

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences

journal homepage: <http://www.elsevier.com/locate/kjss>

Youth perceptions toward corruption and integrity: Indonesian context

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 17 February 2016
 Received in revised form 4 August 2016
 Accepted 17 August 2016
 Available online xxxx

Keywords:

corruption,
 integrity,
 youth

ABSTRACT

Corruption is a crime against humanity—it destroys the country and infects every level of government. Country development is inhibited and poverty increases. Youth, which is the hope of the nation, plays an important role in the fight against corruption. Attitudes towards the fight against corruption and the importance of understanding integrity need to be instilled from a young age. However, not many researchers have investigated or tried to understand the perceptions of young people against corruption and integrity, especially in the Indonesian context. Thus, this research identified youth perceptions toward corruption and integrity. This paper describes the first stage (item generation) in developing a scale for corruption and integrity. Data were collected among Indonesian youth through an open-ended questionnaire and in-depth interviews. The results showed that Indonesian youth are not really familiar with the word integrity. More than half of the respondents could not define the word. From those who could, honesty was perceived as a main characteristic of integrity. Indonesian youth defined corruption as taking away the rights of others. They pointed out that taking away others money is an example of corruption. All the research findings combined with the literature review on corruption and integrity will become indicators to measure corruption and integrity in the next steps of the scale development.

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Introduction

Personal values are known as a significant predictor of individual behavior (Blackwell, D'Souza, Taghian, Miniard, & Engel, 2006; Yuan & Dong, 2006). Understanding people values contributes to understanding individual and societal behavior. A study conducted by Sihombing (2014) found that Indonesian youths hold current values such as mutual assistance, religion, democracy, kinship, and hospitality. However, that study also found that western culture, religious fanaticism, being selfish, and corruption

are also parts of non-positive current values of Indonesian youth.

A corruption theme is emphasized in this research because corruption is a significant world problem (Hodgson & Jiang, 2007), especially in Indonesia, where corruption is a national problem that continues to undermine the nation and many people in the government system (Harrison, 2007; Robertson-Snape, 1999). The number of corruption cases in Indonesia is increasing every year and the people involved operate at various levels.

Corruption occurs in and impacts on many parts of people's day-to-day lives. One noticeable corruption effect is that the public lose trust in the government, especially youths, for whom the corruption issue is a main reason why they have lost interest in talking about politics and government (Buena, 2010; Tyas & Harmanto, 2014). If youths do

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Peer review under responsibility of Kasetsart University.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.kjss.2018.03.004>

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Please cite this article in press as: Sihombing, S. O., Youth perceptions toward corruption and integrity: Indonesian context, *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences* (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.kjss.2018.03.004>

not want to talk about corruption, how can they be interested in fighting it?

Youths are the main foundation for a country. They will be the future leaders, but importantly, their present attitude and behavior will affect the life of a nation. For example, when youths tolerate corruption, then the future of the nation will be questioned since corruption destroys nation building. However, there is little research that focuses on youth perceptions toward corruption and integrity, especially in the Indonesian context (for example, [Transparency International Indonesia, 2012](#); [Transparency International Indonesia, 2013](#)).

This research aimed to identify youth perception toward corruption. Furthermore, this research also aimed to identify youth perception toward integrity. Understanding integrity and corruption are important because those two concepts are related as a lack of integrity may influence corrupt behavior.

Literature Review

Corruption

Corruption is defined as giving or receiving something as a result of doing things that are not encouraged either by law or regulation in connection with certain daily tasks ([Mohamed, Ismail, & Abu Bakar, 2014](#)). Corruption is also defined as the abuse of public office for private gain ([Drury, Kriekhaus, & Lusztig, 2006](#)). The term corruption represents misappropriate behavior such as bribery, nepotism, theft, and embezzlement ([Drury et al., 2006](#)).

Corruption is a word that is most often heard and seen in many types of media communication such as TV, radio, the Internet, and other social media in Indonesia. Those media show that the actors of corruption are diverse and involve many both from government and private sources, including the leaders of a region such as mayors, regents, and governors up to government ministers. Many corruption cases that appear in the Indonesian media have resulted in Indonesia being perceived as a corrupt country ([www.rmaf.org.ph](#)). In addition, some Indonesians perceive that Indonesia is in a state of emergency with regard to corruption ([Duppa, 2012](#); [Viradhani, 2015](#)). A statement about corruption was delivered by the Indonesian president, Jokowi, when he had a dialogue with Indonesian citizens in Washington (10/26/2015). He stated that there were 9 ministers, 19 governors, more than 300 regents/mayors, and 2 Indonesian central bank governors who had been jailed because of corruption ([Ratya, 2015](#)).

One measurement of corruption is the corruption perception index (CPI). The CPI uses a score from zero to 100 to rank countries based on how corrupt each country's public sector is perceived to be. A value of zero means that a country is perceived as highly corrupt a score of 100 means that a country is perceived as very clean. Furthermore, a country's rank indicates its position relative to the other countries included in the index. The CPI score for Indonesia was 32 in 2012 and 2013 and increased to 34 in 2014, indicating that Indonesia is a corrupt country. [Table 1](#).

Corruption in Indonesia occurs in all aspects of the government sector, private sector, non-governmental

Table 1

CPI scores (2012–2014)

Country	CPI Score (2012)	Rank (2013)	CPI Score (2013)	Rank (2014)	CPI Score (2014)	Rank (2014)
Singapore	87	5	86	5	84	7
Brunei Darussalam	55	46	60	38	NA	NA
Malaysia	49	54	50	53	52	50
Thailand	37	88	35	102	38	85
Philippine	34	108	36	94	38	85
Indonesia	32	118	32	114	34	107
Vietnam	31	123	31	116	31	119
Myanmar	15	172	21	157	21	156

Bold represents Indonesia's rank in perception of corruption.

Source: [www.transparency.org](#) (2015).

organizations, and also between individuals in their personal dealings. Moreover, corruption in Indonesia has become a systemic phenomenon and deeply rooted as a socio political problem ([Situngkir, 2004](#)). Bribery is one aspect of corruption that seems normal in Indonesia. Bribery also has many aspects, especially regarding dealing with government officers, police officers, or even school and university officials. In some countries, such as Indonesia and Japan, bribery or gratification is not perceived as a part of corruption but rather as culture, since giving something is expressing gratitude ([Quah, 2011](#)).

A study conducted by [Sihombing \(2014\)](#) and [Akbar \(2011\)](#) found that corruption is a non-positive value held by Indonesian people. Several reports on Indonesian youth have pointed out that youths experience corruption especially when they have to deal with the police ([Transparency International Indonesia, 2012, 2013](#)). They prefer bribery to avoid attending a court for a traffic violation. [Transparency International Indonesia \(2012, 2013\)](#) also reported that Indonesian youths also experience corruption when they have to apply for documents or permits (for example a driving license) or passes an exam, and bribery helps business do well. These reports indicate that corruption is perceived by youths as a domestic problem, that is, corruption is a problem for themselves, their family, and friends. They do not refer corruption as a public problem (affecting for example business, the economy, or country development).

Corruption is one of the biggest attractive issues for Indonesian people. Combating corruption is a powerful theme for many politicians or even for a presidential candidate in their campaigns. The Indonesian government established *Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi* (KPK, Corruption Eradication Commission) in 2003 to combat corruption in Indonesia that had become rampant and systemic. KPK is known as one of the world's more effective anticorruption agencies. In order to prevent and reduce corruption, KPK offers an approach called Sistem Integritas Nasional (SIN, National Integrity System) that emphasizes integrity as a value and the foundation for individuals, organizations, and nationally ([http://kpk.go.id](#)).

Integrity

According to the Indonesian dictionary (*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*), integrity can be defined as the quality, nature, or the circumstances indicating the coherent whole

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