

# Corruption in the Country of Believers

Dien Yudithadewi and Bonifasius Parikesit

*Graduate School of Communication, Paramadina University, Jl. Gatot Subroto kav.97, Jakarta, Indonesia*

**Keywords:** Corruption, Religiosity, Tradition, Believer.

**Abstract:** In Indonesia, there is an interesting phenomenon in which corruption acts are carried out in a congregational manner across institutions. Corruption has become ingrained and developed into a tradition since the era of kingdoms in this archipelago, and according to the Corruption Perception Index 2018, Indonesia sits on the rank 89 of 180 countries. Contrarily, it is also a country of people who believe in God, heaven, hell, and the afterlife, and the most corrupt ministry is the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Ironically, former Minister of Ministry of Religious Affairs is one of the accused, a famous Indonesian corruptor; Nazaruddin, was arrested while (indicted) having his early meal (sahur) for Ramadan fasting and several perpetrators shamelessly put the Hajj title as part of their names. Thus, the question is: why does Indonesia that is considered as a country of believers, acquire piles of corruption practices? This paper is trying to find the answer through qualitative research, with a literature review as the approach. The authors also did random checks through Twitter influencers for findings confirmation. We found out that although people consider themselves believers who truly believe in their beliefs, they justify certain corruption act as common practice and part of the culture.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The primacy of democracy lies in the institutional system that guarantees relationships and responsibilities, not voter statistics, which reduce citizens as a crowd (Hartiningsih, 2011). When Montesquieu introduced the Trias Politica, he assumed that the three branches of state institutions; legislative, executive, and judicial, always fair and upheld honesty. As if they are not honest, how would a nation work?

Unfortunately, in Indonesia, there is an interesting phenomenon in which corruption acts are carried out in a congregational manner across institutions. Therefore, state institutions that are supposed to supervise each other to conduct justice conspire in a corrupt manner, instead.

Ironically, corruption has spread and seems to be a tradition. Even when corruption deals with the reality of God's existence, it is often placed as a ritual rite by the perpetrators. A research conducted by one of independent institutions in South Kalimantan, South Sulawesi and West Nusa Tenggara in 2006 (Kurnia, 2015), shows that there is a formalization of religion in public policies for political competition and covering up the issue of corruption, even though religion in Indonesia is positioned as the core of value

of life. However, when dealing with gratification, it seems that religion is an alien that cast away from their (perpetrators) lives. For example, several perpetrators shamelessly put the title of Hajj as part of their names, even one of the famous Indonesian corruptors (Nazaruddin), was arrested while (indicted) having his early meal (sahur) for Ramadan fasting.

Reasonably, believers should be aware that corruption is similar to stealing, which is categorized as a sin. Then, since God, the Almighty sees and knows every single thing, nobody can avoid the "judgment day." However, when dealing with human materials, some people tend to forget and even ignore the nature of God. They try to deceive God.

### 1.1 Corruption

Corruption, as a word, originally comes from the Latin *corrumpere* or *corrumpere*, which means misconduct, deviant, destructive, and breaking/harmful. Hence, it's about the misconduct of authority and power, deviation of law and values, also destroying and breaking the trust. In general, corruption is related to damaging, harmful, and destructive.

In Indonesia, corruption has become ingrained and developed into a tradition since the era of kingdoms in this archipelago. During that period of time, citizens provide materials to the king as tribute, then kingdoms provide gratification to VOC, then to the colonial government. Entering the new order era, this practice suspected to be increasingly widespread. Some presidential decrees (suspected) were issued to give benefit to the family and cronies.

Referring to a research conducted by Oce Madril (2018) which tittle Political Law of the President in Corruption Eradication in the Government, there are at least eight presidential decisions that benefit his family and cronies. The eight presidential decrees include the issue of exemption from value-added tax for Citra taxis, which belong to one of Suharto's sons, granting monopoly rights to the distribution of explosion, as well as permission to build an oil refinery. However, entering the reform era, according to Teten Masduki, the extent of corruption in Indonesia is getting worse. While during the new order era, corruption was led from inside the presidential palace, now corruption moves everywhere without control.

According to Kurnia (2015) there are 5 (five) components incorruption: (1) corruption is a behavior; (2) the behavior is related to the abuse of authority; (3) carried out for personal or group gain; (4) violates the law or deviates from norms or morals; (5) occurs or is done in a public office setting.

Meanwhile, Klitgaard (1988) defines corruption in the formula:

$$c = m + d - a$$

c = corruption

m = monopoly

d = discretionary power

a = accountability

This formula states that the greater the monopoly and authority a person has, the greater the corruption potential. It does not only apply to the scope of individuals, but also collective group and institutional.

## 1.2 Beliefs

In a society social system, there is public agreement regarding belief/religion's relation to behavioral ethics. Religion, according to Fotaki et al. (2015), gives a norms' mechanism as well as beacon values regarding how people must live their lives. The norms and values are often summarized as religious convictions, as included in the Qur'an and/or the Bible (Parbootheah et al., 2008).

Furthermore, research conducted by King (2008) stated that 84% of people on earth consider themselves religious. However, the relationship between behavioral ethics and faith do not go hand in hand.

Meanwhile, a recent study by WIN/Gallup International (Gallup International, 2017) investigates religious convictions of over 66.000 individuals in 68 nations over the world, discovers that:

- 6 out of 10 individuals on the planet (62%) believe themselves to be religious, while beneath a quarter (25%) consider themselves as non-religious, and 9% believe themselves atheists.

- It has been discovered that levels of religiosity decrease as income and education levels of the interviewees increase. While 66% of people with low income confirm to be religious, this number drops to 50% among individuals with high income. A similar pattern is confirmed in connection to education levels: 83% of people with lower education levels are religious against 49% of higher level.

- 74% of individuals on this planet think we have a spirit, and 71% believe in God, while 56% believe in paradise, 54% in the afterlife, and 49% in hell.

- There is a correlation between religiosity, beliefs, and socio-demographic characteristics - such as age, income, and education level. Principally, as education and income levels grow higher, religiosity levels tend to decrease. Otherwise, the expression of different beliefs is higher among young people.

- The survey result shows that all beliefs decrease as the interviewee's age rises: 74% of young individuals between 18 and 24 years old believe in God, while the number drops to 67% in those aged 65 and older. Believing in afterlife decreases from 60% in the youngest strata to 45% in the oldest; the belief in soul declines from 78% to 68%; the belief in hell drops from 57% to 35%; while the belief in heaven decreases from 64% in the youngest and 46% in the oldest.

- People who have less education, express more beliefs than people with higher levels of education and people with less available income express more beliefs than people who have a higher income.

- Bangladesh and Indonesia are the most believing countries, where nearly the whole populations claim to believe in God, as well as afterlife, spirit, paradise, and hell. Then, followed by Ghana and Pakistan, where religious convictions exceed 95%.

- The belief in God achieves 100% mentions in Indonesia, Ghana, Nigeria, Kosovo, and Azerbaijan.

Regarding Indonesia, the research result above is reflected in numbers of people (4.34 million) who are in waiting list for Hajj pilgrimage, with the longest waiting time is 39 years in South Sulawesi province (Pikiran Rakyat.com, 2019), plus hundreds of thousands of people go to Mecca every year for Umrah pilgrimage, as well as enormous amount of Masjids across the nation that could reach one million (Republika, 2019). It seems that Indonesians are true believers who practice their beliefs.

### 1.3 Corruption and the Unconsciousness of Beliefs

Corruption is an act that is not always present in the form of embezzlement, bribery, commissions, gratuities, facilitation, and robbery of state money. Reducing the meaning and nature of corruption to merely an economy leads to more severe damage. Corruption does not only make countries become poor since it's able to live side by side with high economic growth (Hartiningih, 2011).

Pote Sarasi, Chair of the Thailand Development Council in the 1980s, mentioned that if corruption is limited to the level of below 20%, economic development is still possible. Some experts, including economist Sumitro Djojohadikusomo stated that the level of "leak" in Indonesia since late 1980s had reached more than 30%.

Ironically, corruption and religion practices in Indonesia seem to get along well. One of Indonesia's corruption actor, Nazaruddin, was arrested during (indicted) his early meal (sahur) for Ramadan fasting (Tribunnews, 2011), while another one from the religious party (PKS) using terminology from the sacred Quran, for his corruption code (Detik.com, 2017).

The title and "casing" of piety do not necessarily correlate with one's actual action, especially while making decisions related to worldly materials.

## 2 PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

Correlation between belief/religion, morality, and corruption has been studied by some researchers as below:

Table 1: Preliminary Research.

Research Data	Research result
1. Title: Business Ethics and Religion:	Religiosity is a statistically significant predictor of responses, in a number of ethical scenarios.

<p>Religiosity as a Predictor of Ethical Awareness among Students</p> <p>Authors: Conroy, Stephen J., Emerson, Tisha L. N.</p> <p>Year: 2004</p>	<p>Completion of ethics or religion classes, however, was a significant predictor of ethical attitudes in only two of the 25 vignettes (and in the expected direction).</p> <p>Males and younger respondents appear to be more accepting of the ethically-questionable vignettes.</p> <p>Factors outside of the educational system may be more influential in shaping responses to ethical vignettes than are ethics and religion courses.</p>
<p>2. Title: Religion and Organization: A Critical Review of Current Trends and Future Direction</p> <p>Author: Tracey, Paul</p> <p>Year: 2012</p>	<p>Religion hardly features at all in the major journals that count for tenure at the leading business schools.</p> <p>There is an overwhelming focus on Western Christianity, with relatively little having been written on other religions and only limited focus on countries outside North America and Europe.</p>
<p>3. Title: Whither morality? 'Finding God' in the fight against corruption</p> <p>Author: Marquette, Heather</p> <p>Year: 2010</p>	<p>In many countries where religion plays an important role in social life, usually social ethics refers to the rules of religion.</p> <p>Regarding the rapport between religion and corruption, Beets (2007, p.72) provides two assumptions:</p> <p>(a)Believers who restrain themselves from corruption, for it is related to stealing, dishonesty, illegal, and unfair to others.</p> <p>(b)Believers who involved in corruption for there is no guidance about corruption in religion.</p> <p>However, contrary to the assumption, refer to the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (TI-CPI), most countries with high levels of corruption, also have high levels of religiosity.</p>

<p>4. Title: What Determines Permissiveness Toward Corruption? A Study of Attitudes in Latin America</p> <p>Author: Lavena, Cecilia F</p> <p>Year: 2013</p>	<p>This paper explored how religion and morals are put aside in corruption and ethical debates.</p> <p>In order to clarify the correlation between religion and corruption, the research analytically assessed four causal connections; various leveled religion, negative cultural reinforcement, depraved formalism, and trust intermediation. The examination neglected to exactly approve the causal connections that recent researches have used to clarify the correlation between religion and corruption.</p> <p>Research discoveries: (1) Heterogeneity among various leveled religions: Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity, and Islam. They indicated various mentalities toward conformity to authority, negative cultural contents, depraved formalism, and trust.</p> <p>(2) The supposition that individuals in Protestant nations are less dutiful to authority and less dependent on a government appears to be factually and substantively unimportant in regard to controlling for the nation and individual personalities. One conceivable clarification could be the differences within Protestantism. According to Ellison and Sherkat (1993), conservative Protestants, generally, have no issue of obedience. Hence, it's not about religion but instead relies upon the character of people.</p> <p>(3) Believers of the same religion, apparently don't have solid interactions for sharing values.</p> <p>Nonetheless, this research neglected to affirm the religion-trust and trust-corruption relationship.</p> <p>The observational outcomes demonstrate that the negative</p>
<p>5. Title: Does religion matter to corruption? Evidence from China</p> <p>Authors: Xixiong, Xu; Yaoqin, Li; Xing,Liu; Weiyu, Gan</p> <p>Year: 2017</p> <p>6. Title: The Influence of Personal Religiosity Level against Corruption Behaviour in the Province of Bangka Belitung Islands</p> <p>Authors: Labolo, Muhadam; Alma'arif; Khadafi, Muhammad Riqqo</p> <p>Year: 2018</p>	<p>affiliation among religion and corruption is more fragile in territories with more grounded lawful establishments and the standard of law.</p> <p>It derives that inherent limitations from religions can fill in as an optional instrument to anticipate corruption acts in developed markets like China, where formal institution systems and outside control procedures are deficient.</p> <p>Moreover, when we separate the local religions from the outside ones, our discoveries show that anti-corruption impacts of local religions (i.e., Taoism and Buddhism) are more remarkable than outside religions (i.e., Christianity and Islam).</p> <p>This research was conducted in Bangka Belitung Islands Province, and the goal is to discover and examine the issues. The discoveries of research data demonstrated that individuals in the Province of Bangka Belitung Islands have an immense standard of individual religiosity.</p> <p>Different discoveries demonstrated that the impact of religion is significant in decreasing the degree of corruption in society. Otherwise, people noticed that providing presents to government officers was a sensible thing, in a certain condition.</p> <p>Furthermore, the individual religiosity level was ritualistic.</p>

### 3 RESEARCH METHODS

Research is a process that is carried out in stages, from planning and design, determining the focus, research time, data collection, analysis, and presentation of research results. The authors used qualitative methods that emphasized on literature study (library research) to formulate, solve, and analyze research issues.

Referring to Neuman (2011: 124), one of the goals of the literature review is to integrate and summarize what is known in certain fields. Hence, by studying what others have been found, expectedly, researchers able to get new ideas. Furthermore, he mentioned there are six types of literature review: context review, historical review, integrative review, methodological review, self-study review, theoretical review.

This paper utilized qualitative research with literature review as the approach, using integrative review type, in which authors present and summarize the current knowledge of the topic from sources of data as below:

- Academic journals and papers from other researchers (preliminary researches)
- Textbook with the relevant topic
- Articles that related to the topic
- Referring to Zed in Rahmat (2010:48), to obtain comprehensive discussion, authors implemented points as follow:
  - Finding and acquiring a general idea on the research topic;
  - Finding information to support the research;
  - Strengthening focus (make it wider or narrower), organizing reading materials;
  - Seek and find material that is required;
  - Re-organizing reading materials and make essential research notes;
  - Reviewing and enriching reading materials;
  - Re-organizing again reading materials/notes, then begin to write.

## 4 DISCUSSION

Even though it has been such a "tradition" since the era of kingdoms in the archipelago, corruption in Indonesia became massive and structured in the new order era. Endeavor to reduce corruption was done through the Presidential Decree Number 28 the Year 1967 on the Establishment of Corruption Eradication Team and Law No. 3 The year 1971 on Corruption Criminal Act Eradication, which applies lifetime imprisonment for maximum punishment. However, it's considered an ineffective attempt, for law enforcement was not effective.

### 4.1 Corruption in Numbers

The commitment to handle corruption gained momentum when the reform era began. President Megawati Soekarnoputri formed the Corruption Criminal Act Eradication Commission (KPTPK),

which became the embryo of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) in accordance with Law No. 30 the Year 2002 on KPK.

According to The Borgen Project work, called 10 Facts About Corruption in Indonesia (Myers, 2019), a number of corruption in Indonesia declined 55.4 million USD from the year 2018. The total amount of decrement is 401.45 million USD, and KPK is considered as one of the causes.

### 4.2 Corruption and Two Sides of a Coin of Religious Life

Massive corruption by groups of irresponsible people has been dragging Indonesia into the abyss of impoverishment. This is an irony, for Indonesia is a country that puts "Believe in God" as the number one foundation of the state, and religiosity plays an important role in Indonesian society.

Several corruption cases involving public figures that are depicted as a religious figure, or even the case itself involving religious matter. One of the shocking cases was corruption in the Ministry of Religious Affairs; the Koran procurement, pilgrimage quota, and the latest one is the position of Head of the Regional Office.

Other "famous" ironic cases are Banten Governor, Ratu Atut who is depicted as the religious and polite figure, and Nazaruddin, who was arrested during (indicted) his early morning meal (sahur) for Ramadan fasting. To add the irony, Atut was arrested by KPK due to corruption of social support funds. Isn't it ironic, how the value of a belief that is believed, not necessarily makes believers implement it properly?

Referring to the data from the KPK site, in the years 2016 and 2017, there were one each year, the accused who deliberately put Hajj title in their names. The number even increased in the year 2018, became four people.

The simple summary of the people who put Hajj title and "religion" related case in the stage of the investigation, prosecution and accusation, throughout the years 2016 - 2018 can be presented as follows:

Table 2: List of corruption suspects and defendants (source: kpk.go.id).

Stage	Name
2016 Investigation	• H.M. ITOC TOCHIJA, Ir. M.M.
	• H. BAMBANG IRIANTO
Prosecution	• H. M. JOHAR

Accusation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SURYADHARMA ALI (Minister of Ministry of Religious Affairs from 2009-2014. Cases: misconduct on 2010-2013 Hajj operation and Ministry of Religious Affairs operational funds)</li> <li>• SURYADHARMA ALI (Minister of Ministry of Religious Affairs from 2009-2014. Cases: misconduct on 2010-2013 Hajj operation and Ministry of Religious Affairs operational funds)</li> </ul>
2017 Investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H.M. ITOC TOCHIJA, Ir. M.M.</li> </ul>
Prosecution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not available</li> </ul>
Accusation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H. M. JOHAR</li> </ul>
2018 Investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H. ABDUL LATIF</li> <li>• H. FAUZAN RIFANI H.M. ZAINUDDIN AS</li> <li>• H. MOCH. ANTON</li> <li>• Dra. Hj. HERI PUDJI UTAMI, M.AP</li> <li>• H. ABD. RACHMAN</li> <li>• H. AMIN SANTONO</li> <li>• H. IRWANDI YUSUF</li> </ul>
Prosecution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H. FAUZAN RIFANI</li> <li>• H. ABDUL LATIF HM. SAIPUDIN</li> <li>• H. MOCH. ANTON</li> <li>• H. ABD. RACHMAN</li> <li>• H. MOHAN KATELU</li> <li>• H.M. ZAINUDDIN AS</li> <li>• H. IRWANDI YUSUF</li> </ul>
Accusation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• H. MOCH. ANTON</li> <li>• H. FAUZAN RIFANI</li> <li>• H. MOHAN KATELU</li> <li>• H.M. ZAINUDDIN AS`</li> </ul>

According to research by Lembaga Survei Indonesia in 2017, there is no correlation between piety and corruption acts. The meaning of belief and its rituals only significantly correlate with people's perspective towards corruption, not the behavior (Tempo.co, 2017).

The research involving 1,540 respondents from 34 provinces (89% of respondents are Muslims), also discovered that:

- 74.9% of respondents who are Muslims, claim to be very or quite pious;
- 82.9% of respondents mentioned that they often or quite often consider religion when making important decisions;
- Regarding the practice of ritual: 55.9% of Muslim respondents stated that they routinely perform obligatory five times prayers;
- 67.5% of respondents claimed that they routinely do Ramadan fasting;
- 14.4% of Muslim respondents stated that they routinely perform un-obligatory (sunnah) prayers.

According to Azyumardi Azra, lecturer of Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta Islamic State University, the level of devotion does not correlate with anti-corruption behavior since there is a split personality in the diverse society. Faith is part of education, but it doesn't mean people implement it in daily life.

Furthermore, the research conducted with multi-stage random sampling method, more or less 2.6% margin of error and level of trust 95%, stated that:

- 30.4% of respondents believe that giving money/gift to expedite procedure with a government institution, is appropriate;
- 35.2% of respondents mentioned that they tolerate collusion;
- Three of ten Indonesians consider gratification and collusion as acceptable common practice;
- Correlation between attitude and behavior toward corruption is positive and significant.

Those points above also supported by other research findings. Fotaki (2015) confirmed that the concept of God's forgiveness in Islam has a positive correlation with unethical behavior in the organization. In other words, people see God as a forgiving and merciful figure that always forgives people's mistakes, including unethical behavior (at least in a hypothetical situation in this study).

People's point of view in comprehending the forgiveness concept provides space to manipulate themselves (Tenbrunsel and Messick, 2004). Hence, people are not concerned with the results of their acts, for they believe exoneration will still be provided to them.

To confirm what we have found so far, a question was thrown through Twitter by an influencer who has 277,000 followers. The question is:

Indonesia is considered a religious country, but the number of corruption is very high. According to your opinion, why has this happened?

We got various answers and herewith the prominent ones:

- Faith doesn't fulfill our needs. Religion has a standard, and humans have their own standard;
- The necessity of life makes the standard adjusted to reality. The goal of working is to earn a living, not peace of mind through religious practices;
- Corruption is about greed, doesn't correlate with religiosity;
- People who look religious, are not always real pious. It's an image. There's a belief that corruption is acceptable, as long as some of the money is donated to charity;
- Religiosity is the safest mask to cover corruption;
- Religion is just a ritual, not spiritual;
- Some people believe that they can repent afterward, and will be forgiven;
- Some perpetrators even consider corruption as an opportunity to do charitable acts, as they would donate some of the money to charity;
- Fear of God's law doesn't mean the fear of state law. Moreover, punishment for corruptors is considered light. Also, corruptors able to use money from corruption to bribe law enforcers;
- It's a tradition for a long time ago;
- Indonesians still have a feudal mentality. Power and property take control;
- Religion rituals are an obligation. There's a belief that people can balance their sins with good deeds, such as charity, and perform the pilgrimage. Hence, corruption practices can be balanced with charity and pilgrimage;
- In Christian belief, even during the Jesus era, corruption already existed. This is because people love money more than God.

Referring to the literature study, plus netizen's answers above, it seems that in Indonesia, there is an unconnected relation between religious rituals and religion values implementation. Religion becomes an obligatory ritual, not applicable ideas.

Former Indonesia Vice President, Mohammad Hatta, ever mentioned that the most important aspect in eradicating corruption is not merely in the form of rules or institutions, but based on the strong desire and firmness of all parties to eradicate corruption (Kompas, September 23, 1970).

This opinion is still relevant today. There is no correlation between religion and corruption; for

people understanding toward religion is superficial. Therefore, it requires an act to repair the condition and build a connection between the two so that the role of religion can scrape the seeds of corruption.

## 5 Conclusions

This paper has a limitation, since the methodology is a literature review with limited sources of data, plus supported with a random check for findings confirmation through twitter. Hopefully, in the future, more comprehensive research could be conducted.

The result of this study reveals that there is no real connection between religion/belief and corruption. Hence, back to the question: why does Indonesia that is considered as a country of believers, acquire piles of corruption practices? The answer is: although people consider themselves as believers who truly believe in their beliefs, they justify certain corruption act as common practice and part of the culture.

Since corruption has become ingrained and developed into a tradition, rely on punishment for the perpetrators is not sufficient to eradicate it.

In order to eradicate corruption, society needs to change a habit and culture, and it requires an extra effort from both the government and society itself. The authors of this paper recommend authorized parties to improve religion teachings. Implementation of religious values, morality, justice, and ethics must be emphasized in the teachings, instead of merely concepts and theories.

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