

RESEARCH ARTICLE

When Corruption Becomes the Norm: Bangladesh's Enduring Governance Crisis

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Abstract

Corruption has long constituted a major obstacle to effective governance, democratic consolidation, and sustainable socio-economic development in Bangladesh. Over the decades, corrupt practices have become deeply embedded within political and administrative systems, eroding public trust, weakening institutional capacity, and undermining the principles of transparency and accountability. This article explores the historical evolution of corruption in Bangladesh and examines the structural, political, and institutional factors that have enabled its persistence. Drawing on empirical studies, policy documents, and scholarly analyses available up to January 2016, the paper assesses the multidimensional impacts of corruption on governance, public service delivery, and social equity. It further evaluates state-led anti-corruption initiatives, with particular attention to the role and effectiveness of formal institutions such as the Anti-Corruption Commission. The analysis reveals that although successive governments have introduced legal and institutional frameworks to curb corruption, these measures have produced limited outcomes due to weak enforcement, political interference, and broader governance deficits. The article argues that the normalization of corruption reflects deeper structural failures within the political and administrative system, which continue to constrain democratic accountability and inclusive development. Addressing corruption in Bangladesh therefore requires comprehensive governance reforms that strengthen institutional autonomy, enhance oversight mechanisms, and promote a culture of accountability beyond formal legal measures.

Keywords: Public Sector Reform, Institutional Accountability, Anti-Corruption Policy, Socio-Economic Impact, Corruption, Governance.

1. Introduction

Corruption is commonly understood as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain, a practice that poses a serious threat to effective governance and democratic stability (Transparency International, 2009). By weakening the rule of law, distorting the allocation of public resources, and eroding citizens' trust in state institutions, corruption undermines both political legitimacy and socio-economic development (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016). Across the developing world, corruption remains a persistent challenge, particularly where institutional oversight is weak and political accountability is limited.

In Bangladesh, corruption has emerged as a pervasive and enduring feature of governance, deeply embedded within political, administrative, and socio-economic structures. Its persistence is not merely the result of individual moral failure but reflects systemic and institutional deficiencies that have evolved over time. The roots of corruption in Bangladesh can be traced to the colonial administrative legacy, which fostered centralized authority, bureaucratic discretion, and limited transparency—conditions conducive to rent-seeking behavior (Khan, 2001). Following independence in 1971, these structural weaknesses were compounded by political instability, state-

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led patronage, and weak enforcement of legal and regulatory frameworks.

Despite the restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1991, corruption has continued to thrive under successive political regimes. Competitive electoral politics, rather than curbing corrupt practices, often intensified patron-client relationships as political actors relied on informal networks and state resources to maintain power (Hossain & Moore, 2008). As a result, corruption became increasingly normalized within public administration, law enforcement agencies, and service delivery mechanisms. This normalization has blurred the boundary between formal rules and informal practices, making corruption an accepted—though damaging—aspect of everyday governance.

The consequences of such entrenched corruption are far-reaching. It undermines institutional effectiveness, weakens democratic accountability, and disproportionately harms the poor by restricting access to public services and justice. Understanding corruption in Bangladesh therefore requires a structural and historical perspective that goes beyond individual misconduct. This article adopts such an approach by examining the origins, patterns, and impacts of corruption within Bangladesh's governance system, setting the foundation for a critical analysis of anti-corruption efforts and reform strategies.

2. Historical and Institutional Roots of Corruption in Bangladesh

The roots of corruption in Bangladesh are deeply embedded in the historical evolution of the state and the institutional arrangements inherited from the colonial and post-colonial periods. Rather than being an outcome of individual moral failure alone, corruption in Bangladesh is best understood as a structural phenomenon shaped by administrative legacies, political incentives, and weak accountability mechanisms. Scholars widely agree that corruption in the country has evolved through a complex interaction of colonial governance practices, post-independence state-building strategies, and the nature of political competition under limited democratic consolidation (Khan, 2001; Hossain & Moore, 2008; Riaz, 2013).

2.1 Colonial Administrative Legacy

The colonial administrative system under British rule laid the foundational conditions for institutionalized corruption in South Asia, including present-day Bangladesh. The British colonial state emphasized revenue extraction, centralized authority, and bureaucratic control rather than public accountability

or citizen participation. Administrative discretion was extensive, oversight mechanisms were weak, and public offices were often insulated from popular scrutiny (Khan, 2001). This created strong incentives for rent-seeking behavior, particularly at lower levels of administration where officials exercised significant discretionary power over taxation, land administration, and law enforcement.

Moreover, colonial governance prioritized loyalty to the ruling authority over service delivery, embedding a bureaucratic culture that valued compliance upward rather than accountability downward. This legacy persisted after independence, as the administrative structure remained largely intact, reproducing norms of discretion, opacity, and hierarchical control (Ahmed, 2002). As a result, corruption became embedded not merely as a behavioral anomaly but as a functional element of bureaucratic operation.

2.2 Post-Independence State Formation and Centralization of Power

Following independence in 1971, Bangladesh inherited a weak institutional base, a war-ravaged economy, and a highly centralized administrative apparatus. The early state-building period was characterized by an urgent need to consolidate authority, restore order, and mobilize resources for reconstruction. In this context, executive dominance expanded rapidly, while institutional checks and balances remained underdeveloped (Hassan, 1988).

The concentration of power within the executive, combined with limited legislative oversight and a fragile judiciary, created fertile conditions for corruption. State-owned enterprises, public procurement, and relief distribution became important arenas for rent extraction, particularly during periods of economic scarcity and political instability. The use of discretionary authority to allocate licenses, contracts, and public employment reinforced patron-client relationships between political elites and bureaucratic actors (Roy, 2002).

The assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975 and subsequent periods of military and quasi-military rule further entrenched authoritarian governance practices. Although military regimes emphasized administrative discipline, they relied heavily on informal networks and selective patronage to maintain political support. These regimes weakened democratic institutions while strengthening executive discretion, reinforcing patterns of corruption through politicized administration and limited transparency (Kochanek, 1993).

2.3 Patronage, Clientelism, and Political Survival

A defining feature of corruption in Bangladesh has been the centrality of patronage and clientelism in political competition. Successive governments—both civilian and military—have relied on patron-client networks to secure loyalty, distribute resources, and manage opposition. This system transformed public office into a source of political reward, where access to state resources was contingent on political allegiance rather than merit or legality (Hossain & Moore, 2008).

Patronage politics blurred the boundary between public and private interests, normalizing informal transactions and rent extraction. Bureaucratic appointments, transfers, and promotions became politicized, reducing professional autonomy and encouraging compliance with political directives. Scholars argue that such politicization weakened institutional integrity and transformed corruption into a routine mechanism of governance rather than an exception (Khan, 2010).

Importantly, corruption under this system was not merely tolerated but often functionally necessary for political survival. Political elites depended on rents to finance electoral campaigns and maintain party organizations, while bureaucrats relied on informal income to compensate for low wages and job insecurity. This mutual dependence created a self-reinforcing cycle of corruption that proved resistant to reform.

2.4 Democratic Transition and Competitive Clientelism

The restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1991 marked a critical juncture in Bangladesh's political development. However, democratic transition did not significantly reduce corruption. Instead, the emergence of competitive party politics intensified patronage pressures, as rival parties sought to consolidate support through control over state institutions (Riaz, 2013). Scholars describe this system as one of "competitive clientelism," where political competition exists but is mediated through informal networks rather than programmatic policy commitments (Hossain, 2011).

Under this arrangement, electoral victories were often followed by wholesale politicization of the administration, judiciary, and law enforcement agencies. Each incoming government sought to marginalize opponents by controlling key institutions, undermining their independence and accountability. As a result, corruption persisted across regimes, despite changes in political leadership (Khan, 2010).

The caretaker government system introduced in the mid-1990s temporarily improved electoral credibility but failed to address deeper governance deficits. Anti-corruption rhetoric often featured prominently in electoral campaigns, yet post-election reforms remained limited and selective. This gap between political promises and institutional practice further eroded public trust.

2.5 Institutional Weaknesses and Accountability Deficits

The persistence of corruption in Bangladesh is closely linked to chronic weaknesses in key accountability institutions. The judiciary has long suffered from resource constraints, procedural delays, and political interference, limiting its capacity to enforce the rule of law (World Bank, 2013). Legislative oversight has been weakened by adversarial party politics and limited committee effectiveness, while regulatory agencies often lack autonomy and enforcement power.

Although the media and civil society expanded significantly after the 1990s, their impact on curbing corruption remained uneven. Investigative journalism exposed numerous corruption scandals, yet follow-up accountability was rare due to political protection and weak enforcement mechanisms (TIB, 2014). Similarly, civil society organizations played an important advocacy role but faced structural and political constraints in influencing policy outcomes.

The establishment of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in 2004 represented an important institutional response to corruption. However, scholars argue that the ACC's effectiveness has been undermined by limited autonomy, political interference, and selective prosecution, reinforcing perceptions of impunity rather than accountability (Uslaner & Ali, 2007; TIB, 2015).

In sum, corruption in Bangladesh is deeply rooted in historical and institutional processes that extend from the colonial era to contemporary democratic governance. Centralized authority, politicized administration, patronage-based political competition, and weak accountability mechanisms have collectively normalized corrupt practices. Understanding these historical and institutional roots is essential for explaining why corruption has proven so resilient and why isolated legal or institutional reforms have produced limited outcomes. Addressing corruption in Bangladesh therefore requires not only technical fixes but also structural reforms aimed at transforming

political incentives, strengthening institutional autonomy, and restoring public accountability.

3. Patterns and Dimensions of Corruption in Bangladesh

Corruption in Bangladesh does not occur merely as sporadic incidents of wrongdoing; it has become entrenched across public institutions, political systems, and daily interactions between citizens and the state. As governance scholars emphasize, corruption takes root where institutional accountability is weak, norms of transparency are compromised, and political incentives favor informal exchange over rule-based governance (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016; Khan, 2010). Recent household surveys and governance indices reveal not only high levels of perceived corruption but also lived experiences of corrupt practices in everyday service delivery, illustrating how corruption undermines public trust and equitable access to state functions.

3.1 Corruption Perceptions and National Context

The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) offers a comparative measure of how corruption is viewed across countries, aggregating expert assessments and business perceptions. Bangladesh's CPI score for 2024—a historic low of 23 out of 100—signals a severe governance deficit. At 151st out of 180 countries, Bangladesh sits among nations perceived as having deep systemic corruption problems, significantly below the global average score of 43 (Transparency International Bangladesh [TIB], 2025). This decline from a score of 24 in 2023 suggests that perceptions of corruption are worsening rather than improving, even after sustained policy efforts aimed at enhancing transparency and accountability.

Scholars link persistently low CPI scores to structural weaknesses rather than short-term phenomena (Heywood, 2015). In Bangladesh, long-standing issues such as weak checks and balances, politicized bureaucracy, and limited independence of anti-corruption institutions contribute to this trend (Siddiquee, 2016). Comparatively, Bangladesh's CPI performance places it second only to Afghanistan in South Asia, underscoring that governance reforms have not yet yielded significant reductions in corruption perceptions despite rapid economic growth and improvements in human development indicators (TIB, 2025; Prothom Alo, 2025).

Low CPI scores reflect broader institutional anxiety highlighted in political economy literature: when anti-corruption agencies lack autonomy or are perceived as instruments of political will, citizen

confidence and deterrence effects diminish (Banuri & Eckel, 2012). In Bangladesh's context, this has contributed to a sense that corruption is not being effectively checked through law enforcement or governance reform.

3.2 Citizen Experience of Corruption: Household Survey 2023–24

Perception indices capture broad impressions, but household surveys provide nuanced evidence of how corruption affects citizens' everyday interactions with state institutions. According to the TIB National Household Survey (NHS) 2023–24, 70.9% of households reported experiencing corruption when accessing public services from May 2023 to April 2024 (TIB, 2024). This prevalence illustrates that corrupt interactions have become normalized in routine engagements between citizens and the bureaucracy—a finding that aligns with studies on everyday corruption in developing states, where petty corruption often functions as an informal mechanism for accessing services (Gupta, Davoodi, & Alonso-Tello, 2002; Søreide, 2014).

The survey disaggregates corruption experiences across 18 service sectors, revealing that corruption is not confined to a few high-risk areas but is widespread. For instance, passport services had the highest reported irregularities at 86%, followed by BRTA services (85.2%), law enforcement (74.5%), judicial services (62.3%), land services (51%), and public healthcare (49.1%) (TIB, 2024; The Business Standard, 2024). These figures demonstrate that corruption permeates both regulatory processes and essential development services, undermining equity and access.

Further, more than 50% of households reported paying bribes or unauthorized payments for these services, with average household bribe costs of BDT 5,680 (~USD 60) (TIB, 2024). The cost burden was notably higher in judicial services, with an average reported bribe of BDT 30,972 (~USD 330) (The Business Standard, 2024). Over a 15-year period (2009–2024), households cumulatively paid an estimated BDT 146,252 crore (~USD 15 billion) in bribes, underscoring the substantial economic cost of corruption on citizens (The Financial Express, 2024).

The normalization of corruption in daily life aligns with the concept of routine corruption, where citizens come to expect and reluctantly comply with informal payments to secure basic services (Kurer, 2005; Williams, 2015). Such patterns not only erode trust in state institutions but also incentivize corrupt practices through repeated interaction and low perceived risk of sanction.

3.3 Administrative Corruption and Service Delivery

Administrative corruption in Bangladesh is not limited to bribery; it encompasses irregularities, harassment, extortion, and procedural manipulation within public service delivery. In key sectors, this affects both efficiency and equity.

Passport services emerge as a critical example. With 86% of households reporting corruption, the Department of Immigration and Passports appears to be one of the most opaque and contested bureaucratic arenas (TIB, 2024). Passport issuance and renewals should be rule-based and time-bound, but the need for informal payments to expedite processing or avoid harassment demonstrates how procedural discretion becomes a source of rent extraction—a pattern consistent with literature on bureaucratic corruption in developing states (Leff, 1964; Mauro, 1995).

Similarly, transportation services administered by the BRTA show high corruption exposure, with 85.2% of households reporting bribery or irregularity (TIB, 2024). This aligns with broader governance research that finds transport and licensing agencies to be common sites of rent extraction due to high discretionary authority and complexity of regulation (Olken & Pande, 2012).

Law enforcement agencies, where 74.5% of households reported corruption, also illustrate bureaucratic capture and the discretionary enforcement of laws (TIB, 2024). Police corruption often involves not only bribe solicitation but also coercion or misuse of power, fitting patterns observed in contexts where limited oversight allows officers to operate with impunity (Bayley, 1991; Punch, 2009).

The pervasiveness of administrative corruption across sectors suggests that reforms limited to formal rules without addressing underlying incentives—such as discretionary authority, weak monitoring, and low accountability—are unlikely to be effective (Rose-Ackerman, 1999; Kaufmann & Vicente, 2011). The structural embedding of corruption in service delivery reinforces the broader argument that corruption in Bangladesh is systemic rather than episodic.

3.4 Bribery, Household Income, and Inequality

The TIB household survey highlights that corruption does not impact all social groups equally. While 50.8% of households reported paying bribes, the frequency and financial burden of these payments vary by income level (TIB, 2024).

Households earning below BDT 24,000 per month spent approximately 0.93% of their annual income on bribes, compared to only 0.21% for households earning above BDT 85,000 (TIB, 2024). This pattern reflects the regressive nature of corruption, where informal payments constitute a larger share of income for poorer households, thereby exacerbating existing inequalities—a finding supported by inequality and corruption research showing that corruption disproportionately harms the poor by increasing the cost of basic services and reducing access (Mauro, 1998; Gupta, Davoodi, & Tiongson, 2002).

Moreover, the survey reveals that women, religious minorities, indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities are more likely to experience coercion into informal payments (TIB, 2024). This aligns with intersectional analyses of corruption, which argue that marginalized groups face heightened vulnerability due to weaker social capital and limited political influence, making them easier targets for rent-seeking officials and intermediaries (Anderson, 2009; Williams & Shahid, 2016).

These findings underscore that corruption not only depletes household resources but also deepens socio-economic divides when access to services becomes contingent on informal payments. The equity implications are significant, as those least able to afford bribes are often the most dependent on public services—a dynamic that compounds deprivation and undermines social justice (World Bank, 2019).

3.5 Corruption in Public Projects and Climate Finance

Corruption's impact extends beyond routine service delivery into the domain of public projects and development finance. A TIB report on climate finance found that more than 50% of government-funded climate projects under the Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund (BCCTF) suffered losses due to irregularities, embezzlement, and corrupt practices between 2010 and 2024 (TIB, 2025). The estimated total fiscal loss from these corrupt practices exceeded BDT 2,110 crore (~USD 190 million).

These findings highlight the multilayered nature of corruption in large-scale development initiatives. Climate finance and infrastructure projects often involve complex technical specifications, multiple contractors, and significant discretionary authority in contract awards—conditions that scholars identify as increasing vulnerability to collusion, bid rigging, and cost inflation (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016; Olken & Pande, 2012).

Corruption in climate and development finance has several damaging consequences:

- It diverts critical resources away from adaptive infrastructure and community resilience at a time when Bangladesh faces severe climate vulnerability (World Bank, 2022).
- It undermines public confidence in the state's ability to deliver effective climate solutions, reducing civic support for long-term ecological policies (TIB, 2025).
- It magnifies governance risk, as external donors and investors may perceive Bangladesh as a higher-risk environment for long-term financing (Dreher, Fuchs, & Parks, 2017).

These patterns resonate with broader research on corruption in public investment, which finds that corruption tends to increase project costs, reduce quality, and slow implementation, thereby reducing developmental returns (Mauro, 1998; Kenny, 2006).

4. Sectoral Distribution of Corruption

Corruption in Bangladesh is pervasive across all major public service sectors, but the distribution and intensity vary significantly, reflecting both sectoral vulnerabilities and institutional design weaknesses (Khan, 2010; Siddiquee, 2016). Recent empirical data from Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB, 2024) provide detailed insight into household experiences across service domains.

4.1 Passport and Immigration Services

The Department of Immigration and Passports (DIP) emerges as the most corrupt service sector, with 74.8% of households reporting bribery or informal payments for passport-related procedures (TIB, 2024; Just News BD, 2025). Corruption in immigration services undermines citizens' trust in the state's fundamental functions, hampers mobility, and indirectly constrains economic opportunities, particularly for students and overseas workers (Heywood, 2015). Scholars note that services requiring high discretion, complex documentation, and multiple procedural steps are particularly susceptible to rent-seeking (Leff, 1964; Rose-Ackerman, 1999). The persistence of corruption in DIP reflects not only administrative inefficiency but also the broader political tolerance of informal rent-seeking as a normalized strategy to navigate bureaucratic hurdles (Siddiquee, 2016).

4.2 Transportation and Licensing

The Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) is another high-risk sector, with 71.9% of households

reporting bribery when accessing services such as vehicle registration or driver certification (TIB, 2024; Just News BD, 2025). Similarly, interactions with law enforcement frequently involve bribe demands, harassment, or selective enforcement. Such structural vulnerabilities in transport and regulatory institutions are consistent with evidence that sectors characterized by high discretionary authority and regulatory complexity are prone to endemic corruption (Olken & Pande, 2012; Hossain, 2011). The prevalence of bribery in BRTA services demonstrates how procedural opacity, combined with low accountability, incentivizes officials to exploit their positions for private gain, perpetuating systemic inefficiency and inequity.

4.3 Judicial Services

The judiciary, theoretically a cornerstone of anti-corruption enforcement, is itself implicated in widespread corruption. TIB (2024) reports that 62.3% of households experienced irregularities, and 34.1% reported paying bribes to access judicial services. Judicial corruption erodes the rule of law, reinforces social inequities, and reduces public confidence in legal institutions (Mauro, 1998; Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016). Empirical studies indicate that judicial discretion, combined with limited oversight, creates opportunities for rent-seeking and procedural manipulation, often favoring wealthier and politically connected actors (Søreide, 2014). This pattern contributes to a dual justice system, where legal outcomes are contingent on resources or connections, thereby undermining democratic accountability.

4.4 Land and Local Government Services

Land administration and local government institutions are similarly affected. 51% of households reported corruption in land services, and 44.2% reported corruption in local government offices (TIB, 2024). Informal payments are frequently required for land registration, mutation, or dispute resolution. Corruption in these sectors imposes significant economic and social costs, including delayed project implementation, inflated transaction costs, and reduced trust in local governance (Kurer, 2005; Siddiquee, 2016). Scholars argue that local government and land administration are structurally vulnerable because of centralized authority, lack of transparency, and limited citizen oversight, creating fertile ground for clientelistic practices (Khan, 2010; Heywood, 2015).

5. National Statistical Corroboration: BBS Data

Official statistics from the Bangladesh Bureau of

Statistics (BBS) Citizen Perception Survey 2025 reinforce the prevalence of corruption. The survey found that 31.67% of government service seekers reported paying bribes in at least one interaction between February 2024 and February 2025 (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2025). Although slightly lower than TIB household percentages, BBS data confirm that bribery remains widespread and affects a substantial proportion of the population.

The BBS survey also reveals geographic patterns, with rural areas showing a slightly higher bribery incidence (32.27%) compared to urban areas (30.41%) (BBS, 2025). This suggests that corruption is systemically dispersed rather than confined to urban bureaucracies, reflecting structural deficiencies in administrative oversight, low transparency, and the uneven implementation of accountability mechanisms across regions (Søreide, 2014; Olken & Pande, 2012).

6. Structural Dynamics and Normalization of Corruption

Integrating TIB and BBS data highlights that corruption in Bangladesh is normalized across governance structures. The fact that over 70% of households routinely encounter corruption in essential services (TIB, 2024) and a significant proportion report bribe payments to fulfill basic needs (BBS, 2025) indicates that corruption is embedded in everyday state–society interactions.

Scholarly research frames this as institutionalized corruption, where informal payments become socially and bureaucratically accepted as necessary for timely service delivery or to avoid harassment (Leff, 1964; Kurer, 2005; Rose-Ackerman, 1999). The normative dimension of corruption reinforces systemic inertia: when citizens perceive bribery as unavoidable, their demand for accountability diminishes, and bureaucrats are incentivized to continue corrupt practices (Gupta et al., 2002; Heywood, 2015). Thus, corruption evolves from an episodic problem into a structural feature of governance, shaping expectations, resource allocation, and institutional behavior.

7. Socio-Economic Impacts of Corruption in Bangladesh

Corruption in Bangladesh is not merely an administrative or political anomaly; it is a systemic, multi-dimensional phenomenon with profound socio-economic consequences. Its impacts extend beyond financial misappropriation to distort public service delivery, deepen social inequities, and compromise democratic legitimacy (Heywood, 2015; Rose-

Ackerman & Palifka, 2016). Using evidence from Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB, 2024, 2025), the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS, 2025), and scholarly analyses, this section examines the socio-economic burden of corruption, its distributional consequences, effects on service access, and implications for development and governance.

7.1 Financial Burden on Households

The financial toll of corruption on households in Bangladesh is immense. According to the TIB National Household Survey 2023–24, households collectively paid BDT 10,902 crore (~USD 1 billion) in bribes in a single year (TIB, 2024). When aggregated over fifteen years (2009–2024), households are estimated to have paid BDT 146,252 crore (~USD 15 billion) in informal payments, underscoring corruption as a persistent drain on both household income and national welfare (The Financial Express, 2024).

Corruption imposes a direct cost on household budgets while also generating indirect economic losses. Informal payments reduce disposable income, constrain household investment in education, health, and productive assets, and exacerbate poverty cycles (Gupta, Davoodi, & Tiongson, 2002; Khan, 2010). Empirical evidence indicates that even moderate bribe demands can significantly disrupt household financial planning in low-income contexts, as these households often lack savings and access to formal credit (Olken & Pande, 2012).

Further, the macro-level impact is equally significant. The diversion of public funds into corrupt channels erodes fiscal capacity, inflates procurement costs, and reduces the efficiency of public expenditures (Mauro, 1998; Rose-Ackerman, 1999). For instance, irregularities in procurement of infrastructure, education, and healthcare projects have inflated costs by 15–30% on average, representing an opportunity cost that could have been used for development investments (Khan, 2010; TIB, 2025).

7.2 Disproportionate Impact on the Poor and Vulnerable

The burden of corruption is regressive, disproportionately affecting lower-income households. TIB (2024) reports that households earning below BDT 24,000 per month spent approximately 0.93% of annual income on bribes, whereas households earning above BDT 85,000 per month spent only 0.21%. This disparity illustrates how corruption exacerbates income inequality and undermines poverty reduction efforts, as informal payments consume a larger proportion of

poor households' already limited resources (Gupta et al., 2002; Mauro, 1998).

The social vulnerability dimension of corruption extends beyond income status. Women, religious minorities, indigenous populations, and persons with disabilities are more likely to face coercion, harassment, or extortion during interactions with public institutions, amplifying their marginalization (Anderson, 2009; TIB, 2024). Such inequities reinforce social exclusion and weaken citizens' trust in the state, consistent with evidence that corruption disproportionately burdens marginalized groups in developing countries (Heywood, 2015; Søreide, 2014).

Sociological analyses further suggest that corruption contributes to the perpetuation of intergenerational poverty. Households compelled to pay bribes for access to education, healthcare, or land services experience reduced opportunities for human capital accumulation, limiting social mobility and reinforcing structural inequality (Kurer, 2005; Khan, 2010). In this way, corruption functions as a systemic barrier to inclusive development and human development outcomes.

7.3 Distortion of Service Delivery and Access to Public Goods

Corruption systematically undermines equitable access to essential services. The TIB (2024) survey highlights high prevalence of bribery and irregularities in passport services (74.8%), BRTA/transportation (71.9%), judicial services (62.3%), land services (51%), and local government offices (44.2%). Such corruption not only delays service delivery but also skews resource allocation, as individuals or organizations with financial means gain privileged access while the majority—particularly the poor—face exclusion (Heywood, 2015; Olken & Pande, 2012).

In the health sector, informal payments are common for accessing hospital admissions, treatments, or medications, undermining equity and quality of care. For instance, nearly 49.1% of households reported corruption in public healthcare, including paying unofficial fees to doctors or administrators (TIB, 2024). Such practices reduce utilization of public health services among vulnerable populations and can exacerbate morbidity and mortality, particularly among children and the elderly (Hossain, 2011).

Similarly, in education, corruption manifests in admissions, grading, and examination processes, where bribes and favoritism distort meritocratic access. This not only compromises educational outcomes but also

contributes to long-term socio-economic stratification (Gupta et al., 2002).

Land administration and local governance are equally affected. Informal payments for registration, mutation, and dispute resolution create entry barriers for smallholders and low-income entrepreneurs, constraining economic opportunities and productive investment (Kurer, 2005; TIB, 2024). Scholars argue that this represents a form of “systemic rent extraction,” where corruption reduces institutional legitimacy and undermines the state's role in facilitating economic development (Rose-Ackerman, 1999; Khan, 2010).

7.4 Macroeconomic Implications of Corruption

Corruption in Bangladesh is not limited to micro-level impacts; it has macroeconomic consequences that affect growth, investment, and public finance. The diversion of resources through bribery and embezzlement reduces fiscal capacity for public goods provision and diminishes investor confidence (Mauro, 1998; Olken & Pande, 2012). According to TIB (2025), public procurement irregularities, misappropriation of climate finance, and embezzlement in development projects have cumulatively resulted in losses exceeding BDT 2,110 crore (~USD 190 million) from 2010 to 2024, highlighting the vulnerability of state-led interventions to corrupt practices.

Political economy studies highlight that corruption also distorts policy priorities. Governments may allocate resources to sectors or projects with higher rent potential rather than those with higher social returns (Gupta et al., 2002; Heywood, 2015). This leads to inefficient investment, inflated costs, and suboptimal outcomes, particularly in sectors critical for poverty alleviation, infrastructure, and climate resilience. For example, corruption in climate adaptation projects directly undermines Bangladesh's capacity to respond to its acute climate vulnerability (TIB, 2025).

7.5 Governance, Social Trust, and Institutional Legitimacy

Corruption erodes public trust and weakens the perceived legitimacy of institutions. Empirical research demonstrates that when citizens perceive public officials and political elites as corrupt, they are less likely to comply with laws, pay taxes, or participate in democratic processes (Anderson, 2009; Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016). In Bangladesh, the normalization of corruption—where over 70% of households routinely encounter bribery or informal payments in service delivery (TIB, 2024)—has fostered a culture of institutional cynicism.

The judiciary and law enforcement, both intended as mechanisms of accountability, are themselves implicated in corrupt practices. As noted, bribery and irregularities are widespread in judicial proceedings, limiting access to justice and reinforcing social inequities (Søreide, 2014; TIB, 2024). This dual failure—where institutions designed to prevent corruption are themselves compromised—further entrenches systemic corruption and undermines the social contract between the state and citizens.

7.6 Corruption and Social Inequality

Corruption in Bangladesh exacerbates structural inequalities, creating a feedback loop between economic disadvantage and governance deficits. Lower-income households pay proportionally more for services, while marginalized groups face additional barriers to accessing public goods (TIB, 2024; Anderson, 2009). This distributive impact aligns with global evidence suggesting that corruption is regressive, disproportionately burdening the poor and reinforcing entrenched inequalities (Gupta et al., 2002; Mauro, 1998).

The intergenerational dimension of corruption is significant. When education, healthcare, and legal services are compromised, the next generation experiences limited human capital accumulation, reducing long-term economic mobility and perpetuating cycles of poverty (Heywood, 2015; Khan, 2010). This underscores the role of corruption not only as a current fiscal and social burden but also as a developmental constraint with long-term implications.

7.7 Policy Implications and Reform Imperatives

Addressing the socio-economic impacts of corruption in Bangladesh requires comprehensive, multi-dimensional reforms. Scholarly research emphasizes that tackling systemic corruption demands:

Digitization and e-governance: Reducing human discretion in service delivery through online systems can limit opportunities for bribery (Siddiquee, 2016; Olken & Pande, 2012).

Strengthening oversight institutions: Independent anti-corruption agencies, robust auditing, and legislative monitoring are essential to detect and deter corrupt practices (Rose-Ackerman, 1999; Heywood, 2015).

Transparency and accountability mechanisms: Open procurement, public expenditure tracking, and citizen reporting systems can increase institutional integrity (Kurer, 2005; Søreide, 2014).

Targeted social protections: Protecting vulnerable populations from regressive burdens of corruption—through subsidized services or anti-bribery complaint mechanisms—can mitigate inequality (Gupta et al., 2002; Anderson, 2009).

Public engagement and civic awareness: Sustained citizen participation in monitoring government services is critical for creating a normative shift against corrupt practices (Heywood, 2015; Siddiquee, 2016).

Without such interventions, corruption will continue to distort development outcomes, weaken social equity, and erode public trust in Bangladesh's institutions.

Empirical evidence from TIB (2024, 2025) and BBS (2025), supported by scholarly analyses, confirms that corruption in Bangladesh is systemic, sectorally pervasive, and socially regressive. The financial burden on households, the disproportionate impact on the poor, distorted access to public services, and macroeconomic inefficiencies collectively illustrate the far-reaching socio-economic consequences. Corruption undermines institutional legitimacy, erodes social trust, and perpetuates structural inequalities, creating a vicious cycle that hampers inclusive development. Addressing these entrenched challenges requires holistic governance reforms encompassing transparency, digitization, oversight, public engagement, and targeted protections for vulnerable populations (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016; Siddiquee, 2016).

8. State-Led Responses and Limitations in Combating Corruption in Bangladesh

Corruption in Bangladesh has long been acknowledged as a major impediment to governance, development, and social equity. Recognizing the multi-dimensional consequences of corruption on the economy, public trust, and democratic legitimacy, successive governments have instituted state-led interventions to detect, prevent, and punish corrupt practices. Central to these efforts is the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) under the Anti-Corruption Commission Act of 2004, alongside broader policy initiatives aimed at enhancing transparency, accountability, and institutional integrity (Government of Bangladesh, 2012; TIB, 2025). Despite these efforts, corruption persists at systemic levels, suggesting that the state-led interventions face structural, institutional, and political limitations that have hindered their effectiveness.

8.1 Institutional Measures and Anti-Corruption Framework

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is the principal statutory agency tasked with curbing corruption in Bangladesh. The ACC's mandate includes investigating allegations of bribery, embezzlement, procurement irregularities, and abuse of public office, as well as prosecuting offenders in collaboration with the judiciary (Uslaner & Ali, 2007). Beyond the ACC, the government has implemented a range of public sector reforms aimed at reducing opportunities for corruption, such as:

Public Financial Management Reforms: Initiatives targeting budget transparency, expenditure tracking, and procurement oversight to reduce fiscal leakages (World Bank, 2013; Government of Bangladesh, 2012).

E-Governance and Digital Service Delivery: Programs such as the National e-Governance Plan and digitization of land registration, customs, and passport services aim to reduce bureaucratic discretion and minimize face-to-face interactions where informal payments typically occur (Siddiquee, 2016; TIB, 2024).

Legal and Policy Frameworks: The Anti-Corruption Commission Act (2004), supplemented by amendments and regulations on asset declarations, whistleblower protections, and public procurement, provides the legal basis for anti-corruption enforcement (Government of Bangladesh, 2012).

These measures reflect a recognition that corruption is not merely a moral failing but a structural governance challenge, requiring institutional capacity, transparency, and accountability mechanisms.

8.2 Effectiveness and Operational Challenges of the ACC

Despite the ACC's formal mandate, its effectiveness has been constrained by political, structural, and operational factors. Scholars have repeatedly highlighted that the ACC suffers from limited autonomy, as its leadership is politically appointed and often influenced by ruling parties (Uslaner & Ali, 2007; Hossain & Moore, 2008). This lack of independence has led to selective enforcement, with high-profile prosecutions often targeting political opponents while senior bureaucrats and business elites remain largely immune.

Empirical evidence also indicates that institutional capacity constraints impede comprehensive investigation. The ACC frequently lacks the specialized human resources, forensic expertise, and

logistical infrastructure required for in-depth probes into complex financial and political networks (Khan, 2010; Siddiquee, 2016). Procedural delays, case backlogs, and bureaucratic hurdles further reduce the deterrent effect of investigations. Between 2015 and 2024, although the ACC investigated thousands of cases, only a small fraction—less than 12%—resulted in convictions, highlighting enforcement inefficiency (TIB, 2025).

Legal bottlenecks also undermine the commission's authority. The judiciary, which is supposed to act as a check on corruption, is itself affected by delays, procedural inefficiencies, and occasional bribery, creating a situation where even investigated cases may fail to reach timely or equitable resolution (Søreide, 2014; Hossain, 2011). Scholars argue that without judicial reform, anti-corruption measures are unlikely to produce meaningful change.

8.3 Political Economy Constraints

Corruption in Bangladesh cannot be addressed purely through institutional enforcement; it is deeply embedded in the political economy. Patronage networks, clientelistic politics, and discretionary control over public resources create incentives for political elites to tolerate or even sustain corruption (Khan, 2010; Riaz, 2013). Political interference in ACC operations, selective case prioritization, and inconsistent political commitment illustrate how corruption is structurally reproduced through governance mechanisms themselves.

Moreover, competitive electoral politics sometimes exacerbates corruption rather than containing it. Political parties frequently mobilize supporters and consolidate power through state resources, contracts, and informal networks, reinforcing systemic corruption at both local and national levels (Hassan, 1988; Riaz, 2013). As a result, anti-corruption institutions like the ACC operate in an environment where political expediency often undermines institutional integrity.

8.4 Limitations in Policy Implementation

Beyond enforcement, broader anti-corruption strategies have also faced implementation challenges. Public financial management reforms, digitization programs, and transparency initiatives often remain incomplete, unevenly applied, or insufficiently monitored. For example, digitization of passport and land services has reduced some face-to-face interactions, but TIB (2024) reports that 74.8% of households still experience bribery in passport services, and 51% in land services. These figures demonstrate that

institutional reforms without accompanying cultural, normative, and enforcement measures are unlikely to eliminate corruption.

Similarly, public procurement reforms face persistent challenges. Despite regulations mandating transparent bidding processes and audit trails, high-profile cases of embezzlement and irregularities continue, particularly in infrastructure, climate finance, and energy projects (TIB, 2025). Scholars emphasize that such outcomes reflect both weak oversight capacity and collusive practices between public officials and private actors, demonstrating that technical reforms alone cannot overcome systemic corruption (Søreide, 2014; Khan, 2010).

8.5 Role of Civil Society and Media

Research suggests that anti-corruption interventions are more effective when civil society, media, and citizen participation complement formal institutional mechanisms (Heywood, 2015; Anderson, 2009). In Bangladesh, civil society organizations such as Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) have played a critical role in documenting corruption, mobilizing public awareness, and pressuring institutions to act. Similarly, investigative journalism and media scrutiny have highlighted irregularities in procurement, service delivery, and climate finance projects.

However, restrictions on freedom of expression, political intimidation, and limited engagement of marginalized communities constrain the effectiveness of civil society oversight. While awareness campaigns and citizen feedback mechanisms exist, their influence remains uneven and dependent on political tolerance and institutional responsiveness (Siddiquee, 2016; TIB, 2025). The lack of strong participatory channels for citizens further diminishes the deterrence potential of anti-corruption measures.

8.6 Comparative Perspectives and Lessons

Scholarly analyses suggest that Bangladesh's challenges are not unique; countries with similar political-economy structures and weak institutional autonomy exhibit comparable patterns of corruption (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016; Søreide, 2014). Evidence from East and Southeast Asia demonstrates that effective anti-corruption interventions require a combination of institutional autonomy, political will, professionalized bureaucracies, and citizen engagement (Khan, 2010; Heywood, 2015).

Comparative studies emphasize that institutional reforms without political reform are insufficient.

Strengthening judicial independence, legislative oversight, and electoral integrity are essential complements to anti-corruption agencies. Moreover, reform must target the incentive structures that allow corruption to persist, such as rent-seeking opportunities, discretionary authority, and clientelistic networks (Kurer, 2005; Khan, 2010).

8.7 Recent Developments and Continuing Challenges (2024–2026)

Recent data highlight the persistence of systemic limitations in state-led anti-corruption initiatives. According to TIB (2025), Bangladesh scored 23 out of 100 on the 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index, ranking 151st globally, signaling a worsening perception of governance integrity. Household-level surveys indicate that over 70% of households continue to experience corruption in essential services, including passport issuance, BRTA licensing, judicial proceedings, and land registration (TIB, 2024).

These patterns illustrate that while institutional frameworks exist, the enforcement capacity, political autonomy, and cultural transformation necessary to reduce corruption substantially remain incomplete. The persistence of high-profile scandals, bribery in service delivery, and embezzlement in public projects underscores the gap between formal legislation and practical enforcement.

9. Policy Recommendations for Enhancing State-Led Anti-Corruption Measures

Addressing corruption in Bangladesh requires a multi-dimensional policy strategy that combines institutional reform, judicial strengthening, service delivery innovation, civil society engagement, and political economy adjustments. Recent studies, including Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB, 2024, 2025) and the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS, 2025), highlight that corruption remains deeply entrenched across service sectors, with pervasive impacts on public trust, social equity, and national development. In response, policy scholars and practitioners, including Ali Riaz's 2024–25 Reform Committee, have articulated comprehensive proposals for strengthening anti-corruption governance. The following recommendations build upon these insights and international best practices.

9.1 Strengthening Institutional Autonomy

A cornerstone of effective anti-corruption governance is the political and operational independence of oversight institutions, particularly the Anti-Corruption

Commission (ACC). Empirical evidence demonstrates that selective enforcement and politically influenced investigations undermine institutional credibility (Uslaner & Ali, 2007; Khan, 2010). The Ali Riaz Reform Committee (2025) proposes several measures to enhance the ACC's autonomy:

Transparent Appointment Mechanisms: Commissioners should be appointed through independent committees comprising judiciary members, parliamentarians across party lines, and civil society representatives. This would reduce partisan interference and reinforce public confidence.

Protected Mandates and Financial Autonomy: The ACC should have guaranteed budgetary allocations independent of executive approval, along with statutory protection to investigate high-level officials, including ministers and senior bureaucrats.

Merit-Based Leadership and Performance Monitoring: Leadership appointments should be based on integrity, professional competence, and prior anti-corruption experience, with performance audits conducted periodically by independent evaluators (Riaz, 2025).

Strengthening institutional autonomy ensures that the ACC can act decisively against corruption without fear of political retaliation, aligning Bangladesh's anti-corruption framework with international norms (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016).

9.2 Judicial and Legal Reforms

Judicial inefficiency and vulnerability to bribery significantly limit the effectiveness of anti-corruption enforcement. The TIB (2024) and BBS (2025) surveys indicate that bribery and delays in judicial processes are widespread, with low-income and marginalized citizens disproportionately affected. Key reform measures include:

Expedited Case Management: Introducing specialized anti-corruption courts with time-bound case handling to reduce procedural delays and prevent manipulation.

Merit-Based Judicial Appointments: Transparent recruitment and promotion processes, guided by competency assessments and integrity audits, are essential to reduce influence-peddling (Søreide, 2014; Hossain, 2011).

Strengthening Oversight and Accountability: Judicial decisions and anti-corruption prosecutions should be subject to periodic public reporting and independent review, ensuring transparency in verdicts and deterring bribery.

Legal Harmonization and Enforcement Clarity: Aligning anti-corruption laws, public procurement regulations, and criminal statutes to close loopholes, reduce discretionary authority, and simplify enforcement (Riaz, 2025).

The Ali Riaz Committee emphasizes that judicial reform is not merely procedural but structural, requiring both capacity enhancement and institutional independence to sustain anti-corruption interventions (Riaz, 2025).

9.3 Digitization and Service Delivery Reforms

One of the most significant sources of everyday corruption in Bangladesh arises from discretionary bureaucracy in service delivery, particularly in passport issuance, land registration, public healthcare, and transport licensing (TIB, 2024). Digitization and e-governance present transformative solutions:

E-Governance Expansion: Full digitization of licensing, tax, land, and social services reduces face-to-face interactions and administrative discretion, minimizing opportunities for bribery (Siddiquee, 2016).

Online Payment Systems: Integrating secure online payment platforms with audit trails ensures that service fees are transparent and traceable.

Service Standardization and Feedback Mechanisms: Publishing service standards and turnaround times, coupled with citizen grievance redress systems, empowers users to challenge irregularities and enhances accountability (TIB, 2025).

Data Analytics for Risk Detection: Using AI and big data to detect unusual patterns in service delivery and procurement can enable real-time identification of corruption hotspots, aligning with the Riaz Committee's recommendation for e-governance monitoring dashboards (Riaz, 2025).

Digitization reforms, when implemented comprehensively and monitored effectively, can reduce informal payments, improve efficiency, and restore public confidence in administrative systems.

9.4 Civil Society and Media Empowerment

Robust civil society oversight and investigative journalism are critical complements to formal institutional measures. Corruption thrives in opaque environments; increasing transparency and civic participation enhances deterrence:

Strengthening Oversight Organizations: Civil society organizations like TIB and professional watchdogs

should be empowered to monitor public projects, conduct independent audits, and publish findings without fear of political reprisals (Anderson, 2009; Heywood, 2015).

Investigative Journalism and Media Freedom: Protecting media independence ensures coverage of corruption scandals, procurement irregularities, and policy shortcomings, facilitating public scrutiny and pressure for reform.

Participatory Monitoring: Engaging local communities, citizen panels, and social audits can ensure that corruption detection occurs at the grassroots level, particularly in rural service delivery, where TIB and BBS data show persistent irregularities (TIB, 2024; BBS, 2025).

The Riaz Committee (2025) emphasizes citizen-centered accountability as a means to reinforce state institutions and encourage bottom-up pressure for transparency.

9.5 Political Economy and Governance Reforms

Corruption in Bangladesh is structurally embedded within political networks, clientelistic relationships, and discretionary state power. Therefore, anti-corruption reforms must address incentive structures as well as institutional design:

Reducing Patronage and Clientelism: Reforming public employment, procurement, and subsidy allocation to minimize discretionary authority can break the link between political loyalty and material benefit (Khan, 2010; Riaz, 2013).

Professionalizing the Civil Service: Competitive recruitment, merit-based promotion, and ethical performance evaluations reduce incentives for rent-seeking and enhance institutional integrity.

Electoral Accountability and Transparency: Strengthening electoral oversight, campaign finance regulation, and independent election commissions ensures that political actors are accountable to citizens rather than patronage networks (Riaz, 2025).

Integrated Policy Approach: Linking anti-corruption reforms with poverty alleviation, climate finance, and service delivery ensures that structural incentives for corruption are minimized while promoting development outcomes (TIB, 2025).

The Riaz Committee underscores that political will is a prerequisite for sustained anti-corruption outcomes; without aligning incentives across political, bureaucratic, and societal levels, technical and procedural reforms remain limited in impact.

9.6 Integrating International Best Practices

In addition to domestic reforms, international lessons can enhance Bangladesh's anti-corruption strategy:

Adopting Multi-Stakeholder Integrity Frameworks: Coordinated anti-corruption action involving government, civil society, and private sector partners, similar to the UN Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) frameworks, can enhance compliance and transparency (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016).

Performance-Based Incentives for Anti-Corruption Agencies: Linking ACC performance evaluations and institutional funding to measurable outcomes encourages efficiency and accountability.

Global Collaboration and Learning: Bangladesh can benefit from cross-country experiences in digital service delivery, anti-money laundering, and anti-fraud technology to strengthen domestic mechanisms (Søreide, 2014; Heywood, 2015).

Bangladesh's entrenched corruption reflects structural, political, and socio-economic vulnerabilities that cannot be addressed through isolated institutional interventions. While state-led mechanisms such as the ACC provide a formal framework for investigation and prosecution, their effectiveness is constrained by political interference, limited capacity, and weak enforcement. Recent recommendations, notably those articulated by the Ali Riaz Reform Committee (2024–25), emphasize a holistic approach combining institutional autonomy, judicial and legal reforms, digitized service delivery, civil society empowerment, and political economy adjustments.

Implementing these measures requires sustained political commitment, resource allocation, and cultural change to normalize transparency and integrity. Only through comprehensive, multi-layered reforms can Bangladesh reduce the systemic entrenchment of corruption, enhance public trust, and improve governance outcomes. These recommendations are consistent with both empirical findings from TIB (2024–25) and BBS (2025) surveys and scholarly analyses emphasizing the need for integrated approaches to combat corruption in politically and socially complex environments (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016; Siddiquee, 2016; Riaz, 2025).

10. Concluding Remarks

Corruption in Bangladesh is no longer merely an episodic problem but has become a systemic and normalized feature of governance, with roots extending from colonial administrative practices to

contemporary political and bureaucratic structures. Empirical evidence from Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB, 2024, 2025) and the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS, 2025) demonstrates that corruption permeates nearly all sectors of public life, from passport issuance and land services to judicial proceedings and public procurement. The financial burden on households is substantial, with lower-income families disproportionately affected, reinforcing socio-economic inequities and undermining poverty reduction efforts. Over the past 15 years, households have collectively paid an estimated BDT 146,252 crore (~USD 15 billion) in bribes, highlighting the scale of economic and social costs (The Financial Express, 2024; TIB, 2024).

The persistence of corruption is closely tied to structural and institutional weaknesses, including discretionary bureaucratic authority, politicized oversight bodies, underfunded judicial institutions, and limited media independence. Political patronage networks and clientelism exacerbate these challenges, making governance reforms difficult to implement without addressing the underlying incentive structures (Khan, 2010; Riaz, 2025). Corruption not only erodes public trust in government institutions but also weakens the social contract, impedes service delivery, and reduces the efficacy of development initiatives, including critical sectors such as climate finance, healthcare, and education (Heywood, 2015; Siddiquee, 2016).

State-led interventions, such as the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and e-governance initiatives, represent important steps toward addressing corruption. However, their limited independence, political interference, and capacity constraints have restricted their effectiveness (Uslaner & Ali, 2007; Hossain, 2011). Recent proposals by the Ali Riaz Reform Committee (2024–25) emphasize the need for holistic and multi-sectoral reforms, including strengthening institutional autonomy, judicial and legal reforms, digitized service delivery, civic oversight, and political economy adjustments. Integrating these reforms can reduce opportunities for rent-seeking, enhance transparency, and foster accountability across public institutions.

Ultimately, combating corruption in Bangladesh requires more than piecemeal interventions; it demands a sustained commitment to transforming governance structures, professionalizing the civil service, empowering civil society, and embedding integrity in political and bureaucratic processes. By addressing both the structural and normative

dimensions of corruption, Bangladesh can strengthen democratic accountability, improve public service delivery, and promote inclusive socio-economic development. In this sense, anti-corruption efforts must be situated within broader democratic and institutional reform agendas, linking transparency, accountability, and citizen participation to long-term national development objectives (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016; TIB, 2025). Only through such integrated strategies can the country hope to reverse the entrenched patterns of corruption and restore public trust in its institutions.

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