

## CORRUPT BEHAVIOR IN A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

✉ Winda Putri Diah Restya & Hanna Amalia  
Psikolog, Indonesia

### ARTICLE INFORMATION

#### Article History:

Received June 27, 2018

Revised July 18, 2018

Accepted March 9, 2019

#### JEL Classifications:

C91; D23; D73

#### DOI:

10.21532/apfjournal.v4i2.113

### ABSTRACT

*This study focuses on understanding the corrupt behavior through psychological perspective. The discussion of corruption is always worth to be studied, because acts of corruption are different from any ordinary fraud. These actions tend to have a broad impact, and can even make the destruction of a country. This is what distinguishes it from common criminal offenses at the community level. This study seeks to answer the questions on what is the motive underlying corruption, how will the corrupt behavior affect the perpetrators and how are coping strategies undertaken by the corruptor through GONE theory proposed by Jack Bologne: Greed, Opportunity, Need and Exposure. The data of this studies were obtained using qualitative research approach through the in-depth interview method and non-participant observation.. Data were collected in Correctional Institution ClassII B Kajhu – Aceh through three participants. The results show that there are two motives underlying corrupt behavior: Opportunities and Need, while the motive for Greed is not proven. The impact of corrupt behavior on the individual concerned is the feeling of shame, the loss of self-esteem as a member of the community and also as the head of the family. The coping strategy used by the corruptor was by suppressing the negative emotions and focusing more on positive things such as being closer to God Almighty.*

*Keyword: Corruption, Psychological Perspective, Coping Strategy*

### INTRODUCTION

Corruption has become a parasite in the government system in Indonesia. It shows how bad governance is in this country. This phenomenon has resulted in poverty, low levels of education and health, and poor public services. In addition, corruption has made Indonesian people, especially those living below poverty line, suffer. (Lawalatta, 2013).

Corruption is indeed different from ordinary theft. Corruption is usually committed by unscrupulous public officials.

It has a broad impact on government system and is even able to destroy a country. This is what distinguishes it from ordinary criminal behavior whose impact is limited to the individual scope only.

Corruption hampers the country's economic growth. According to Transparency International, an anti-corruption organization that annually releases reports of global corruption, of the 28 countries in the Asia Pacific region, most of them get poor ratings. 18 countries get score below 40 from the highest score of 100. 0

✉ Corresponding author :  
Address : -  
Email : [windarestya5685@gmail.com](mailto:windarestya5685@gmail.com)

means the most corrupt and 100 means the cleanest. Indonesia got a score of 34, up from last year score of 32. Indonesia is currently ranked 107th, together with Argentina and Djibouti. In 2014, Indonesia was ranked 114 out of 174 countries surveyed (Pasuhuk, 2014).

The government has actually made many efforts to eradicate corruption. One of them is by establishing a Corruption Eradication Commission (*hereinafter referred to Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi / KPK*). Since its establishment 12 years ago, KPK has shown its significant performance in terms of eradicating corruption. This can be seen clearly from the many corruption cases that the KPK has been able to reveal. In the period of 2004-2015, the KPK imprisoned 23 ministers and heads of institutions, 15 governors, 49 regents or mayors, 87 legislators, and 120 officials in echelon I, II, and III. ([www.kpk.go.id](http://www.kpk.go.id)).

The KPK's actions in eradicating corruption should have created a deterrent effect for corruptors, but the fact shows the opposite. Corruption cases do not shrink at all. The number of defendants who were brought to court by the KPK even increased from 36 people in 2012 to 41 people in 2013, and 50 people in 2014. This year, within nine months, 47 people have been brought to trial. It can be ascertained that the number of people brought to court due to the cases of corruption this year exceeded the previous year. That number did not include cases handled by the police and prosecutors. The number of corruption cases also increased from 1,257 cases in 2011 to 2,270 cases in 2014, up 80.6 % in three years ([www.kpk.co.id](http://www.kpk.co.id)). These facts then raise a question. Have efforts to eradicate corruption not been effective yet?

This ineffectiveness could be due to the fact that all this time the discussion on efforts to tackle corruption, research carried out, and policies made are always based on a non-psychological perspective, such as from legal, economic, political, sociological and religious perspectives. Meanwhile, studies and efforts to combat corruption from a psychological perspective are still

relatively difficult to find. Corruption is actually a form of behavior. Like other behaviors, it is influenced by various factors, both social and individual factors.

There are various social factors that cause someone to commit corrupt behavior, so the approach used to see the phenomenon of corruption is also diverse. However, individual approach to corruption receives less attention. As a human behavior, corruption is also born from human psychological factors. According to Huntington (1968), corruption is the behavior of public officials that deviates from the norms accepted by society and the deviant behavior is aimed at fulfilling personal interests. In Law No. 31 of 1999, corruption is defined as every person who intentionally violates the law to commit an act with the aim of enriching himself or another person or a corporation which results in the state financial losses and the country's economic constraints

In general, corruption can be caused by many factors, including one's psychological nature. There are even respectable people in the surrounding environment who also commit corruption. The behaviorists state that environment strongly encourages someone to commit corruption and defeats his good nature that has become his personal traits or characteristics. The environment, in this case, provides encouragement and not punishment to someone who abuses his power. Empirical studies on corruption confirm this assumption. According to Sudirman (2013), the determinants of corruption stem from three aspects: 1) damage to the macro environment (state) where the legal, political, control, transparency systems are broken, 2) influence of corrupt climate at the group or department level, and 3) personality factors. So, it is quite clear that the environment is indirectly very influential on the psychology of someone to commit corruption.

Therefore, this study tries to understand corrupt behavior from the psychological perspective, in terms of the motives of the perpetrators, the dynamics and its

psychological impact on the perpetrators, and coping strategies carried out by the corruptors. Finally, with a number of preliminary studies, it can be drawn up in an effort to overcome corruption through psychological perspective.

### **Formulation of the Problem**

Based on various explanations above, there are four formulations of the problem in this study:

1. What are the motives underlying corrupt behavior?
2. What is the process and psychological dynamics of corruption?
3. What is the impact of corrupt behavior on the perpetrator?
4. How is the coping strategy carried out by the perpetrator of corruption?

### **3. METHOD**

This study uses a phenomenological-qualitative approach. Phenomenological-qualitative approach aims to examine social phenomena in an atmosphere that takes place naturally or scientifically, not in controlled or laboratory conditions. A phenomenological-qualitative approach is used to describe the meaning of individual life experiences especially for (1) explaining the life experiences of informants that are subjectively interpreted by themselves (Taylor, 1993), and (2) looking for the core of the meaning of experiences experienced by individuals (Drew, 1989)

### **Research Sites**

The study is conducted at Correctional Institution Class II B Kajhu, Baitussalam Sub-District - Aceh Besar.

### **Population and Sample**

The subjects in this study are corruptors who are currently serving a period of detention at Correctional Institution Class II B Kajhu- Banda Aceh. The type of corruption case is not limited because this study aims to see a picture of the process of psychological dynamics that occurs on the subject of the research widely.

The research subjects are selected using a theoretical sampling procedure. In this

case, the subjects selected are individuals who are able to provide information in accordance with the focus and purpose of this study (Creswell, 1998). The selection of research subjects is based on several criteria as follows:

1. Have accepted the permanent legal decision and become a prisoner
2. Being imprisoned at Correctional Institution Class II B Kajhu
3. The term of detention is more than 4 years
4. Have served a sentence of at least half of the total detention period

### **Data Collection Technique**

Data collection technique in this study is conducted using observation and interview methods. The observation method used is direct observation in the field with the non-particular technique, that is, the observer is outside the observed subject and does not participate in the daily activities carried out by the subject. The interview method is conducted with intensive and in-depth interviews which focus on how the informants' thoughts, feelings, and actions when committing corruption, the impact that occurred, and their coping strategies (Moustakas, 1994). The open-ended questions proposed are aimed at giving freedom to informants in answering openly and in detail about what they want to convey without being strictly regulated by the researcher. The interview guide is compiled based on GONE theory which was found by Jack Bologna consisting of greed, opportunity, need, and Exposure (Manossoh, 2016).

### **Data Analysis Technique**

According to Sugiyono (2014), data analysis in a quantitative approach begins with formulating and explaining the problem, before going to the field and continuing until the writing of research results. Data analysis in qualitative approach is the process of measuring data and organizing into patterns, categories and basic descriptions through the following procedures:

### 1. Reduction and Elimination

Data in the form of field notes as raw materials are summarized or selected. The raw materials are then taken into the same theme or the same problem.

### 2. Data Display

The results of data reduction are then displayed into patterns, categories, focus, and themes that want to be understood in term of the problem.

### 3. Clustering and Thematizing the Invariant Constituents (Thematic portrayal)

The respondent's experiences are then made into thematic labels. The constituents or basic elements are then grouped and labeled. This label is the red thread of the answers of all respondents.

### 4. Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents and Themes by Application: Validation

It is a process of validating invariant constituent. What is done at this stage is to check the invariant constituent and the accompanying theme on the full recording of the research respondents' statements.

### 5. Individual Textural Description

By using a constituent invariant and a valid and relevant theme from the previous stage, the individual textural description is then compiled from the experience of each research respondent.

### 6. Individual Structural Description

The results of compiling individual textural description and imaginative variation will build the individual structural description from the experience of each research respondent

## 3. RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Motive to commit corruption

According to GONE theory put forward by Jack Bologna, there are 4 aspects that can explain the motive for corruption: Greed (individual greed), Opportunity (System that provides opportunities for corruption), Need (Associated with mental attitude that feels never enough to fulfill life needs), and Exposes (Weak punishment for perpetrators of corruption). From the

results of the interview, it is revealed that the majority of subjects who are motivated to commit corruption are more caused by aspects of opportunity and need. This means that the biggest reason why someone can be involved in a corruption case is the system applied in the place where the subject worksthat gives an opportunity to commit corruption. This is then also supported by the situation from within the subject who feels that he wants to fulfill his life's needs to the fullest. The findings of this study are in line with the opinion expressed by Surachmin (2011) that too large employee discretion, weak leadership, and weak legislative institutions are some of the factors that cause corruption.

### The Impact of Corruption

The impact of corrupt behaviour that becomes the finding in this study is divided into two: the impact of corrupt behavior on individuals as the perpetrators of corruption and the impact on their families.

#### 1. The Impact of corruption on the Subject:

- Getting valuable lessons because being in the prison is a priceless experience, just like entering an educational institution that teaches about life
- Being imprisoned means automatically taking away the freedom of life as a normal human being.
- Being imprisoned due to a corruption case makes the subject feel ashamed of partners or people around him, especially because the corruption case is reported massively in newspapers and the name of the subject is not given initials.
- Being imprisoned makes the subject feel no longer able to be relied on as the head of the family in terms of providing a living for the family

2. The Impact of Corruption on the Family

- The reaction shown by the family

of the subject related to corrupt behavior was embarrassed. At first the family of the subject did not dare leave the house. But over time this could be overcome because the subject continued to give understanding to the family that it was indeed his risk that someone who had a certain position in the government could end up with a corruption case

- Wives and children are the people most affected by the husband's corrupt behavior. One of the biggest impacts is the loss of a husband as a single breadwinner, which impacts on the family economy. Therefore, the wife inevitably has to become the backbone of the family.

### Coping Strategy

From the findings of this study, it was revealed that the subjects, in performing coping strategies, were more directed towards Emotion-Focused Coping than Problem-Focused Coping, which means that the subjects worked harder to manage the problem:

1. *Self-Control*: The subjects controlled themselves by not thinking too much about the problem. Because it had already happened, what can be done is to take lessons from the problem
2. *Positive Re-appraisal*: Doing spiritual coping by getting closer to God Almighty. The research subjects claimed to have more time to be able to worship than when they were still holding office. The subjects became more sincere and surrendered to God after the case had happened to them. This spiritual coping was the most important role to make the subjects feel calm about the situation that befell them. Besides, the research subjects also thought that "it is better to accept punishment in the world than in the hereafter."

### Other Relevant Findings

There are some interesting findings from

this field research, including:

- a. The types of corruption commonly occurred in the Banda Aceh region in particular and Aceh in general are embezzlement and fraud. Embellishment is an act of fraud or theft of resources carried out by certain parties who manage these resources, whether in the form of public funds or certain natural resources. Fraud is an economic crime involving trickery or swindle. This includes the process of manipulating or distorting information and facts with the aim of taking certain advantages.
- b. Corruption is caused by two factors: extrinsic factors in the form of a weak system and the possibility of corruption and intrinsic factors in the form of consumptive needs within individuals
- c. None of the two subjects felt that they had the intention to commit corruption, but, it was the influence of the work environment which later supported the occurrence of corruption
- d. Both research subjects agreed that corruption was not only the work of one person. Corruption always involves other people and usually at a higher level of office. However, in the trial none of these two subjects dared to name the other parties who were also involved. Both subjects with hearty accepted corruption cases alleged to them and accepted the punishment given independently
- e. Both subjects in this study claimed that the alleged corruption cases were actually the fraud that had been committed by others but they were asked to be responsible
- f. Both research subjects felt that they accepted injustice from legal standpoint. From the interview it was revealed that the Prosecutor often requested a certain amount of funds so that corruption cases were not raised, and the unwillingness of the subject to fulfill the request could affect the length of the sentence.
- g. Both subjects felt weak legally because

the cases raised were cases of their tenure years ago (10 years ago). So, when they were asked to collect evidence, the subjects had difficulty finding the files needed, which should be able to alleviate or be self-defense. In addition to the difficulty in finding evidence, the two subjects claimed to have forgotten the incident a few years ago.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on Gorer Theory, there are two motives underlying the corrupt behavior: Opportunities and Needs. Opportunity is related to circumstances of organizations and communities in such a way that there is an opportunity for someone to be able to commit fraud. Need is the factor needed by individuals to support their natural life. The Greed factor is not revealed at all, because the type of corruption that occurs is not corruption which is based on the wishes of the corruptors only, but because there is intimidation from above which makes the subject forced to commit corruption. Corruption is caused by two factors: extrinsic factors in the form of weak systems and allow for the occurrence of corruption and intrinsic factors in the form of consumptive needs from within the individual. The impact of corrupt behavior for the individual concerned is shame, loss of self-esteem as a member of the community and as head of the family, loss of freedom, inability to provide a living for other family members, and ultimately feels that punishment is a form of extraordinary life lessons. The impact of corrupt behavior on the family is that the family is forced to bear the shame of the acts of the corruptors, so they are afraid or do not dare to leave the house, and the wife is forced to become the backbone of the family. The coping strategy done is more on emotional focused coping, that is, by trying to suppress negative emotions and focus on positive things, such as by doing spiritual coping (trying to get closer

to God Almighty, improving the quality of worship, being sincere and patient in the face of trials).

#### REFERENCES

Drew, N. (1989). The Interviewer's Experience As Data in Phenomenological Research. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 11, 431-439.

Huntington S. P. (1968). *Political Order in Changing Societies*. New Haven: Yale University Press

Lawalatta, O. (2013). *Kompilasi Pemikiran Tentang Dinamika Hukum Dalam Masyarakat*. Ambon: Fakultas Hukum Universitas Pattimura (Unpatti)

Moustakas. C. (1994). *Phenomenological Research Methods*, California: SAGE

Manossoh, H. (2016). Faktor-faktor terjadinya fraud pada pemerintah di provinsi sulawesi utara. *Jurnal Emba*, 4(1). Di akses tanggal 22 Maret 2017 dari <https://ejournal.unsrat.ac.id/index.php/emba/article/view/1164>.

Sudirman. (2013) Korupsi: Penyebab dan Dampaknya terhadap Pembangunan Nasional. *Jurnal Al-Mizan* Vol. 9 No. 1 Juni 2013

Sugiyono. (2014). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung: Penerbit Alfabeta.

Surachmin, S. (2011). *Cahaya, Strategi dan Teknik Korupsi Mengetahui untuk Mencegah*. Jakarta: Sinar Grafika

Taylor, B. (1993). Phenomenology: One Way to Understand Nursing Practice. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 30, 171-179.

Pasuhuk H. (2014). *Indeks Korupsi Peringkat Indonesia Membaih Tapi Masih Buruk*. <http://www.dw.com>. Diakses pada tanggal 19 September 2015.

<http://www.kpk.go.id/id/berita/berita-sub/3114-korupsi-dan-demokrasi-di-indonesia>