

Perceptions of Development under Viksit Bharat: A Thematic Analysis of Economic, Social, and Infrastructure Dimensions.

Abstract

This paper examines citizens' perceptions of development under the Viksit Bharat vision using qualitative responses collected through a Google Form from 21 respondents. The analysis uses open coding and axial coding to identify five major themes: economic well-being, social development, infrastructure and urban living, governance and inclusion, and sustainability. The findings show that participants recognised progress in employment opportunities, public services, education, healthcare and infrastructure. However, they also highlighted persistent concerns regarding inequality, women's safety, traffic, public service gaps, transparency, pollution, and environmental degradation. Overall, respondents understood Viksit Bharat not only as economic growth, but as inclusive, sustainable, transparent and citizen-centred development.

Keywords

Viksit Bharat, Development, Thematic Analysis, Infrastructure, Governance, Sustainability, Inclusion

Introduction

Viksit Bharat 2047 is the vision of the Government of India to make India developed by the Independence Day Celebration of its 100th anniversary. The literature on the subject examines and analyses this vision in a macro-economic perspective, as well as a governance and policy perspective, with negligible studies in particular that explicitly explore citizens' perception of this vision. This review will critically examine the key academic discourse in India, and highlights the gap between macro level policies and the understanding of development by citizens.

One of the major themes in the literature is the economic aspect of development. The status of developed countries is associated with per capita income levels, long term growth of GDP and structural change, the researchers argue. For example, Rangarajan and Shanmugam (2025) suggest that the definition of the developed status can only be satisfied if there is a clear economic benchmark; many states in India will not be able to reach the stated goals with the current level of growth and income distribution. This means that for citizens, Viksit Bharat will always go hand in hand with the development of income, jobs and equality in the region.

The other stream that is prominent is the one on inclusive and sustainable development. Paul and John (2025) define Viksit Bharat as a multi-dimensional model, which includes economic development and social welfare as well as environmental sustainability. Similarly, Ramakrishna et al. (2024) highlight the importance of infrastructure, healthcare, education and rural development in achieving a holistic transformation. The studies assume that the citizens will consider the development to be not only economic growth, but better quality of their life, the availability of social services, and the environment.

Literature Review

Another theme that is frequently discussed is governing and institutional change. In their paper, Paul and Rena (2024) show that reforms in the systems of governance, such as the efficiency of bureaucracy, innovation and digital transformation are essential to achieve Viksit Bharat. In addition to this, the e-governance literature states that citizen perception of development is seen as being strong influenced by transparency, service delivery and accountability mechanisms (Kumar et al., 2014). This implies that the citizens can equate Viksit Bharat with good governance, less corruption and better responsiveness of the state.

Another dimension revealed in the literature is the human capital and technological advancement. Viksit Bharat vision education, skill development and innovation are crucial drivers of development. Most recent research shows that the roadmap entails investment in areas like agriculture, manufacturing, infrastructure, and digital transformation and places a significant focus on the creation of employment and social justice. In the eyes of the citizen, this is in line with the hopes of higher education, job security and promotion.

The cultural and philosophical foundations of the development trajectory of India are also highlighted. The vision of Viksit Bharat brings together the economic systems of modernity and the philosophy of traditional values of India like Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world as one family) and inclusive and ethical development, as stated by Sharma (2024). This means that the material component of development can be understood by citizens, alongside with aspects of social harmony, equity and global responsibility.

Despite these contributions, the gap in the literature is important due to the few studies that have paid attention to citizen centric views. Most of the studies take a top-down approach and take the policy frameworks and macroeconomic measures into account but not lived experiences. While the trends in the population make India favourable for the Viksit Bharat in terms of demographic dividend and globalization process, it is the capability of the trends to be translated to the benefit of the population that creates Viksit Bharat, as per Bisiriyu (2025). This gap highlights the need for citizen-centered empirical studies of citizen conceptions of development and self-assessment.

To sum up, the literature suggests that Viksit Bharat is a multi-faceted process—economic growth, social integration, sustainable development, efficient governance and culture values. However, the difference between the policy's definition and citizens' experiences remains and this study aims to bridge that gap.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design to understand citizens' perceptions of development under the Viksit Bharat vision. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables the exploration of personal experiences, perceptions, and meanings attached to development beyond quantitative indicators.

Sampling Design

The study uses purposive and convenience sampling. Data were collected through a Google Form questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions. A total of 21 respondents from diverse occupational backgrounds participated, including students, professionals, self-employed individuals, and retirees.

Data Collection

Data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire covering five dimensions of development.

Data Analysis Technique

Responses were analyzed through thematic analysis. Open coding was first used to identify recurring ideas, which were then grouped into broader themes corresponding to the Viksit Bharat framework. Similar to Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis approach, themes were refined based on frequency and significance within participant responses.

Objectives

1. To understand citizens' perceptions of economic development under Viksit Bharat
2. To examine views regarding social development and quality of life.
3. To assess perceptions of infrastructure and public services
4. To evaluate governance, transparency, and inclusion.
5. To explore attitudes toward environmental sustainability and future development.

Analysis

This study seeks to understand how ordinary citizens interpret the idea of Viksit Bharat and whether they perceive development to be occurring in their everyday lives.

Table 1

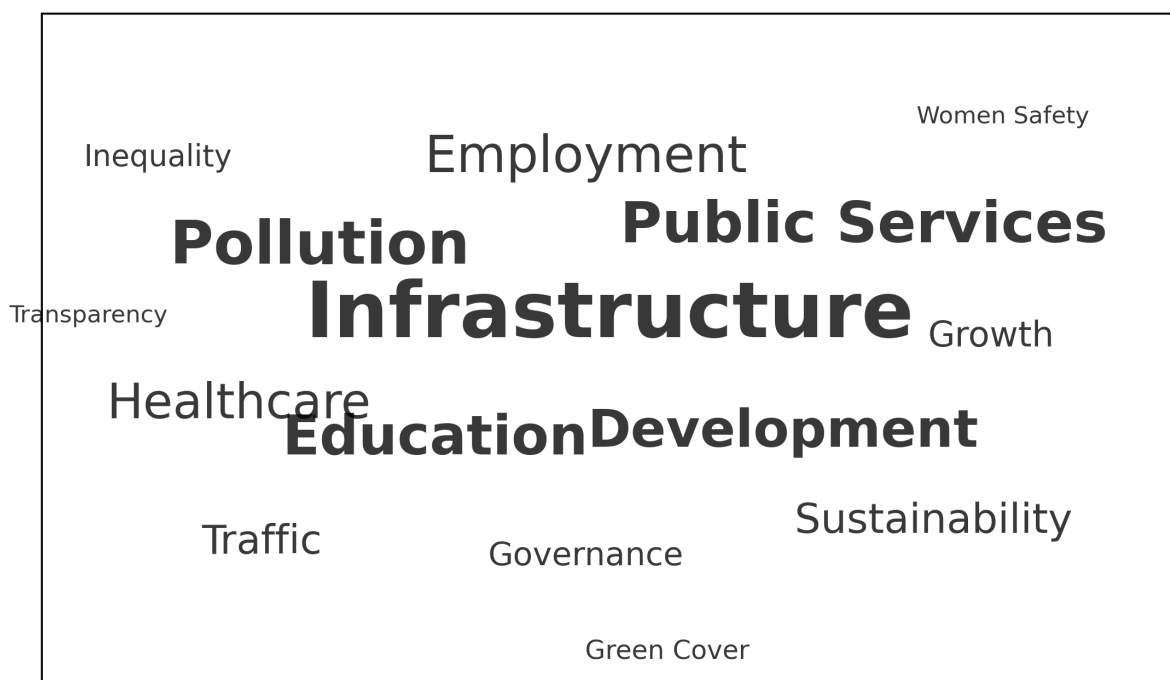
Axial Codes

Axial Category	Open Code	Subcategory/ Phenomenon	Axial Link	f	%	Emergent Theme
Economic well-being	Improved financial stability	Economic mobility	Income stability was improving for many respondents, but gains were uneven and shaped by inflation and competition.	19	6.6	Inclusive prosperity
Economic well-being	Employment and entrepreneurship	Opportunity expansion	Respondents referred to full-time employment, self-employment, consulting, internships and business opportunities.	17	5.9	Opportunity expansion
Economic well-being	Government economic support	Welfare and tax support	Tax reforms, scholarships, subsidies and public investment were seen as useful by some respondents.	11	3.8	State-enabled economic mobility
Economic well-being	Financial insecurity and competition	Economic anxiety	Long work hours, AI competition, low salaries, unemployment, retirement security and inflation reduced the meaning of income gains.	11	3.8	Persistent insecurity
Social development	Education and healthcare improvement	Human development	Most respondents acknowledged some improvement in education and healthcare facilities.	18	6.2	Human development
Social development	Quality of life improvement	Social welfare	Many respondents felt quality of life had improved, though not equally for all groups.	12	4.2	Quality of life gains
Social development	Women safety and empowerment	Gendered safety concerns	Women safety, women empowerment and education were repeatedly identified as areas needing attention.	5	1.7	Gendered inclusion
Social development	Social inequality and basic services	Uneven access	Poverty, sanitation, water, healthcare, education and income inequality were seen as unresolved issues.	15	5.2	Uneven social inclusion
Infrastructure and urban living	Improved roads/electricity/connectivity	Visible development	Respondents noticed better roads, electricity, water supply and internet in some areas.	15	5.2	Visible infrastructural progress
Infrastructure and urban living	Traffic, drainage and road problems	Urban pressure	Bad roads, congestion, waterlogging, drainage and crowding were among the strongest daily frustrations.	15	5.2	Urban planning deficit
Infrastructure and urban living	Public services satisfaction gap	Service delivery gap	Ratings for water, sanitation and transport were mixed, showing that public services remain uneven.	21	7.3	Incomplete public service delivery
Infrastructure and urban living	Housing and living condition divide	Spatial inequality	Some respondents described better housing, while others noted slums, poor living conditions and lack of improvement.	9	3.1	Uneven urban living
Governance and inclusion	Policy effectiveness	Administrative performance	Government policies were seen as moderately effective by many, especially through schemes and digital services.	13	4.5	Governance effectiveness
Governance and inclusion	Limited citizen voice	Participation gap	Several respondents said local authorities only sometimes heard them, while others said no.	19	6.6	Weak participatory governance
Governance and inclusion	Transparency and access gaps	Accountability deficit	Accessibility improved in some cases, but transparency ratings were low or mixed for many participants.	18	6.2	Accountability gap

Governance and inclusion	Personal benefit from schemes	Direct benefit	Some respondents personally benefited through scholarships, solar subsidies, passport renewal services or other schemes.	3	1.0	Targeted welfare benefit
Sustainability	Environmental degradation	Ecological concern	Many respondents perceived environmental conditions as worsened or unchanged rather than improved.	18	6.2	Environmental anxiety
Sustainability	Pollution, waste and green cover concerns	Urban ecology stress	Air pollution, waste management, reduced green cover and deforestation were frequently mentioned.	12	4.2	Ecological stress
Sustainability	Limited sustainability initiatives	Implementation gap	Initiatives were often described as absent, private, or insufficient despite a few mentions of GRAP and solar subsidies.	19	6.6	Sustainability implementation gap
Sustainability	Sustainable development demands	Development-environment balance	Respondents asked for waste management, renewable energy, trees, transport, cycling, rainwater harvesting and limits on deforestation.	19	6.6	Sustainable development demand

Figure 1

Word Chart



The following themes were generated using QDA Miner Lite software:

1. Economic Well-being and viksit bharat
2. Social Development and viksit bharat
3. Infrastructure & Urban Living and viksit bharat
4. Governance & Inclusion and viksit bharat
5. Sustainability and viksit bharat

Theme 1: Economic Well-being and Viksit Bharat

The findings indicate that economic improvement is one of the strongest indicators through which respondents assess development. Most participants reported that their financial conditions had improved either significantly or moderately over recent years. Employment opportunities, self-employment, entrepreneurship, and expanding job markets were commonly cited as positive developments. Many respondents linked economic progress to increased access to employment, better business opportunities, and government-led economic reforms. However, economic growth was not viewed as equally beneficial for all sections of society.

A recurring concern was the rising cost of living. Inflation, job insecurity, competition in the labor market, and uncertainty caused by technological changes were repeatedly mentioned.

One respondent stated:

“My income has improved, but inflation reduces the actual benefits. Financial stability remains difficult despite higher earnings.”

This suggests that while economic development is visible, citizens continue to experience anxieties regarding long-term financial security. Therefore, Viksit Bharat is understood not merely as economic growth, but as sustainable and inclusive prosperity. Emergent Economic Themes: Improved income and financial stability, Increased employment opportunities, Positive impact of certain government initiatives, Concerns regarding inflation and cost of living, Unequal distribution of economic benefits.

Theme 2: Social Development and Viksit Bharat

Respondents generally perceived improvements in education, healthcare, and overall quality of life. Better educational institutions, greater awareness, and expanded healthcare facilities were frequently mentioned. Many participants believed that development initiatives have positively influenced living standards. However, concerns remained regarding unequal access to these benefits across social groups. Several respondents identified persistent social issues including: Women's safety, Educational inequality, Healthcare accessibility, Social awareness, Water and sanitation challenges.

One respondent observed:

“There has been development, but education and healthcare quality still vary greatly depending on location and income.”

This demonstrates that respondents evaluate development not only through economic indicators but also through access to social opportunities and public welfare services. Emergent Social Themes are Improved quality of life, Better education and healthcare access, Persistent social inequalities, Women's safety concerns, Need for greater social inclusion.

Theme 3: Infrastructure and Urban Living

Infrastructure emerged as one of the most visible indicators of development. Respondents frequently mentioned improvements in roads, electricity supply, internet connectivity, and transportation facilities. Many participants reported fewer electricity outages, improved road networks, and enhanced digital connectivity. These developments were viewed as tangible evidence of progress.

Nevertheless, infrastructure deficiencies remain significant. Common concerns included: Poor road maintenance, Traffic congestion, Drainage issues, Pollution, Public transport limitations, Waste management problems

One participant remarked:

“Roads and connectivity have improved considerably, but traffic and maintenance continue to affect daily life.”

This indicates that while infrastructure development is widely recognized, citizens expect higher standards of urban planning and public service delivery.

Emergent Infrastructure Themes: Improved roads and connectivity, Better access to electricity and internet, Traffic congestion, Road maintenance concerns, Need for better public transport and sanitation.

Theme 4: Governance and Inclusion

Perceptions regarding governance were mixed. Many respondents acknowledged improvements in digital governance and accessibility of public services. Government schemes, scholarships, subsidies, and welfare initiatives were cited as examples of positive interventions.

However, respondents expressed uncertainty regarding whether citizen voices genuinely influence decision-making processes. Transparency and accountability emerged as important concerns. Several respondents felt that while government services are more accessible than before, responsiveness remains inconsistent.

One respondent explained:

“Government services are easier to access digitally, but there is still a gap between policy announcements and implementation.”

This suggests that citizens associate Viksit Bharat not only with economic and physical development but also with efficient and accountable governance. Emergent Governance Themes: Increased accessibility of government services, Benefits from welfare scheme, Growing digital governance, Concerns about implementation gaps, Need for greater citizen participation.

Theme 5: Sustainability and Viksit Bharat

Environmental sustainability emerged as the most critical area of concern. A majority of respondents believed environmental conditions had worsened despite economic and infrastructure improvements. Pollution, declining green spaces, waste management issues, and environmental degradation were repeatedly highlighted. Many participants emphasized that development should not occur at the cost of environmental protection.

One respondent stated:

“Development and ecological sustainability should move together. Economic growth without environmental protection cannot create a truly developed nation.”

Respondents suggested: Greater investment in renewable energy, Better waste management systems, Stronger pollution control measures, Increased urban greenery, Sustainable construction practices, These findings indicate that citizens increasingly view sustainability as an essential component of development rather than a separate concern. Emergent Sustainability Themes: Rising environmental concerns, Pollution and waste management challenges, Demand for renewable energy, Need for sustainable urban planning, Integration of development and environmental protection.

Overall Perception of Viksit Bharat

Across all themes, respondents described Viksit Bharat as a vision of a developed, inclusive, transparent, and sustainable India. Development was not interpreted solely in terms of GDP growth but through improvements in quality of life, social welfare, infrastructure, governance, and environmental responsibility. Most participants believed India is moving toward becoming a developed nation. However, they emphasized that progress remains uneven and requires stronger efforts to address inequality, corruption, environmental degradation, and gaps in public service delivery. The findings suggest that citizens view Viksit Bharat as a multidimensional concept where economic growth, social welfare, governance reforms, infrastructure development, and sustainability must progress simultaneously.

Conclusion

This study explored citizens' perceptions of development under the Viksit Bharat vision using qualitative thematic analysis of 21 responses. Five major themes emerged: Economic Well-being, Social Development, Infrastructure and Urban Living, Governance and Inclusion, and Sustainability. The findings reveal that respondents generally acknowledge significant improvements in income opportunities, infrastructure, public services, and quality of life. However, concerns regarding inflation, inequality, governance effectiveness, environmental degradation, and uneven access to development remain prominent. Overall, participants perceive Viksit Bharat as a holistic vision of national development that extends beyond economic growth to include social inclusion, environmental sustainability, efficient governance, and improved living standards. The results highlight the importance of balancing economic progress with social justice and ecological responsibility to achieve the broader goals of Viksit Bharat 2047.

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Appendix

Questionnaire:

Section A: Basic Information

(Keep short, optional for qualitative study)

Please describe your occupation and background.

How long have you been residing in your current city/village?

Section B: Economic Well-being

How has your income or financial stability changed in recent years?

What employment or business opportunities are available to you currently?

Do you feel that government initiatives have improved your economic condition? Please explain.

What challenges do you still face in terms of earning and financial security?

Section C: Social Development

How would you describe the changes in education and healthcare facilities in your area?

Do you feel there has been improvement in quality of life for people around you?

How inclusive are development initiatives for different social groups (women, elderly, marginalized)?

What social issues still need attention in your area?

Section D: Infrastructure & Urban Living

How has infrastructure (roads, transport, electricity, internet) improved in your area?

What changes have you observed in housing and living conditions?

How satisfied are you with public services such as water supply, sanitation, and transport?

What infrastructure problems do you still face?

Section E: Governance & Inclusion

How effective do you find government policies and schemes in your area?

Do you feel your voice or concerns are heard by local authorities?

How transparent and accessible are government services to you?

Have you personally benefited from any government scheme? Please describe.

Section F: Sustainability

How do you perceive environmental changes in your area (pollution, greenery, waste management)?

Are there any initiatives promoting sustainability or environmental protection?

Do you think development is happening in an environmentally sustainable way?

What steps should be taken to improve sustainability in your area?

Section G: Overall Perception

What does “Viksit Bharat” mean to you personally?

Do you believe India is moving towards becoming a developed nation? Why or why not?

What improvements would you suggest for better development outcomes