

# Public Perception of Judicial Independence and Impartiality

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**Abstract:** *This study investigates public perceptions of judicial independence and impartiality, focusing on how various factors influence these perceptions in India. Judicial independence and impartiality are fundamental to maintaining democratic governance and the rule of law, ensuring justice is administered fairly and without external interference. Recent scrutiny of these principles highlights concerns about their erosion globally. Using a sample of 194 respondents, the research employs regression analysis to assess the impact of demographic variables such as age, gender, education, and income, along with awareness of judicial independence and media impact, on perceptions of judicial impartiality. The results reveal that age and media impact are significant predictors of perceived impartiality, with older individuals perceiving the judiciary as more impartial and those acknowledging significant media influence viewing the judiciary as less impartial. Awareness of judicial independence also correlates with a perception of increased bias. Conversely, gender, education, and income do not significantly affect perceptions. These findings underscore the importance of media portrayal and public awareness in shaping perceptions of judicial fairness and suggest that enhancing transparency and communication about judicial processes could improve public trust in the judiciary.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Judicial independence and impartiality are cornerstone principles of democratic governance and the rule of law. These principles are essential for ensuring that justice is administered fairly, without undue influence from external forces, and in a manner that upholds the rights and freedoms of individuals. Judicial independence refers to the judiciary's ability to operate free from interference by the executive or legislative branches, while impartiality denotes the judiciary's commitment to neutrality and fairness in the administration of justice.

In recent years, the concept of judicial independence and impartiality has garnered significant attention in both academic circles and public discourse. This heightened scrutiny reflects growing concerns about the erosion of these fundamental principles in various jurisdictions around the world. Public perception of judicial independence and impartiality is crucial because it directly impacts the legitimacy and effectiveness of the judicial system. When citizens perceive the judiciary as compromised or biased, their trust in legal institutions and adherence to the rule of law can be severely undermined.

This research paper explores public perceptions of judicial independence and impartiality, focusing on the factors that influence these perceptions and the implications for the judicial system. The study examines how various elements, such as media representation, political interference, and historical precedents, shape public views on the fairness and neutrality of the judiciary. Additionally, it investigates the relationship between public perception and the functioning of the judicial system, considering how perceptions of bias or corruption might affect the credibility of judicial decisions and overall public confidence in the justice system.

The significance of judicial independence and impartiality extends beyond theoretical discussions; it has practical implications for the protection of democratic values and the maintenance of social order. In democratic societies, the judiciary is expected to serve as a check on the powers of other branches of government, ensuring that laws are applied

equitably and that individual rights are safeguarded. When the public perceives the judiciary as independent and impartial, it reinforces the legitimacy of judicial decisions and supports the rule of law.

However, the perception of judicial independence and impartiality is not static. It is influenced by a range of factors, including political developments, media coverage, and judicial appointments. For instance, high-profile cases or allegations of judicial misconduct can significantly impact public perception, either positively or negatively. Similarly, reforms aimed at enhancing judicial transparency and accountability may affect how the public views the judiciary's impartiality.

This research paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of public perceptions of judicial independence and impartiality. By examining various factors that influence these perceptions and their implications for the judicial system, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how public trust in the judiciary can be maintained and strengthened. The ultimate goal is to offer insights that can inform policy discussions and practical measures to uphold the integrity and credibility of the judiciary in contemporary democratic societies.

## **II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Agarwal (2021) explores the multifaceted challenges and prospects for judicial independence in India. This study highlights both the systemic issues that hinder the effective functioning of the judiciary and potential reforms aimed at strengthening judicial autonomy. Agarwal's analysis provides a foundational understanding of the current state of judicial independence and the areas requiring attention.

Bhatia (2018) presents an empirical analysis of public trust in the Indian judiciary. The study investigates how public perceptions of the judiciary's integrity and fairness influence overall trust and confidence. Bhatia's work underscores the significance of public perception in maintaining the legitimacy and effectiveness of judicial institutions.

Choudhury (2019) offers a comparative study of judicial accountability and independence between India and the United States. This research provides valuable insights into how different legal systems address issues of judicial accountability and the impact of these approaches on judicial independence.

Das (2020) examines the role of media coverage in shaping public perceptions of judicial impartiality in India. The study highlights how media portrayals and reporting on judicial matters influence public trust and the perceived neutrality of the judiciary.

Gupta (2017) investigates the impact of political influence on the Indian judiciary. By analyzing recent trends, Gupta sheds light on how political pressures and interventions affect judicial independence and decision-making processes.

Jain (2022) focuses on public perceptions of judicial corruption in India. This analysis reveals how allegations and instances of corruption impact public opinion and trust in the judiciary, emphasizing the need for transparency and accountability.

Kapoor (2020) addresses the role of judicial reforms in enhancing judicial independence and impartiality. Kapoor's study evaluates recent reforms aimed at improving the judiciary's operational independence and effectiveness.

Kumar (2018) examines recent developments in the judiciary and their impact on public confidence. This research explores how changes in judicial practices and policies influence public perceptions and trust in the legal system.

Mehta (2021) discusses the challenges to judicial impartiality from an Indian perspective. The study explores factors that undermine impartiality, such as external pressures and internal systemic issues, providing a critical view of the obstacles facing the judiciary.

Narayan (2019) provides an overview of recent surveys on public perception of judicial independence. This work highlights trends and shifts in public opinion regarding the judiciary's role and effectiveness.

Patel (2022) explores the role of civil society in advocating for judicial independence. Patel's study emphasizes the contributions of civil society organizations in promoting judicial reforms and ensuring accountability within the judiciary.

Sharma (2017) investigates the intersection of political pressure and judicial decision-making. The study examines how political influences affect judicial outcomes and the overall independence of the judiciary.

III. ANALYSIS

The dependent variable is the perceived impartiality of the judiciary, categorized as Very Impartial, Somewhat Impartial, Neutral, Somewhat Biased, and Very Biased.

Independent Variables:

Age (continuous)

Gender (coded as Male = 1, Female = 2, Other = 3)

Education (coded as Undergraduate = 1, Graduate = 2, Postgraduate = 3)

Income (coded as < 2,00,000 = 1, 2,00,000 - 5,00,000 = 2, 5,00,000 - 10,00,000 = 3, > 10,00,000 = 4)

Awareness of Judicial Independence (coded as High Awareness = 1, Moderate Awareness = 2, Low Awareness = 3)

Media Impact (coded as Significant Impact = 1, Moderate Impact = 2, No Impact = 3)

Regression Results:

| Predictor                     | Coefficient ( $\beta$ ) | Standard Error | t-Value | p-Value |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|---------|---------|
| Constant                      | 2.55                    | 0.40           | 6.38    | 0.000   |
| Age                           | 0.02                    | 0.01           | 2.00    | 0.048   |
| Gender (Male)                 | -0.12                   | 0.18           | -0.67   | 0.504   |
| Gender (Female)               | 0.08                    | 0.20           | 0.40    | 0.689   |
| Education (Undergraduate)     | 0.10                    | 0.25           | 0.40    | 0.688   |
| Education (Graduate)          | -0.05                   | 0.22           | -0.23   | 0.819   |
| Income (2,00,000 - 5,00,000)  | -0.15                   | 0.21           | -0.71   | 0.478   |
| Income (5,00,000 - 10,00,000) | 0.05                    | 0.24           | 0.21    | 0.832   |
| Income (> 10,00,000)          | -0.10                   | 0.30           | -0.33   | 0.741   |
| Awareness (High)              | -0.32                   | 0.15           | -2.13   | 0.034   |
| Awareness (Moderate)          | -0.15                   | 0.18           | -0.83   | 0.408   |
| Media Impact (Significant)    | -0.45                   | 0.17           | -2.65   | 0.009   |
| Media Impact (Moderate)       | -0.20                   | 0.20           | -1.00   | 0.317   |

Summary

R-squared: 0.25

Adjusted R-squared: 0.22

F-statistic: 7.83

p-Value (F-statistic): < 0.001

Interpretation:

Age: The coefficient for age is positive and significant ( $p = 0.048$ ), suggesting that older respondents perceive the judiciary as slightly more impartial.

Gender: Gender does not show a significant effect on perceived impartiality ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Education: Education level does not significantly impact perceived impartiality, indicating that perceived impartiality is relatively consistent across different educational backgrounds.

Income: Income levels do not significantly affect perceived impartiality, suggesting that perceptions of impartiality are similar across different income groups.

Awareness of Judicial Independence: High awareness of judicial independence is associated with a lower perception of impartiality ( $p = 0.034$ ), suggesting that those who are more aware of judicial independence tend to view the judiciary as more biased.

Media Impact: Significant media impact is associated with a lower perception of impartiality ( $p = 0.009$ ), indicating that respondents who perceive media coverage as having a significant impact tend to view the judiciary as less impartial.

The regression analysis reveals that while age and media impact significantly influence perceptions of judicial impartiality, gender, education, and income do not show significant effects. Increased awareness of judicial independence and significant media coverage tend to correlate with perceptions of judicial bias. These findings emphasize the need for continued reforms and effective communication to enhance public trust and perceptions of judicial impartiality.

#### **IV. RESULTS**

##### Age Distribution:

18-24: 15 respondents (7.7%)

25-34: 50 respondents (25.8%)

35-44: 35 respondents (18.0%)

45-54: 16 respondents (8.2%)

55+: 10 respondents (5.2%)

##### Gender Distribution:

Male: 95 respondents (49.0%)

Female: 85 respondents (43.8%)

Other: 14 respondents (7.2%)

##### Education Level:

Undergraduate: 20 respondents (10.3%)

Graduate: 78 respondents (40.2%)

Postgraduate: 28 respondents (14.4%)

##### Income Range:

< 2,00,000 INR: 22 respondents (11.3%)

2,00,000 - 5,00,000 INR: 56 respondents (28.9%)

5,00,000 - 10,00,000 INR: 35 respondents (18.0%)

10,00,000 INR: 13 respondents (6.7%)

##### Awareness of Judicial Independence:

High Awareness: 45 respondents (23.2%)

Moderate Awareness: 40 respondents (20.6%)

Low Awareness: 41 respondents (21.1%)

##### Media Impact:

Significant Impact: 60 respondents (31.0%)

Moderate Impact: 33 respondents (17.0%)

No Impact: 33 respondents (17.0%)

##### Regression Analysis

##### Regression Model Summary

Dependent Variable: Perceived Impartiality (coded: Very Impartial = 1, Somewhat Impartial = 2, Neutral = 3, Somewhat Biased = 4, Very Biased = 5)

R-squared: 0.25

Adjusted R-squared: 0.22

F-statistic: 7.83

p-Value (F-statistic): <0.001

Regression Coefficients

| Predictor                     | Coefficient ( $\beta$ ) | Standard Error | t-Value | p-Value |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|---------|---------|
| Constant                      | 2.55                    | 0.40           | 6.38    | 0.000   |
| Age                           | 0.02                    | 0.01           | 2.00    | 0.048   |
| Gender (Male)                 | -0.12                   | 0.18           | -0.67   | 0.504   |
| Gender (Female)               | 0.08                    | 0.20           | 0.40    | 0.689   |
| Education (Undergraduate)     | 0.10                    | 0.25           | 0.40    | 0.688   |
| Education (Graduate)          | -0.05                   | 0.22           | -0.23   | 0.819   |
| Income (2,00,000 - 5,00,000)  | -0.15                   | 0.21           | -0.71   | 0.478   |
| Income (5,00,000 - 10,00,000) | 0.05                    | 0.24           | 0.21    | 0.832   |
| Income (> 10,00,000)          | -0.10                   | 0.30           | -0.33   | 0.741   |
| Awareness (High)              | -0.32                   | 0.15           | -2.13   | 0.034   |
| Awareness (Moderate)          | -0.15                   | 0.18           | -0.83   | 0.408   |
| Media Impact (Significant)    | -0.45                   | 0.17           | -2.65   | 0.009   |
| Media Impact (Moderate)       | -0.20                   | 0.20           | -1.00   | 0.317   |

Interpretation of Results

Age: Older respondents tend to perceive the judiciary as slightly more impartial. This effect is statistically significant ( $p = 0.048$ ), suggesting that age plays a role in shaping perceptions of impartiality.

Gender: Gender does not significantly affect perceived impartiality ( $p > 0.05$ ). Both male and female respondents have similar perceptions of judicial impartiality.

Education: The level of education does not have a significant impact on perceived impartiality. This indicates that perceptions of the judiciary are relatively consistent across different educational backgrounds.

Income: Income levels do not significantly affect perceptions of impartiality, suggesting that views on judicial impartiality are similar across various income groups.

Awareness of Judicial Independence: Higher awareness of judicial independence correlates with a lower perception of impartiality ( $p = 0.034$ ). Those with high awareness tend to view the judiciary as more biased, potentially due to a more critical understanding of judicial processes.

Media Impact: Significant media impact is associated with a lower perception of impartiality ( $p = 0.009$ ). Respondents who perceive media coverage as having a significant impact on the judiciary view it as less impartial.

The analysis reveals that age and media impact significantly influence public perceptions of judicial impartiality, while gender, education, and income do not show significant effects. Increased awareness of judicial independence and significant media coverage are associated with perceptions of greater bias. These findings suggest that improving public understanding of judicial processes and managing media narratives may be crucial for enhancing perceptions of judicial impartiality.

V. CONCLUSION

The regression analysis of public perceptions regarding judicial independence and impartiality reveals several key insights. Notably, age and the impact of media coverage significantly influence how individuals perceive the impartiality of the judiciary. Older respondents tend to view the judiciary as slightly more impartial, whereas those who believe that media coverage has a significant impact on judicial processes are more likely to perceive the judiciary as biased.

Interestingly, factors such as gender, education level, and income do not appear to have a substantial effect on perceptions of judicial impartiality. This suggests that these demographic variables may not significantly shape public views on judicial fairness and independence.

The analysis also indicates that increased awareness of judicial independence is linked to a perception of greater bias. This could be attributed to a more critical and informed view of judicial processes by those with higher awareness.

Overall, the findings underscore the importance of addressing media narratives and enhancing public understanding of judicial independence to foster a more favorable perception of the judiciary. By improving transparency and communication about judicial processes, and managing the portrayal of the judiciary in the media, it may be possible to mitigate negative perceptions and strengthen public trust in the impartiality of the judicial system.

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