional theory.

The discussion by [Mabillard & Zumofen \(2016\)](#) and [Heald \(2012\)](#) highlights the principal-agent and stewardship theories as key frameworks for understanding the connection between accountability, transparency, and corruption in the government sector. The principal-agent model

suggests that transparency strengthens horizontal accountability, ensuring the government remains answerable to the public and stakeholders. However, while transparency is crucial for reducing information asymmetry, it does not inherently guarantee reduced corruption, as principal-agent relationships may still suffer from moral hazards or weak enforcement mechanisms. Heald's concept of vertical transparency further refines this understanding by differentiating between downward and upward transparency. Downward transparency aligns with the stewardship perspective, where governments act as responsible managers of public resources. This highlights the role of transparency in fostering trust and reinforcing ethical governance. In contrast, upward transparency is more managerial, often focusing on bureaucratic efficiency rather than preventing corruption. This distinction suggests that while transparency is essential, its effectiveness in reducing corruption depends on how it is institutionalized and whether mechanisms for accountability and enforcement exist.

Given this framework, stewardship theory presents an opportunity for further research, particularly in exploring governance models where government officials act as stewards rather than mere agents. Unlike the principal-agent model, which assumes self-interest drives behavior, stewardship theory emphasizes trust, shared values, and ethical responsibility. If governments embrace stewardship principles—promoting collaboration, service orientation, and moral leadership—then transparency can be leveraged not only for oversight but also for building integrity-driven governance, ultimately contributing to long-term corruption reduction. Future research should examine how different governance structures and cultural contexts influence the effectiveness of these theories in curbing corruption.

Regarding research methods, most articles (72.7%) use surveys to collect data on corruption perceptions and other variables. Then analytical articles as much as 20.5% followed by case studies as much as 6.8%, which analyze the problem in one or more cases, or a comparison of two countries' cases. Additionally, the data analysis techniques category classifies articles based on the methods used to process collected data. Quantitative analysis accounts for 36.4% of this category, with regression tests being the most common for relationship testing at 25.0%. Qualitative research comprises 11.3%, while mixed-method approaches represent 6.8%. Research in the other category (18.2%) is a literature review, or in the form of articles and reports with descriptive analysis of the topic context.

Corruption weakens governments and hampers the overall process of policy formulation and implementation. It diminishes service delivery, creates fiscal burdens, and, most critically, erodes public trust while damaging citizens' expectations of their government (Graycar, 2015). To address the first research question, it is essential to explore key issues in this literature review, particularly the evolution of research on defining and measuring corruption in the public sector. Economic and organizational researchers often refer to corruption as public corruption (Svensson, 2005) or government corruption (Uhlenbruck et al., 2006), drawing from definitions provided by the World Bank (1997) and the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development). These institutions define corruption as the “abuse of public office for private gain,” specifically involving civil servants and individuals in government or state institutions. In contrast, Transparency International adopts a broader perspective, defining corruption as the abuse of power, which does not necessarily require the involvement of public officials.

Due to the limitations and ambiguity of these definitions, Torsello & Venard (2015) adopt an anthropological perspective and employ an ethnographic methodology to critically examine the anthropological literature on corruption. They redefine corruption and suggest that it should not

always be perceived as an inherently negative cultural phenomenon. Torsello & Venard (2015) suggest the use of holistic analysis that examines the connection between culture and corruption from an anthropological perspective so that it can help design anti-corruption policies (Dipierro & Rella, 2024). This layered understanding of corruption—from the narrow, institutional definitions to broader, cultural interpretations—reveals the complexity of tackling corruption in different societies and emphasizes the need for a context-specific approach to developing anti-corruption policies.

Anti-corruption policies can be particularly effective in developing countries if corruption research incorporates a systems thinking approach to better understand its underlying dynamics (Ullah et al., 2020). However, since corruption often takes place in the ambiguous "grey areas" of societal behavior—making it difficult to measure actual corruption levels—research in this field tends to be more illustrative and suggestive rather than definitive (Stulhofer et al., 2008). As a result, corruption perceptions are commonly used as a proxy indicator for actual corruption, despite criticisms that this approach may not accurately reflect true corruption levels.

Corruption assessments have largely depended on perception-based surveys, as they offer broad coverage and are more feasible than directly measuring corruption. Since gathering individuals' perceptions of corruption is easier than obtaining objective data, these surveys continue to serve as the foundation for most international corruption indices, including Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (TI CPI) and the World Bank's Governance Indicator for Control of Corruption (WBG ICC). The majority of the articles in this literature review utilize these indices to measure corruption (Brusca et al., 2017; d'Agostino et al., 2016; Jin, 2016; Lustrilanang et al., 2023; Zheng et al., 2017), the International Country Risk Guide (ICRG) index (Vadlamannati & Cooray, 2016). Some measures of corruption perceptions produced by institutional surveys such as the Americas Barometer (Neshkova & Kalesnikaite, 2019), the Asian Barometer Survey (Chang, 2021), Barometer (Malmberg & Karv, 2024), and the China General Social Survey (CGSS) (Ma et al., 2022), as well as perception surveys conducted independently by researchers (Mangafić & Veselinović, 2020; Rieznik & Lee, 2021; Sofyani, et al., 2022).

The challenge of obtaining objective data on government corruption stems from the complexity of the concept itself, as most measures rely on subjective perceptions. Corruption perception indicators, often based on surveys, introduce uncertainties due to their reliance on individual opinions. To address this, Dipierro & Rella (2024) introduced the Bayesian Corruption Index (BCI), offering a more objective estimation method than existing measures like the Worldwide Governance Indicator (WGI) and Transparency International indices (Standaert, 2015). The BCI constructs a composite index by integrating perceptions from multiple stakeholders, including residents, businesses, NGOs, and government officials, aiming to provide a more comprehensive and reliable measure of corruption as the misuse of public power for personal benefit.

The measurement of corruption remains a contentious issue, as scholars debate the validity of perception-based surveys versus more empirical case study approaches. Graycar (2015) critiques perception-based measures, arguing that they merely capture allegations rather than actual instances of corruption, making them unreliable in determining their true extent. Instead, he advocates for the TASP (Types, Activities, Sectors, and Places) framework, which categorizes corruption based on concrete data rather than subjective opinions. For example, there may be bribery (type) in procurement (activity) in mining (sector) in South Africa or a particular mine (place). This approach aims to provide a more structured and specific analysis, allowing policymakers to address corruption in a targeted manner rather than relying on general assumptions.

However, despite these criticisms, perception-based measures continue to be widely used and remain a relevant benchmark in corruption research. [Andersson & Bergman \(2009\)](#) acknowledge the limitations of corruption indicators but emphasize their continued importance in understanding public trust in governance. [Neshkova & Kalesnikaite \(2019\)](#) propose using both experience-based and perception-based measures to balance objectivity and subjectivity. Additionally, [Brusca et al. \(2017\)](#) and [Spyromitros & Panagiotidis \(2022\)](#) argue for the integration of multiple perception-based indices to improve reliability. [Canache & Allison \(2005\)](#) further highlight the strong correlation between public perceptions and expert-based corruption indices, demonstrating that perception-based measures, despite their flaws, still capture meaningful insights into corruption trends. Ultimately, while perception-based surveys have their shortcomings, dismissing them entirely overlooks their value in gauging societal attitudes toward corruption. A more comprehensive approach, combining perception-based measures with empirical case studies and alternative indices such as the Bayesian Corruption Index (BCI), can provide a more holistic understanding of corruption. By integrating multiple methodologies, researchers and policymakers can gain a clearer picture of corruption's prevalence and impact, leading to more effective governance strategies.

Furthermore, a number of studies in this literature review that looked at the influence of the corruption perception index on growth and economic performance ([d'Agostino et al., 2016](#); [Spyromitros & Panagiotidis, 2022](#)), support the idea that corruption slows down progress in a way that is similar to "sanding the wheel" rather than "greasing the wheel." Some academics explore the factors that determine corruption at the individual level ([Mangafić & Veselinović, 2020](#)), behavioral drivers ([Baez-Camargo et al., 2020](#); [Srirejeki & Putri, 2023](#)), as well as cultural factors ([Dipierro & Rella, 2024](#)). In addressing the second research question, most studies explore the relationship between corruption and the implementation of good governance, particularly examining how enhanced accountability, transparency, and Freedom of Information (FOI) laws influence perceptions of corruption ([Brusca et al., 2017](#); [Vadlamannati & Cooray, 2016](#); [Wu & Christensen, 2020](#); [Zheng et al., 2017](#)). In addition, some governance factors that have been shown to reduce corruption are increased (female) participation ([Jin, 2016](#); [Neshkova & Kalesnikaite, 2019](#)), e-participation ([Waheduzzaman & Khandaker, 2022](#)), and the implementation of national audits ([Su et al., 2023](#)).

Transparency and accountability are now widely recognized as essential components of good governance and fundamental strategies in the fight against corruption ([Brusca et al., 2017](#)). They are also considered prerequisites for democratic governance ([Mabillard & Zumofen, 2016](#)). According to [Grimmelikhuijsen & Welch \(2012\)](#), transparency refers to the availability of organizational information that allows external stakeholders to assess its operations and internal performance. Meanwhile, accountability requires public officials to justify how they allocate resources and the outcomes they achieve ([Iyoha & Oyerinde, 2010](#)). Since public evaluation of performance depends on access to information, transparency and accountability must function together ([Hopper et al., 2009](#)). As a result, transparency is often regarded as an aspect of both vertical and horizontal accountability ([Heald, 2018](#)). Over time, these two concepts have increasingly been integrated into a unified framework known as the Transparency-Accountability (T/A) Initiative ([Mabillard & Zumofen, 2016](#)).

The adoption of Freedom of Information (FOI) laws has been widely linked to improved transparency and accountability, contributing to reduced corruption perceptions over time ([Vadlamannati & Cooray, 2016](#)). However, while FOI laws promote access to information,

Haustein & Lorson (2022) caution against the *illusion of transparency*, where mere availability of government data does not necessarily equate to genuine accountability. Similarly, the role of e-government and digital platforms in combating corruption is well-documented (Khan et al., 2021; Putri et al., 2024), but its effectiveness depends on whether digital tools facilitate actual public participation or simply serve as information repositories. While social media and e-participation mechanisms promote openness and interaction (Stamati et al., 2015), they often fail to translate into meaningful policy influence, as governments may control the narrative or limit citizen engagement to passive consumption of information (Waheduzzaman & Khandaker, 2022). Effective participation requires more than digital accessibility—it necessitates mechanisms for citizen control and policy responsiveness (He & Ma (2020). Therefore, while FOI laws, e-government, and digital participation are valuable tools for transparency, their true impact depends on whether they empower citizens with real decision-making influence rather than functioning as symbolic gestures of openness.

This section also presents Table 3, which compiles explicit suggestions from the sampled articles for advancing research on accountability, transparency, participation, and corruption in the government sector. Since not all articles provided specific recommendations, the summary is limited to those explicitly stated in the research. The review highlights the need for a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating comprehensive corruption measures, regulatory and institutional changes, and behavioral and cultural aspects to enhance governance practices. Additionally, strengthening the link between governance and public trust is crucial for advancing academic discussions on combating corruption in the government sector.

Table 3. Proposed Agenda for Future Research

Authors	Research topics	Summary of the topics
(He & Ma, 2020; Jin, 2016; Neshkova & Kalesnikaite, 2019; Waheduzzaman & Khandaker, 2022; Zheng et al., 2017)	Participation and corruption relationship	Research investigates the connection between participation and corruption, encompassing e-participation, as both a cause and an effect of corruption. Most use worldwide databases and cross-country data for measurement. It is important to conduct an in-depth exploration of perceptions of participation and use more comprehensive measures in identifying participation approaches with different research environments. In addition to individual demographics, the role of social desirability can also be considered when exploring participation.
(Stamati et al., 2015; Vadlamannati & Cooray, 2016)	Transparency, FOI, and social media openness	Research on the effects of Freedom of Information (FOI) laws on public perceptions of government corruption should also examine how governments utilize social media to enhance transparency and accountability. Future studies could investigate differences in the quality of FOI law implementation and its impact on both actual corruption and perceived corruption levels. A more comprehensive approach could involve enriching existing data through citizen interviews or surveys to gain deeper insights into these relationships.

Authors	Research topics	Summary of the topics
(Cucciniello et al., 2017; Lyrío et al., 2018)	Concepts of transparency, governance, and corruption in the public sector	The study synthesizes the literature on government transparency; and analyzes discussions on transparency, accountability, and corruption in the public sector. It proposes further study to improve how transparency is perceived and used, with a focus on determining where and how it works.
(Brusca et al., 2017; Crepaz & Arian, 2023; Heald, 2018; Sofyani, et al., 2022)	The link between accountability, transparency, corruption and trust	Studies perform a nuanced analysis of the link between transparency and trust by exploring how a country's level of transparency or accountability influences both corruption and public trust in government. This study advocates for a more comprehensive approach, utilizing direct surveys or interviews to assess transparency practices. It anticipates that the effects of transparency on trust and perceptions of corruption may vary due to differences in public awareness or other influencing factors.
(Zaitul et al., 2023)	Principles of good governance in villages	Studies that develop governance principles from a community perspective. The expansion of governance principles from a stakeholder perspective can be done using diverse villages.
(Ullah et al., 2020)	A system thinking model of corruption	Research that develops systems-thinking models of corruption using a qualitative approach can offer a more comprehensive understanding of corruption dynamics. Future studies should incorporate additional economic, social, legal, political, cultural, ethical, and psychological factors to provide a more holistic perspective on corruption and its underlying mechanisms.
(Baez-Camargo et al., 2020; Dipierro & Rella, 2024; Srijekti & Putri, 2023)	Behavioral and cultural factors of corruption	Research that investigates corruption from both behavioral and cultural perspectives can provide valuable insights. A behavioral framework can guide future studies on the 'human factor' in corruption, exploring the extent to which social norms influence corrupt behavior across different cultural contexts and value systems. Future studies could also use regional-level analysis to examine the role of national culture, along with other potential factors such as religion and a country's level of modernization.
(Haustein & Lorson, 2022)	Perceptions of information on the transparency of government financial reports	Research examines the public's interest in accounting information and their ability to interpret basic financial data from reports, allowing for assumptions about increased transparency. Future studies could employ longitudinal analyses and large-scale cross-country surveys to determine whether citizens' perceptions vary internationally or are influenced by cultural contexts.

Authors	Research topics	Summary of the topics
(Sofyani, et al., 2022)	Accountability and transparency's determinants and their influence on trust	The research investigates the organizational competence and commitment of village government officials as key factors influencing accountability and transparency, which in turn affect community trust. It is essential to further explore this issue by considering additional variables, such as external pressures, corruption perceptions, and participation mechanisms.
(Chang, 2021; Xiao et al., 2024)	Perceptions of corruption connection with trust	Research explores the intricate relationship between public trust in government institutions, perceptions of corruption, and institutional effectiveness, recognizing their potential endogenous connection as they mutually influence one another. Future studies could investigate the causal link between corruption perceptions, effectiveness, and trust, particularly when longitudinal data covering more countries or regions becomes available.

Source: Article Analysis

Research on participation and corruption, including e-participation, primarily relies on global databases, but future studies should explore perceptions of participation with more comprehensive measures. Social desirability and demographic factors should also be considered. Investigations into FOI laws and government use of social media for transparency should assess variations in law implementation and their impact on actual corruption. A holistic approach, including citizen surveys and interviews, is recommended to better understand transparency, accountability, and trust. Future research should refine how transparency is assessed, examining its relationship with corruption and public confidence, while considering variations in knowledge and contextual influences.

Future studies on corruption should take a holistic approach, incorporating economic, social, political, legal, ethical, cultural, and psychological factors to comprehend its complexities. Studies should explore corruption from behavioral and cultural perspectives, analyzing the influence of social norms across different cultures, religions, and modernization levels. Investigations into public engagement with financial transparency should assess citizens' ability to interpret accounting information through longitudinal, cross-country surveys. Research on village government accountability should examine organizational competence, external pressures, and participation mechanisms. Additionally, studies should explore the dynamic relationship between public trust, corruption perceptions, and institutional effectiveness, using longitudinal data to assess causal links across different regions.

5. Conclusion, Implications, and Limitations

This literature review examines corruption in the government sector and its relationship with good governance aspects such as transparency, accountability, and participation. The study highlights the increasing research interest in governance and corruption, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive approach that incorporates public participation and technological advancements like social media and the Internet to enhance accountability and transparency. The review identifies the principal-agent theory, institutional theory, legitimacy theory, and stewardship theory as key frameworks explaining governance relationships, organizational culture, and public trust. Cultural and behavioral factors are also recognized as essential in shaping governance practices.

Key findings suggest that transparency can reduce corruption by fostering trust, participation, and accountability (Arkorful *et al.*, 2021; Beshi & Kaur, 2020; He & Ma, 2020; Prato *et al.*, 2022; Sofyani *et al.*, 2022; Stamati *et al.*, 2015; Zhao & Hu, 2015). The literature highlights the need for further exploration of the causal link between corruption perception and public trust (Chang, 2021; Xiao *et al.*, 2024), particularly at the village government level, which remains under-researched. Strengthening openness, participatory governance, and accessible information is crucial for improving democracy, reducing corruption, and driving economic and social progress. However, this study is limited by the inclusion of only English-language publications and restricted access to certain journals, leading to a smaller sample size. Despite these limitations, the review effectively outlines research trends and gaps. Future studies should expand the dataset, incorporate multilingual sources, and extend the study time to provide a more thorough review of governance and corruption.

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