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Behavioral and Cultural Determinants of Corruption: Evidence from Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Corruption poses significant challenges in Indonesia, impacting economic, social, and political dimensions. This study investigates behavioral and cultural determinants of corruption through a systematic literature review, focusing on recent empirical studies and theoretical frameworks. Key findings reveal that institutional weaknesses, cultural norms, and individual greed are critical drivers of corruption. Institutional flaws, such as ineffective regulatory mechanisms and convoluted bureaucratic processes, exacerbate opportunities for corrupt practices. Meanwhile, cultural norms that tolerate bribery and gift-giving further entrench corruption within society. The research underscores the importance of good governance, including transparency and accountability, as well as cultural transformations through education and public awareness campaigns. By offering evidence-based insights, this study contributes to the development of anti-corruption strategies that address both structural and cultural dimensions, providing a foundation for policy-making and societal change. The findings also highlight the necessity of reforms that integrate behavioral understanding with institutional improvements to foster sustainable anti-corruption efforts.

INTRODUCTION

The rise of corruption stands out as one of the critical hurdles encountered by nations at different stages of development, like Indonesia. This phenomenon not only engenders harmful economic repercussions but also undermines a nation's moral, social, and political underpinnings (Demartoto, 2007). Corruption entails exploiting authority for individual or collective benefit that contravenes legal and ethical standards.

Generally, corruption manifests in various modalities, from bribery, misappropriation of public resources, and nepotism to more intricate forms of authority abuse (Afriyanti et al., 2015; Kirya, 2020; Nisnevich, 2016). This situation is further aggravated by inadequate law enforcement and suboptimal oversight, which creates avenues for corrupt practices to persist without substantial hindrances. Consequently, comprehending the

determinants that precipitate corruption is an essential component in the endeavors to prevent and eradicate this social malaise.

In the Indonesian context, the phenomenon of corruption is far from novel. From the colonial period to the reform era, corrupt practices have become deeply entrenched within the bureaucratic and political frameworks. Many factors contribute to the proliferation of corruption in Indonesia, including convoluted bureaucratic structures, inadequate internal and external regulatory mechanisms, and a societal culture that exhibits a degree of tolerance towards legal transgressions (Rachmat, 2016; Syarif, 2023). Corruption remains a pervasive issue in Indonesia, undermining economic progress and social trust. Despite the establishment of anti-corruption agencies and initiatives, the nation's standing on the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) underscores ongoing systemic challenges. This study addresses the question: What are the primary behavioral and cultural determinants of corruption in Indonesia? It aims to fill gaps in the literature by identifying how local cultural norms and behavioral patterns perpetuate corruption, while also analyzing the limitations of existing frameworks. By doing so, the research offers targeted recommendations for mitigation, emphasizing evidence-based strategies that align with Indonesia's socio-cultural context.

One of the most salient consequences of corruption impedes economic advancement. When public resources designated for developmental initiatives are misappropriated, infrastructure, healthcare services, and education progress are significantly hindered (Boudreaux et al., 2018; Kutan et al., 2009; Zamahani, 2016). Consequently, social disparities expand, as affluent groups are more likely to derive advantages from a corrupt framework, while the less fortunate experience increasing

marginalization. Furthermore, corruption engenders market distortions, wherein inept enterprises may secure government contracts through illicit payments. At the same time, more capable firms are disadvantaged due to their refusal to engage in such unlawful conduct. This scenario obstructs sustainable economic growth and engenders instability within the investment environment.

In addition to its economic ramifications, corruption engenders significant social repercussions. The erosion of public trust in governmental and institutional frameworks occurs when citizens perceive that official entrusted with the stewardship of public resources are appropriating them for personal enrichment (Farrag & Ezzat, 2019; Pelizzo & Stapenhurst, 2013; Rasul, 2002; Trabelsi, 2024). This engenders a perpetuating cycle of skepticism that proves challenging to dismantle, as individuals who experience disillusionment with governmental entities are often disinclined to endorse the reformative policies essential for eradicating corruption. With time, corruption may jeopardize the foundational understanding shared between the authorities and the people, reducing trust in the government's effectiveness in securing their needs and being forthright.

Corruption significantly intensifies the inequities present within the legal sector. The legal framework, which ought to serve as a cornerstone of justice, is susceptible to manipulation by entities possessing superior resources (Arnone & Borlini, 2014; Bellacosa, 2018; Pramono et al., 2024). Individuals engaged in corrupt practices frequently evade legal repercussions, whereas ordinary citizens implicated in minor infractions endure disproportionate penalties. This phenomenon engenders injustice and exacerbates the public's perception of the integrity of the justice system and law

enforcement institutions. In certain instances, corruption within the legal sector can precipitate social disorder, as individuals believe the law is no longer enforced equitably.

One must acknowledge that corruption exists beyond just the privileged segments of society and reaches into lower ranks. In certain regions, for instance, the habitual practice of offering bribes to secure public services has become normalized. At the level of local bureaucracy, officials tasked with processing documentation or permits frequently solicit 'grease money' to expedite administrative procedures. When individuals encounter pressing circumstances, they often resort to bribery, even though they recognize the moral consequences of such behaviors. This illustrates that corruption transcends individual ethics, representing a systemic issue that necessitates a holistic strategy for its resolution.

Numerous scholarly investigations indicate that the predominant factor propelling corruption is the presence of deficient institutional frameworks. Institutions ostensibly responsible for executing oversight functions frequently lack the capacity to identify or forestall corrupt practices (Drebee et al., 2020; Heinrich & Brown, 2017; Santos et al., 2024). For instance, a non-autonomous auditing mechanism, insufficient internal controls, and ambiguous regulatory guidelines amplify the potential for corrupt activities. Furthermore, an intricate and convoluted bureaucratic structure similarly creates opportunities for officials to exploit their authoritative positions for personal advantage. In such contexts, institutional reform assumes critical significance in the endeavor to avert and eliminate corruption (Pope, 2003).

One prevalent strategy that is frequently advocated for the eradication of corruption is the enhancement of good governance. The essence of good governance lies in principles like clarity, responsibility, community involvement, and following the law. Using these rules is likely to bring about a fall in corruption, as it supports a more lucid decision-making method that the extensive community can evaluate. Furthermore, the augmentation of public engagement in oversight functions can serve as a mechanism of social control against officials who may attempt to perpetrate malfeasance. In various nations, the deployment of information technology has also demonstrated efficacy in mitigating corruption, exemplified by the introduction of e-government systems that diminish direct interactions between public officials and citizens (Saputra et al., 2024).

Another determinant that impacts the prevalence of corruption is the cultural and social values cultivated within a society. In certain nations, such as Indonesia, corruption is frequently perceived as 'normal' or an integral aspect of daily existence. For instance, presenting 'gifts' to public officials is regarded as a facet of communal cooperation or an expression of gratitude, notwithstanding that legally, this behavior is categorized as bribery. This lenient perspective towards corruption impedes its eradication, as the populace fails to perceive corruption as a critical issue that necessitates intervention.

Elevated levels of economic inequality constitute a significant impetus for corruption. When the allocation of financial resources is perceived as inequitable, certain demographic groups may experience marginalization and subsequently pursue avenues for advantage through illicit means. Corruption is frequently regarded as an expedient pathway to wealth, particularly for individuals who perceive the prevailing system as failing to offer equitable opportunities. In this framework,

initiatives aimed at mitigating corruption must be integrated with policies that foster economic equality and facilitate the establishment of broader opportunities across all strata of society.

Corruption is intrinsically linked to the political dimension. In numerous nations, the prevalence of corruption can be attributed to an opaque political framework coupled with insufficient accountability among governmental officials (Funderburk, 2012; Xin & Rudel, 2004). Electoral processes financed by ambiguous sources or contributions that lack adequate oversight facilitate the emergence of monetary politics and other corrupt behavior. Moreover, political parties frequently engage in corrupt activities to secure funding for their campaigns or to sustain their grip on power. In such contexts, there is an imperative for the implementation of more transparent and accountable political reforms to mitigate the opportunities for corrupt practices.

The eradication of corruption necessitates a comprehensive approach encompassing all strata of society and governmental institutions. Beyond implementing more stringent law enforcement measures, it is imperative to foster a societal paradigm shift regarding corruption such that this behavior is no longer perceived as normative. Over the long term, initiatives to prevent corruption must be systematically embedded within the educational framework, enabling the younger population to comprehend the detrimental effects of corruption from an early age and cultivate robust principles of integrity. By executing these strategies, it is anticipated that corrupt practices can be mitigated, thereby facilitating more equitable and sustainable national development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of corruption is derived from the Latin term corruptio. In English, it is referred to as corruption or corruption, while in French it is designated as corruption and in Dutch it is termed coruptie. The Indonesian lexicon has drawn the term corruption from the Dutch language. 1. The adjective corrupt denotes a state of moral decay, characterized by unethical behavior such as accepting bribes (exploiting one's authority for personal benefit, among other actions). 2. Corruption is defined as an unethical act (including offenses such as embezzlement or accepting bribes, among other transgressions) (Napisa & Yustio, 2021).

By Law No. 31 of 1999, corruption is defined as an abuse of authority executed for individual or corporate advantage. Furthermore, corruption may be construed as an unlawful act undertaken to augment one's wealth, that of others, or a corporation, which adversely impacts the state's financial stability or the nation's economic wellbeing.

The typology of corruption delineated within the framework of the Corruption Law, as articulated in Law No. 31 of 1999 about the Elimination of Criminal Acts of Corruption, which has been subsequently amended by Law No. 20 of 2001 regarding Revisions to Law No. 31 of 1999 on the Abolition of Criminal Acts of Corruption, can be categorized as follows: 1. Adverse Impact on State Finances, 2. Bribery, 3. Misappropriation in Office, 4. Extortion, 5. Deceptive Practices, 6. Conflict of Interest in Procurement Processes, 7. Gratification.

The concept of behavior in Indonesian encompasses how a person responds to outside stimuli or their environment (Riany et al., 2017; Satya & Said, 2016). According to Skinner, behavior constitutes an individual's response or reaction to external stimuli; from a biological perspective, behavior

signifies the actions or activities of the living organism in question, thus rendering human behavior as the actions or activities performed by humans themselves, which encompass a pervasive range (Richelle, 2015; Sarto-Jackson et al., 2017).

The term "culture" is derived from Sanskrit, specifically from the word "buddayah," which represents the plural of "buddhi" (denoting mind or reason) and is interpreted as a phenomenon associated with the human intellect and rationality in the English language, the concept of culture is referred to as "culture," originating from the Latin term "colere," which signifies to cultivate or to engage in labor and can also be construed as the act of land cultivation or agriculture. Furthermore, "culture" is frequently translated as "Kultur" in Indonesian. According to comprehensive dictionaries of the Indonesian language, culture is defined as encompassing thoughts, customs, evolved elements, and practices that have become entrenched habits resistant to change. In colloquial usage, individuals often equate the notion of culture with that of tradition. In this context, tradition is understood as the manifest practices of a community. Jerald G. and Rober assert that culture comprises a collective mental framework that necessitates individual reactions to environmental stimuli. This definition suggests that culture is observable in quotidian behaviors but is governed by a deeply ingrained cognitive framework. Thus, culture transcends superficial behaviors and is fundamentally interwoven within the fabric of each individual (Syakhrani & Kamil, 2022).

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a literature review methodology that seeks to dissect corruption's determinants by examining diverse scholarly works, empirical research documents, and pertinent governmental publications (Mulia, 2022). The information amassed is derived from secondary sources, encompassing academic journals, monographs, and articles scrutinizing corruption across various nations, particularly in Indonesia. Employing this tactic, the investigation clarifies the individual, institutional, and societal influences on corruption frequency. The analytical process involves a critical evaluation and juxtaposition of existing research findings to cultivate an enhanced comprehension of how these factors facilitate the emergence of corrupt practices and identify strategies that may be implemented to mitigate corruption effectively.

DISCUSSION

There exist multiple determinants that contribute to the phenomenon of corruption when examined through the lenses of behavioral and cultural frameworks within Indonesia. Firstly, individual characteristics represent a significant contributing factor to corruption across various strata of society. The inception of corrupt practices frequently stems from individuals' intentions to exploit their positions or authority. The innate human propensity for greed compels individuals to pursue expedient and illicit avenues for personal enrichment, notwithstanding the infringement of legal and ethical standards (Nadjib & Bafadhal, 2020; Prabowo, 2024). This avarice is further intensified by inducements from external entities that proffer material incentives or advantageous positions to expedite processes or secure particular contracts. Moreover, pressing financial exigencies can also incite individuals to resort to corrupt practices. In the context of challenging economic circumstances, specific individuals may perceive themselves as compelled to

undertake such measures to address their own or their family's financial requirements swiftly.

The secondary determinant contributing to corruption is the deficiency of moral standards, while individual integrity also constitutes a significant factor in the proliferation of corruption (Aprilia & Islahuddin, 2019). Individuals exhibiting low moral principles frequently lack a sense of accountability for their behaviors, mainly when presented with the opportunity to exploit power. Persons with weak integrity often experience no remorse when engaging in actions that undermine the public good, as they prioritize personal gain. This illustrates that the education of moral and ethical values is crucial in mitigating corruption. Instruction that imparts the principles of integrity and responsibility can facilitate the development of individuals who exhibit a robust commitment to executing their duties with honesty and transparency.

Moreover, the tertiary factors contributing to corruption are education and legal consciousness, which are pivotal in shaping individual conduct concerning corrupt activities. Individuals lacking comprehension or awareness of the pertinent legal frameworks are more susceptible to engaging in corrupt behaviors. Insufficient educational attainment and a deficiency in understanding the perils associated with corruption render numerous individuals oblivious to the illegality of their actions. This phenomenon frequently manifests in communities that have yet to embrace transparency and accountability in their daily practices. Comprehensive education, particularly in legal studies and governance, is imperative to enhance public consciousness regarding the significance of evading corruption and equipping them with knowledge about the legal ramifications of such behaviors.

The institutional component is a major contributor to corruption, significantly affecting whether corrupt actions are encouraged or suppressed. In numerous nations, including Indonesia, an inadequate oversight system constitutes a vulnerability readily exploited by individuals seeking to engage in corrupt activities. A lax oversight framework creates opportunities for the misappropriation of public resources without the apprehension of detection by regulatory authorities. For instance, in budgetary management, the insufficiency of effective control mechanisms frequently results in diverting funds intended for public welfare to be appropriated for personal benefit. Furthermore, the lack of transparent and independent auditing processes generates avenues for specific individuals or collectives to augment their wealth through corruption illicitly.

Moreover, the fifth determinant contributing to corruption is the prevalence of ineffective policies, which further exacerbate corruption within institutional frameworks. In numerous instances, formulated policies frequently lack a solid foundation or exhibit overlapping jurisdictions, resulting in legal ambiguities that unscrupulous actors can manipulate. Convolutional or excessively bureaucratic policies tend to impede the administrative process, ultimately prompting individuals to pursue illicit shortcuts through bribery or other forms of corruption to expedite the resolution of their matters. In light of this context, there is a pressing need for policy reforms that are simpler, more transparent, and easily comprehensible to mitigate the potential for corruption within the bureaucratic landscape.

In addition to the oversight mechanisms and established policies, the sixth determinant contributing to corruption is the cultural and social norms that emerge within society, which are significant factors in reinforcing or

undermining corrupt practices. In certain nations, bribery or the provision of gratuities has become ingrained in the daily cultural fabric. In Indonesia, for instance, the tradition of presenting gifts to officials as an expression of gratitude is frequently misconstrued as acceptable despite its classification as bribery under legal definitions. Social norms that exhibit tolerance toward corruption present a formidable obstacle in eliminating corruption, as the societal perspective fails to recognize corruption as a critical issue warranting serious intervention. Consequently, initiatives aimed at transforming cultural and social norms to underscore the significance of integrity and transparency should be a primary emphasis of anti-corruption strategies.

Furthermore, the seventh determinant contributing to corruption is the presence of social and economic inequality, which additionally acts as a catalyst for corrupt practices. When financial assets are not allocated equitably, specific demographics experience marginalization and resort to alternative methods, including corrupt activities, to secure access to these resources. In numerous instances, individuals from disadvantaged economic backgrounds perceive a lack of equitable opportunities for advancement through legitimate avenues, prompting them to resort to corrupt practices to expedite their ascent to prosperity. This inequity in the distribution of economic resources incites individuals to partake in corrupt behaviors and engenders broader social instability.

The eighth determinant is that an opaque political framework significantly contributes to the prevalence of corruption at the governmental tier. Elections financed through ambiguous sources, the utilization of political funds to purchase votes, and the absence of accountability among public officials represent some of the principal issues that foster corruption within the political landscape. Political factions frequently engage in corrupt activities to accumulate financial resources for sustaining authority or securing electoral victories. In light of this context, there is an urgent necessity for more transparent and accountable political reforms to curtail the opportunities for corruption among political authorities.

The final determinant contributing to the prevalence of corruption is the inadequacy of law enforcement mechanisms and the insufficient safeguarding of whistleblowers. Numerous instances of corruption remain inadequately investigated owing to a deficiency in political backing or apprehension of retaliation from involved stakeholders. Furthermore, individuals who disclose incidents of corruption frequently lack sufficient protective measures, thereby exposing themselves to potential physical threats, job termination, or even legal actions. This inefficacy of law enforcement fosters a culture of impunity for those who engage in corrupt practices and incentivizes them to persist in their unlawful behaviors without fearing substantial repercussions.

Various elements influence the complexity of corruption, and we cannot ignore how mass media and social media shape people's views. Mass media can influence societal viewpoints regarding corruption-related matters, both through the reportage of prominent cases and initiatives aimed at combating corruption. Vigorous coverage of significant corruption scandals frequently elicits robust reactions from the populace, which subsequently calls for enhanced law enforcement measures against those implicated in corrupt activities. Conversely, social media also assumes a pivotal role in broadening public discourse concerning corruption. Social media platforms facilitate public engagement in overseeing governmental officials and various institutions. Through

social media, individuals can rapidly disseminate information about alleged corrupt practices and advocate for increased transparency (Maulana, 2013). While the media plays a crucial role in eliminating corruption, it concurrently encounters substantial obstacles. In certain instances, the media, which ought to function as a mechanism of social control, become entangled in corrupt practices, such as accepting inducements to suppress coverage of specific cases. This illustrates that the media is equally susceptible to the same pressures and temptations that afflict other institutions. Consequently, the integrity of the media must be perpetually upheld to ensure its capacity to fulfill its role as an independent watchdog and to courageously report the truth without apprehension of financial or political repercussions.

Corruption within law enforcement agencies constitutes a significant challenge that necessitates immediate attention. Entities such as police departments, prosecutorial offices, and judicial courts frequently face allegations of engaging in corrupt activities, which may manifest as accepting bribes to terminate investigations or providing preferential treatment to influential individuals or affluent groups. The prevalence of corruption within these law enforcement entities profoundly undermines public confidence in the judicial system, thereby exacerbating systemic inequities. Consequently, it is imperative to implement reforms to foster a more transparent and independent judicial framework to eliminate corruption at this institutional tier.

CONCLUSION

Corruption represents a diverse challenge rooted in personal characteristics and the inadequacies within institutional arrangements and the surrounding social landscape. Factors such as avarice, low ethical standards, and insufficient moral education significantly contribute to individuals' propensity to partake in corrupt activities. Conversely, inadequate oversight mechanisms, ineffective regulatory policies, and societal norms that tolerate corruption foster an environment conducive to such misconduct. Consequently, eliminating corruption cannot be achieved exclusively through heightened law enforcement measures; it necessitates concomitant structural reforms and an enhancement of public consciousness regarding the perils associated with corruption. Initiatives to combat corruption must engage all strata of society and governmental entities. It is imperative to fortify institutions by establishing a more transparent and accountable oversight framework, alongside streamlining bureaucratic procedures to enhance efficiency and mitigate opportunities for officials to exploit their authority. Furthermore, fostering cultural transformation through early anti-corruption education and impactful public awareness campaigns is critical for reshaping societal attitudes toward corruption. In the long run, it is also essential to implement more transparent political reforms to diminish corruption at the elite level, ensuring that elected representatives are held accountable and are subject to scrutiny by the broader community.

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