



ARTICLE

# “I Am Not a Corrupt Criminal and What I Did Is Not Corruption!”: The Dynamics of Perceptions, Denial, and Understanding of What Corruption Is

*Zainal Abidin*

Universitas Padjadjaran, Sumedang, Indonesia

*Idhamsyah Eka Putra*

Persada Indonesia University, Jakarta, Indonesia; Division for Applied Social Psychology Research, Jakarta, Indonesia

*Yuliana Hanami*

Universitas Padjadjaran, Sumedang, Indonesia

*Sari Angraeni*

Indonesian Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi), Jakarta, Indonesia

## ABSTRACT

While a general definition has been made on which acts are considered illegal corruption, people's understandings of what constitutes corruption behaviors are varied. The present research aims to understand the perceptions, interpretations, denials, and rationalizations of corruption by convicted perpetrators in Indonesia. How corruption is perceived and understood by perpetrators, and how these perceptions may be utilized as a basis for denying corruption accusations should be explored to have more understanding of the dynamics of corruption from the perspective of perpetrators. The data were obtained through in-depth interviews with five corruption convicts. The results show that the reasons the participants deny the accusation of corruption are as follows: (a) they know what corruption is and they believe what they do is not corruption; (b) corruption cases are political, so it is improper to call it corruption; (c) they consider themselves victims of a bad system;

Received 20 April 2024

Accepted 22 November 2024

Published online 28 December 2024 [zainal.abidin@unpad.ac.id](mailto:zainal.abidin@unpad.ac.id), [idhamsyah.eka@upi-yai.ac.id](mailto:idhamsyah.eka@upi-yai.ac.id), [y.hanami@unpadf.ac.id](mailto:y.hanami@unpadf.ac.id), [sari.angraeni@kpk.go.id](mailto:sari.angraeni@kpk.go.id)

© 2024 Zainal Abidin, Idhamsyah Eka Putra,  
Yuliana Hanami, Sari Angraeni

and (d) they think that everyone does it. Such understanding, then, is used as a tool for denial and rationalization. The findings indicate how corruption is perceived and understood can influence someone to commit corrupt acts.

#### **KEYWORDS**

perceived corruption, understanding of corruption, denial, rationalization perpetrator, explanatory case study

## **Introduction**

Several studies have shown the detrimental and destructive effects of corruption in many societies (Enste & Heldman, 2017; Lambsdorff, 2006; Myint, 2000; Rose, 2017; Rose-Ackerman, 2006). Such effects include inhibiting economic growth and investment, causing social and political conflicts, destroying social orders and norms, creating legal uncertainty, poverty, and injustice, reducing public trust in the government, and perpetuating immoral values in society. Surveys conducted by Transparency International in 2022 and 2023 revealed that Somalia has the lowest scores on the Corruption Perception Index, making it the most corrupt out of 180 countries in the world (Corruption Perception Index 2022, 2023; Corruption Perception Index 2023, 2024). Conflicts and wars are considered as the leading causes of corruption in Somalia, South Sudan, and Syria, and efforts to eradicate it have always failed (Tanno, 2020).

Contrary to these three countries, no war is happening in Indonesia, and conflicts are not as rife, though corruption is a serious problem. As an effort to overcome corruption, the Corruption Eradication Commission (*Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi*, or KPK) was established by the government in 2004. The tasks of KPK, according to Indonesian Law No. 30 of 2002, include investigating, inquiring, and prosecuting criminals; acting to prevent corruption, and monitoring the implementation of state governance (*Komisi Pemberantasan Tindak Pidana Korupsi*, 2002). Many cases have been uncovered, and the perpetrators were arraigned in court.

However, although the KPK has functioned effectively in its duties and handled large numbers of cases in the past years, dealing with corruption is still a challenging matter in Indonesia. Interestingly, most convicted corruption offenders denied their wrongdoings and insisted that they did not commit corruption, even when caught in the act while doing the crime (*Koruptor cengar-cengir*, 2013). The present study raises this issue by interviewing individuals convicted of corruption offenses about their perceptions of corruption and the accusation of corruption.

### ***Discursive Psychology: A Lens on Corruption***

In this study, we employed an analytical lens through discursive psychology (McKinlay & McVittie, 2008; Potter, 2003), which examines how language and interactions construct and convey psychological phenomena such as thoughts,

---

emotions, and identities. Within this framework, discourse refers to discussions or spoken topics that are both situated and action-oriented within a social context (van Dijk, 2000). The situated nature of discourse emphasizes that the way a topic is discussed is closely linked to its context, which is connected to a specific sequence of interactions (Potter & Edwards, 2001). Moreover, discourse is action-oriented, in which individuals communicate and share information in specific ways that are shaped by their understanding, social norms, and perceptions (Potter & Edwards, 2001).

In analyzing corruption cases, rather than asking whether particular actions constitute corrupt practices, discursive psychology focuses on how corrupt acts are justified, minimized, or denied, and how actions are categorized as corrupt (McVittie & Sambaraju, 2019). This approach can help reveal how social norms, power dynamics, and psychological states are constructed and negotiated within these contexts. Next, we present what corruption is and how a discourse about corruption is discussed.

### ***Corruption and How It Is Perceived***

Generally, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), corruption is any behavior on the part of the officials in the public or private sectors, in which they improperly and unlawfully enrich themselves and those close to them or induce others to do so, by misusing their position (OECD, 2008). This definition is similar to the World Bank's, which is "the abuse of public power for private benefits" (Helping countries combat corruption, 1997). In the context we presently study, in Indonesia, Law No. 31/1999, in conjunction with Law No. 20/2001, classifies the types of corruption acts explicitly derived from ADB and World Bank (Perubahan Atas Undang-Undang Nomor 31 Tahun, 1999; Tentang Pemberantasan Tindak Pidana Korupsi, 1999). There are seven corruption types deemed as criminal acts: (a) causing state financial losses, (b) bribery, (c) embezzlement in office, (d) extortion, (e) fraudulent acts, (f) conflict of interest in procurement, and (g) gratuities. These types of corruption are mostly related to state loss and state authority personnel. To the best of our knowledge, in the case of fraudulent acts, for example between private sector companies, it will be deemed as a criminal crime case beyond corruption law in Indonesia.

However, while there has been a definition by the ADB, the types of acts that are considered *illegal* corruption vary in every country. In fact, people's understandings of corrupt behaviors are also varied. A study conducted by Melgar et al. (2010) showed that corruption is interpreted differently according to society and culture which determine perception of corruption.

How a society defines corruption can also influence whether or not a person is deemed capable of committing it. According to social norms theory, factors such as societal tolerance for corruption might encourage individuals to engage in corrupt practices (Agerberg, 2022; Jackson & Köbis, 2018). This case supports the idea that corrupt behavior is a multifaceted socio-psychological phenomenon.

Moreover, among state leaders, managing corruption relies on how the discourse about corruption is framed or shaped. A comparative study (Kajsiu, 2018) regarding corruption discourse collected the speeches of Albanian prime minister,

---

Edi Rama, and Columbian president, Juan Manuel Santos. The study found that there are three differences in the discourse of corruption: location, the victimization that corruption produces, and its definition. In Rama's discourse, corruption is found mainly within the public sector in general and the state in particular. The state is the principal perpetrator of corruption, while private companies and citizens are the primary victims, and corruption is exclusively defined as bribery. On the other hand, in Santos' discourse, corruption can be found both in the private and public sectors. The state is the victim of corruption conducted by the private sectors, and corruption is defined as cultural problems including bribery, state capture, clientelism, as well as cultural, moral, and ethical failures. The differences are influenced by the distinct anti-corruption and ideological contexts of each country. Public sector corruption is more prevalent in Albania compared to Columbia and awareness about the acts of corruption is built earlier in Albania than in Columbia, where armed conflicts still take place.

To the accused corruptors, the discourse surrounding corruption may revolve around whether they are guilty or innocent, as well as their defensive rhetoric. A study conducted in Jordan (Badarneh, 2020) has addressed this issue. The study focused on public statements of apology, analyzing the responses by (a) Basem Awadallah, a former Royal Court Chief and Minister of Planning, and (b) the Office of the Queen of Jordan, who were accused of corrupt practices involving public funds and excessive spending on luxury items, respectively. The study revealed that the apologies typically involved the denial of the corruption allegations, with both parties employing similar strategies, such as invoking the sociocultural context of Jordanians and promoting nationalistic sentiments. In summary, Awadallah's apology portrayed himself as a victim, suggesting that the public was not well-acquainted with him, while positioning himself as a devout and patriotic public servant. Conversely, the Queen's office questioned the validity of the accusations and the motives of the accusers, portraying them as wrongdoers. Thus, the primary aim of these apologies was to safeguard one's reputation.

Undoubtedly, the persistent denial of wrongdoing by offenders poses a challenge in uncovering and combating corruption. A study by Anand et al. (2004) highlighted one of the most intriguing findings in white-collar crime literature: offenders often fail to recognize their actions as corrupt. They justify their behavior by arguing that their actions are standard practices within their profession or position. Moreover, Abidin and Prathama Siwadi (2015) discovered that in Indonesia, out of 100 suspects in alleged corruption cases, only 3% admitted guilt as determined by a court; the remaining 97% denied the charges and vehemently asserted their innocence. Those who denied the accusations of corruption often claimed that the prosecutors' demands and the court's decisions were erroneous and lacked factual basis. Some even portrayed themselves as victims or scapegoats of their superiors.

We have demonstrated above that individuals hold varied understandings and perspectives regarding what constitutes corrupt behavior. Denials of wrongdoing in cases of corruption are frequently observed among those accused, including state leaders who have been found guilty of corruption, such as Jacob Zuma, Najib Razak,

and Benjamin Netanyahu (Bachner, 2021; Latif & Chu, 2021; S. Africa's ex-president, 2021). However, to our knowledge, little research has been conducted on how corruption is perceived and understood by perpetrators, and how these perceptions may be utilized as a basis for denying corruption accusations.

In terms of Indonesian context, psychological research on corruption has explored aspects such as mental health and spirituality (Sahama et al., 2019), motives and psychological dynamics among convicts (Restya & Amalia, 2019; Salama, 2014), social value orientation (Mulyana et al., 2019), and religiosity (Fachrunisa & Chizanah, 2021; Syamsudin et al., 2022). However, studies on how corrupt actors perceive and understand corruption are still limited, highlighting a crucial gap for developing effective anti-corruption strategies.

### ***Denial of Committing Corruption***

From a psychological perspective, denial is defined as a unique defense mechanism against external threats (Gago-Rodríguez et al., 2018; Ritchie, 2014), including court punishment, social sanctions, and guilt. Several studies have examined the role of denial after corruption (Ashforth & Anand, 2003; De Klerk, 2017; Gannett & Rector, 2015; Mulder & van Dijk, 2020; Nahartyo & Haryono, 2018; Rabl & Kühlmann, 2009). The results showed that perpetrators were convinced that they were honest, and that the act could be legally and morally justified. Denial is almost common in corruption cases, and this kind of defense mechanism is a common thing that occurs when an accused is found guilty. Such a phenomenon is possible when the accused corruption offenders are eager to appear as a moral person (van Prooijen & van Lange, 2016), even after committing an immoral or unethical action.

Moreover, according to Moore (2016), there is a phenomenon of self-deception in unethical behavior, including corruption. This works through a biased cognitive process, whereby a person assesses themselves as a hero contributing to society. Moore emphasizes three strategies in deceiving oneself to still be moral after committing a crime. These strategies include motivated attention (selectively attending to or ignoring information), motivated construal (redefining one's immoral actions to make them justifiable), and motivated recall (selectively forgetting, remembering, or inventing information).

A meta-analysis of six studies conducted by Dupuy and Neset (2018, p. 5) found that individuals would commit crimes when they anticipate indirect harm or work in organizations that do not punish unscrupulous behavior. A similar finding was also reported by Cabelkova (2001) regarding the role of corruption perceptions in motivating individuals to commit corruption. According to the study, when participants perceive that the employees who work in an institution are corrupt, they will give bribes in order to be facilitated in managing business licensing at that institution. Usually, when accused of bribery, they deny it, claiming that such a thing is common practice in certain institutions. Thus, the denial of committing corruption may appear as ignorance of unethical practices by the organization or institution where corruption is conducted, while the people involved normalize it over time. We will explore this issue further in the present study.

---

### **The Present Study**

Since the establishment of the KPK in 2004, many politicians, public officials, civil servants, private parties (entrepreneurs), state-owned enterprises (SOEs) officials, and those assisting perpetrators have been prosecuted. Since 2014, KPK has reported that the top four corruption offenders are dominated by people from the private sector (entrepreneurs), members of the People's Representative Council (DPR/DPRD), Echelon I–III government officials, and regional heads (governors, regents, and mayors). The top offenses are bribery, procurement of goods/services, misuse of funds, money laundering, illegal/unauthorized fees collection, and inappropriate license granting (Pusparisa, 2021).

The public has appreciated the KPK's existence and achievements in increasing Indonesia's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) score. Since 2009, Indonesia's CPI score has increased yearly. It has increased by 20 points within 14 years, from 20 in 2004 to 34 in 2023 (Transparency International Indonesia, 2024). Despite these achievements, politicians, public officials, and business people still commit corruption. In Indonesia, the number of corruption cases is still relatively high while the prosecution of corruption cases by law enforcement agencies tends to decline from 2015 to 2020 (Alamsyah, 2021). It will probably continue to get higher since the KPK's authority was weakened by Law No. 19/2019, which reduced the duties and powers of the KPK, raising concerns of increased corruption cases and decreased CPI score (Afifa, 2020). Most of the offenders, however, denied the accusation of committing corruption. Most accused corruptors in some notorious cases in Indonesia have argued that they were not guilty (Anas Urbaningrum *divonis*, 2014; Ihsanudin, 2015; Pratomo, 2014).

This study, by utilizing discursive psychology (Potter, 2003), investigates the perceptions of corruption perpetrators and the dynamics between their perceptions and the defense mechanisms they employ regarding their corrupt behaviors. We argue that perception is a crucial factor in understanding behavior; therefore, examining the perception of corrupt behavior from the perspective of the accused is essential to explaining the underlying mental processes.

There are three main points to address: (a) How do perpetrators perceive their corrupt acts, and why might they minimize, justify, or deny the accusations? (b) How do they construct their position and the nature of the corrupt acts—do they position themselves as victims, blame others, or shift focus away from themselves? (c) How do their perceptions influence the defense mechanisms they employ in response to their corruption cases—do they shape perceptions of guilt or innocence to seek justice, or do they call for accountability regarding the accusations?

### **Method**

The participants were five convicts serving their sentences in Sukamiskin Penitentiary, a special prison for corruption convicts in Indonesia, located in Bandung, West Java. Before the interviews, we obtained permission from the Head of the Regional Office of the Ministry of Law and Human Rights of West Java to conduct research at Sukamiskin. After receiving permission, we visited the facility to request interviews with the targeted participants for inclusion in this study.

Prior to the interview, each participant agreed to the informed consent verbally stated by the interviewers, affirming their voluntary participation. They were also informed that the interview was conducted solely for academic purposes. Participants were assured that they could withdraw at any time without penalty, that confidentiality would be maintained, and that the interview would be recorded. Moreover, they were informed that these interviews would be made public without disclosing their identities, and there would be no rewards for their participation. However, before collecting data, we did not apply for ethical clearance, as the local context did not require such oversight for us to conduct the research. Accordingly, permission from the Head of the Regional Office of the Ministry of Law and Human Rights of West Java is sufficient to allow us to collect the data.

Five participants were chosen to represent the professions that are most commonly associated with corruption in Indonesia (Table 1). All participants were males aged between 40 and 50 years old. The participants were charged with bribery, receiving gratuities, and embezzlement. The court has convicted them, fined them, and sentenced them to prison for 3–10 years. The background data of the participants were acquired from the prison officers on duty the day of the interview.

**Table 1**  
*Code Names, Professions, and the Participant's Case*

Participant's code name	Participant's profession before conviction
S-1	Head of Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD)
S-2	Regional Head
S-3	Civil servant
S-4	Former head of a State-Owned Enterprise
S-5	Entrepreneur

Data were collected in the form of in-depth interviews in July, 2017. Interviews were conducted individually by three interviewers in one of the rooms at the prison. Two interviewers were researchers of this study, while the other one was our colleague who was not involved in the present study. The interview lasted one to two hours per session and was recorded on a digital tape recorder and then transcribed verbatim. Each interview lasted about 50–70 minutes. All names have been replaced by aliases; identifying information has been changed. To protect the confidentiality of participants, the names of their organizations have been deleted. We developed a set of questions in Indonesian language, which was then deeply explored during the interviews. The interview consisted of four main questions, namely:

1. In your opinion, what is the definition of corruption?
2. You have been found guilty by a court of corruption. In your opinion, is the verdict correct or not? Have you really done what the prosecutor accused you of and what the judge decided in court?
3. What was your role in the case?
4. In that particular case, who do you think is the guiltiest and the most responsible for the act (of the crime)?

The results were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus, the data were analyzed using inductive analysis that primarily used detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data by the researcher. The raw transcripts were read several times by the researchers to reach familiarity and understanding of its contents in order to identify themes and categories. The researchers discussed the readings and developed a coding frame manually using a word processor. The coding was performed to form categories, which were then conceptualized into themes after several discussions.

## Results

Four main themes related to corruption perceptions from the point of view of the accused were identified. The first theme is “The expert’: they know what corruption is”, focusing on what they believe as the concept of corruption. The second theme, “The case of corruption is political, not precisely corruption as it is” conveys what they think of what they actually did regarding the accused acts of corruption. The third theme, “The victims of a bad system/environment,” discusses how they blame the system for making the public label them as corruptors. Finally, the theme “Inclusive perpetratorhood: everyone is doing it” emphasizes that what they did is what people around them normally do. Next, we present each of the four main themes separately in detail.

### ***“The Experts”: They Know What Corruption Is***

When they were asked what constitutes corruption, all the participants believed that what they did was not a corrupt act. They claimed that they knew what corruption was, which was different from what they actually did in their cases. Of the five participants, in general, four had identical responses in defining corruption. They argued that corruption was an act that was detrimental to the state, related to the state’s financial loss, and committed for a particular, mostly personal, interest.

S-1: The definition of detrimental to the state, for example, is marking up budgeting, and giving/receiving something to get permission, as compensation. (Trans. by Zainal Abidin, Idhamsyah Eka Putra, Yuliana Hanami, Sari Angraeni—Z. A., I. E. P., Y. H., & S. A.)

S-2: Corruption is indeed detrimental to the state ... (Trans. by Z. A., I. E. P., Y. H., & S. A.)

S-3: The detriment to the state means that the rights of state property are taken, so it is very detrimental to the state ... and the perpetrators have the authority to use the state assets ... (Trans. by Z. A., I. E. P., Y. H., & S. A.)

S-5: Definition of corruption is not clear, its meaning is still gray ... as far as I know, corruption is detrimental to the state. For example, abuse of the state budget, abuse of office, benefiting oneself and others. (Trans. by Z. A., I. E. P., Y. H., & S. A.)

Concomitantly, participant S-4 did not state implicitly regarding the state loss due to corruption. However, as to what participant S-5 emphasized, S-4 also mentioned that the definition of corruption was not clear. He gave examples of this ambiguity



where bribery was a clear example of a corrupt act, while the boundaries of money laundering could lead to multiple interpretations.

S-4: Corruption itself is not clear. Bribery is clear because there are intentions for certain interests, but money laundering has no clear boundaries, so it has multiple interpretations ... (Trans. by Z. A., I. E. P., Y. H., & S. A.)

In line with S-4, S-2 also mentioned bribery when he gave an example of a form of corruption.

S-2: The definition of bribery is, for example, the police arrests car or motorcycle drivers who violate the traffic. Then, the driver gives a bribe to the police in order not to be ticketed. Corruption should have an intention ... (Trans. by Z. A., I. E. P., Y. H., & S. A.)

Thus, they acknowledged that bribery is a kind of corrupt act involving the intention of the doers. In other words, they admitted it as something intended for a specific purpose that benefits the bribe giver.

Participant S-5 also argued that his bribery of local state officials was not considered corruption. As far as he knew, corruption involved big money, as in, more than 1 billion rupiahs. Hence, as a businessman, he believed that the process of passing a project connected to the government's interference was closely related to the game of bribery. He considered that bribery, notably in a small amount of money, was not corruption.

S-5: As far as I know, it is called corruption if the amount of money given or received by the perpetrator is above one billion rupiah ... The amount of money I gave was only 100 million rupiah, not up to one billion. So, it's not corruption ... and there's no need to be convicted of bribery. (Trans. by Z. A., I. E. P., Y. H., & S. A.)

In fact, KPK only handles corruption cases that cost the state more than one billion rupiahs. However, if the case involves state officials, the KPK can handle cases of bribery of under one billion, even 10 million (Rastika, 2013).

The responses given suggest that the participants indeed acknowledge that corruption is a detrimental act carried out on the basis of personal interests. However, they have their own understanding of what might be called "wrong corruption." Moreover, they had a more sophisticated understanding of how corruption manifested itself in the field. Due to this understanding, they believed that what they did was clearly different from the stated definition.

This led to another interesting finding about their perception of corruption. Participants distinguished between corruption and gratification in that they believed that gratification was not necessarily an act of corruption.

S-1: However, in the case when people give and are given, that is not corruption. (Trans. by Z. A., I. E. P., Y. H., & S. A.)

---

S-2: However, (the definition of) gratification is still debatable and not easy to prove, and it has a cultural basis. In our culture, giving and receiving (gifts) is a habit, different from the individualistic European culture. Therefore, an invitation to eat together and giving gifts is normal. Giving parcels or money is not just a bribe or gratuity, but an expression of pleasure. Corruption should have an intention, which I lack. (Trans. by Z. A., I. E. P., Y. H., & S. A.)

They mentioned gratification in this context because, for them, the concept of gratification is not clearly defined, especially if it is related to the context of Indonesian or Eastern culture. Moreover, they believed that gift-giving and receiving is a cultural practice that is part of the tradition of Indonesian society, as an expression of gratitude or even to celebrate religious events. Giving gifts is a common tradition that has taken root in Indonesia's community life (Nazifah, 2019). Even the results of a Groupon survey conducted in 2013 showed that many Indonesians (40%) wanted to spend their money to buy gifts for their closest people (Anna, 2013). Referring to this, accused corruptors used the excuse that this tradition is part of Indonesian culture, which is still valid today.

S-4: Culture. Give gifts to relatives; send a parcel before Eid. There is research on this, corruption in East Asia. Giving gifts by law is classified as gratification because it is associated with position. That is not true ... then, it must be clarified what gratification is ... (Trans. by Z. A., I. E. P., Y. H., & S. A.)

Even though participant S-4 stated that gratification was not linked to position, Nazifah (2019) confirms that even the smallest gift to civil officials or state administrators, if it is related to their position and goes against their commitments or duties, it can be regarded as bribery. Giving gifts, or giving something as a token of gratitude, is indeed a common thing and part of Indonesian culture. However, there is a regulation that bans giving gifts to government officials, as stated in Law no. 20/2001, article 12B (Perubahan Atas Undang-Undang Nomor 31 Tahun 1999, 2001). In the explanation of the article, gratification is defined as a gift in a broad sense, which includes the provision of money, goods, rebates, commissions, interest-free loans, travel tickets, lodging facilities, travel tourism, free medical treatment, and other facilities; which are received domestically and abroad and carried out with or without electronic means.

S-1: Entrepreneurs give their money after the local regulation is passed and the project is running, as a thank you. Maybe they made a profit from the project, and then want to say thank you. (Trans. by Z. A., I. E. P., Y. H., & S. A.)

Despite the definition of gratification being clearly described, the participants seemed to ignore what is stated in the law. Nazifah (2019) also confirms that the lack of understanding and intention from civil servants in addressing gratification as ruled by the law is one of the reasons why gratification practices are still prevalent today. As a result, they saw that their actions could not be interpreted as corruption that harm

others, but purely as a part of the gift-giving and receiving custom. Therefore, they did not acknowledge what they did as a “crime,” even though their actions were proven to be bribery and gratification.

***The Case of Corruption Is Political, Not Precisely Corruption as It Is***

We found that all participants acknowledged that if what they had done was considered corruption, they defended themselves by saying that everything happened because of political interests. Thus, they argued that the corruption in their cases was not relevant to the true definition of corruption as they understood it, such as harming the state and something done with certain intention that benefits oneself. The statements from S-1 described such examples:

S-1: Crime, including corruption, should have an intention, proven in court. However, my case is different from politicians who may have intentions, but not necessarily in the bureaucracy. Politicians grow the organization by their members’ income. There is no such obligation in government agencies. (Trans. by Z. A., I. E. P., Y. H., & S. A.)

S-1: receive gifts from entrepreneurs, after the local regulations are issued and the project is completed, so it’s not corruption, because it doesn’t harm the state. (Trans. by Z. A., I. E. P., Y. H., & S. A.)

Participants considered that they were accused because political opponents, law enforcers, and their superiors at work disliked them. As a result, they felt that they became the victims of these parties. Therefore, the reason that they went to prison was not solely because of their own actions.

S-4: My case was political because my president [managing director] did not like me, then reported that I was involved in a criminal case, even though this was a civil issue. In case I am wrong, the Internal Control System is sufficient to handle it. (Trans. by Z. A., I. E. P., Y. H., & S. A.)

The intervention of law enforcement officers, as well as the case intersecting with them, led participant S-2 to believe that his case had been manipulated. In the incident involving S-2, issues arose when the officers felt slandered by him. This led him to believe that he was being punished as a result.

S-2: You may not have committed corruption, but because law enforcers manipulated it, you become a convict. For example, my case was ... also manipulated. I will never want to be corrupt. (Trans. by Z. A., I. E. P., Y. H., & S. A.)

Regardless of what the participants claimed, corruption cases in Indonesia cannot be separated from political matters. This is supported by Syarif and Faisal (2019), who found that one of the main roots of corruption in Indonesia is a corrupt political system. Looking at the participants’ cases, it is impossible to ignore the fact that their cases

are highly political since it involves the public and private sectors, which are related to political decision-making. Hence, this description falls into the category of political corruption. According to Amundsen (1999), political corruption occurs at the top level of the state and has political repercussions.

### ***The Victims of a Bad System/Environment***

There was a statement by the participants saying that they were in prison right now because they were trapped in a bad system and work environment. They mentioned external factors as a “system,” considered to be conditions influencing individual behavior in the workplace. These conditions were perceived to harm their characters (especially to be corrupt) but could not be avoided and controlled.

One participant emphasized that the intervention of law enforcement in handling cases, especially if they already had certain sentiments towards the perpetrators, could make the case even worse.

S-2: The current system is indeed a corrupt one and even worse than ever. In such a system, it is possible to enforce laws based on like and dislike, and manipulation. Many people know that I am a victim of such law enforcement system. (Trans. by Z. A., I. E. P., Y. H., & S. A.)

Regardless of what participant S-2 said, the role of law enforcements in corruption cases in Indonesia is quite a concern. The number of corruptions continues to rise, due to reasons such as law enforcement officials' lack of awareness of their tasks and obligations, the apparatus' lack of morals, and the lack of functioning supervisory institutions (Suramin, 2021).

Another participant, who came from the private sector (entrepreneur) stated that he was trapped by the officials.

S-5: The system is broken, and it seems bad to a private actor in the government. There are many requests from officials when dealing with government projects, which should not be there in a clear system. (Trans. by Z. A., I. E. P., Y. H., & S. A.)

The government plays a system by setting various requests that must be fulfilled. This case happened to participant S-5. Many businessmen in Indonesia appear to be willing to pay bribes to public authorities to get things done faster because it is known to be a regular practice in the country, and anyone who does not do so is likely to lose business (Kuncoro, 2006).

Additionally, two participants stated that their relationship with their co-workers influenced the reasons for their arrest. For participant S-3, his relationship with his superior was just a matter of following orders:

S-3: It could be due to friendship with the leader, which makes a person comply. ... it is not easy to refuse a superior's request and commit an offense. (Trans. by Z. A., I. E. P., Y. H., & S. A.)

Concurrently, participant S-1 felt that he had been betrayed by his co-workers:

S-1: I was reported by the council of members themselves. He admitted to receiving a check, which was reported to the KPK as evidence ... (Trans. by Z. A., I. E. P., Y. H., & S. A.)

If we look at the responses above, it seems that the participants blamed their relations with their co-workers. They were reluctant to assume that their fault was solely due to their own actions, given that their co-workers had contributed to their involvement in the cases.

Corruption can be caused by bad-character officials who are motivated by excesses, opportunities, and excessive needs, but it can also be caused by a bad legal system (Iskandar & Hernawan, 2017). Taken together, the participants perceived themselves as slandered victims. They insisted the mistakes occurred because of the poor system implementation and the work environment that forced them to do so.

### ***Inclusive Perpetratorhood: Everyone Is Doing It***

Until now, many perpetrators of corruption in Indonesia have been caught and their cases have been sentenced. As corruption is a common case that is known to the public, it is obvious the perpetrators already know about various actions that are categorized as corruption. Two participants wondered about their case, and if everyone also did it, why only their acts were considered wrong:

S-1: All my friends in parliament often receive envelopes from investors and businessmen who secure projects here (in District X). So, that's considered a normal occurrence. (Trans. by Z. A., I. E. P., Y. H., & S. A.)

S-5: It's not just me who bribe public officials ... all businessmen like me who get projects from the government do the same thing. (Trans. by Z. A., I. E. P., Y. H., & S. A.)

This indicated that they were most likely well-informed that many others were doing the same thing but not being caught. This could also show that, in fact, many perpetrators of corruption were still on the loose, regardless of whether the authorities knew about it or not. As of 2013, it was reported that many corruptors in Indonesia were not seriously punished, and even among those who work as businessmen, their businesses were still running (Dozens of corruptors still in limbo, 2013).

## **Discussion**

The findings of the present study indicate that even though the perpetrators acknowledged corruption as a crime detrimental to the state, they did not think that their actions could be categorized as corruption, and claimed their cases were the result of criminalization by those who had vested interests.

---

Based on language perspective, the ambiguous perception of corruption can be understood because the term can be seen in two ways: describing an event or action objectively (descriptive function), and evaluating something subjectively (evaluative function). In other words, the term "corruption" contains descriptive and normative elements, related to one's moral integrity (Heywood & Rose, 2015; Rose, 2018). Perpetrators may use it relative to their own arguments and circumstances, perceiving and defining it to their own advantage, so that their cases would not be categorized as criminal acts. It is then understandable why many accused of corruption deny the accusation (Ashforth & Anand, 2003; De Klerk, 2017; Gannett & Rector, 2015; Mulder & van Dijk, 2020; Nahartyo & Haryono, 2018; Rabl & Kühlmann, 2009).

Our study also reveals that the perpetrators have their own understanding of what is called corruption. Based on the interviews, they compared various pieces of evidence to show how corrupt behaviors generally differs from what they did. What was maintained by the perpetrators denoted an act of self-defense to drop the accusation that they were guilty. They built the definition of their behaviors and were adamant in their stance by ignoring the fact that what they have done actually constitutes corruption. Defending and denying oneself of committing acts of corruption are common things to do in corruption cases. According to Anand et al. (2004) people convicted of white-collar crimes tend to admit their wrongful behavior but deny criminal intent and their stigmatization as criminals by employing some rationalization techniques which allow them to view their corrupt actions in such a way that it appears to be normal and acceptable manners.

In conjunction with defensive arguments, our study shows that the perception of corruption is constructed through a process of selectively choosing information to justify the act. Consequently, perpetrators come to the conclusion that they do not deserve sanctions, whether legal or social. Some interviewees argued that receiving rewards or gratuities was a common practice and not against the law. They contended that it was widely practiced across all levels of bureaucracy and considered culturally acceptable in Indonesia (Nazifah, 2019). Accordingly, based on their interpretations, they believed the law's definition of gratification was inaccurate because it contradicted the standard practice of gift-giving tradition.

The ambiguous definition of gratification, according to the participants, highlighted the fact that they believed what they did was not against the law. This indicates that they position themselves as the implementers of a long-standing cultural tradition that has been practiced in Indonesia. They argued that the law's unclear definition of gratification fails to take cultural aspects into account. They believed that the law should not contradict prevailing cultural practices and that what they did would be considered legal. This idea made the participants believe that their acts were unrelated to corruption. Even so, in the case of the participant S-5, who is an entrepreneur, it was clear that he deserved to be punished because the bribery case involved government officials. In other words, his defense was not acceptable. In Indonesia, it is stated that gratification by entrepreneurs can be criminalized only if it involves officials (Clifford Chance, 2019). However, based on interviews, S-5

---

claimed that many businessmen had done the same thing, that is, bribing officials. In other words, they observed and imitated individuals who engaged in corrupt acts without facing any punishment, as it was perceived as a common practice. To date, the case of bribery committed by businessmen to state officials is still rampant in Indonesia (Nuralam, 2021). Likewise, this finding strengthened a study conducted by Cabelkova (2001), which showed that when the employees of an institution are mostly considered corrupt, it can lead to a culture of corruption. In our study, the case includes entrepreneurs and, very likely, politicians.

Additionally, regardless of the cultural context, accepting gifts can create a conflict of interest and reduce the officials' integrity, which is an entry point to scandals and corruption (Kjellberg, 1994). This condition does not only occur in Indonesia. In several countries, the scope of gratification has flexible rules that take into account certain requirements. In some Middle East countries, for example, gifts or entertainment for non-incitement recipients to breach their duties should not be considered bribes (Measures against corruptibility, 2000).

In our study, we also found that the accused corruptors may position themselves as the victims, not the suspects. They believed they were being politicized and scapegoated by the people involved in the bad system/environment, a part of which they had become. In other words, they felt trapped and blamed their situation as being at the wrong place and time with the wrong people. We argue that this case will be common among politicians accused of corruption. However, as we do not have strong evidence to support our argument, further study is suggested to examine corruptions by comparing different types of perpetrators.

This research sheds light on the significant role of perception in corruption, illustrating how individuals' interpretations of corrupt behavior can motivate them to engage in corrupt activities and serve as a foundation for their subsequent denial and rationalization. By examining how perpetrators selectively interpret information to justify their actions, this study highlights the complex interplay between individual beliefs, societal norms, and legal definitions of corruption. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the limitations of this study, particularly its preliminary nature and the small sample size of participants (only five subjects). While the findings provide valuable insights, they should be a starting point for further investigation into this complex phenomenon.

Moving forward, future research should aim to expand upon these initial findings by conducting more extensive studies with larger and more diverse participant samples. Additionally, comparative analyses of corruption discourses across different societal contexts could yield valuable insights into the cultural, political, and economic factors that influence perceptions and behaviors related to corruption. By building upon this foundation, researchers can develop a more nuanced understanding of corruption and its implications for governance, ethics, and societal well-being on a global scale. Moreover, the present study does not extensively address the legal culture of corrupt individuals, particularly their legal cynicism and tendency to shift responsibility and blame onto others or external circumstances. Future research should explore this issue further.

---

## Conclusion

The findings of our study indicate that perceptions and understandings of corruption can influence individuals to engage in corrupt activities. When certain actions are not perceived as corruption, defendants may deny the accusations and employ rationalization to justify their behavior. Therefore, we propose that, in addition to apprehending those involved in corrupt practices, socialization programs be implemented to clearly define what constitutes corruption. The goal is to ensure that individuals possess a shared understanding of corruption based on Indonesian law.

## References

- A *guide to anti-corruption legislation in Asia Pacific* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). (2019). Clifford Chance. <https://www.cliffordchance.com/content/dam/cliffordchance/briefings/2019/04/a-guide-to-anticorruption-legislation-in-asia-pacific-6th-edition.pdf>
- Abidin, Z., & Prathama Siswadi, A. G. (2015). *Psikologi korupsi: Memahami aspek-aspek psikologis pelaku korupsi, pola-pola perilaku korupsi, dan pola-pola penanganan korupsi di Indonesia* [Psychology of corruption: Understanding the psychological aspects of corrupt individuals, patterns of corrupt behavior, and patterns of corruption handling in Indonesia]. Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Afifa, L. (2020, January 24). *The end of KPK under Jokowi*. Tempo.co. <https://en.tempo.co/read/1299103/the-end-of-kpk-under-jokowi>
- Agerberg, M. (2022). Messaging about corruption: The power of social norms. *Governance*, 35(3), 929–950. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gove.12633>
- Alamsyah, W. (2021). *Kinerja penindakan kasus korupsi tahun 2020* [Performance of Corruption Case Enforcement in 2020] [PowerPoint slides]. Antikorupsi.org. <https://antikorupsi.org/sites/default/files/dokumen/210101-Tren%20Penindakan%20Korupsi%20Tahun%202020.pdf>
- Amundsen, I. (1999). *Political corruption: An introduction to the issues* (Working paper No. 7). Chr. Michelsen Institute. <https://www.cmi.no/publications/file/1040-political-corruption.pdf>
- Anand, V., Ashforth, B., & Joshi, M. (2004). Business as usual: The acceptance and perpetuation of corruption in organizations. *Academy of Management Executive*, 18(2), 39–53. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AME.2004.13837437>
- Anas Urbaningrum divonis 8 tahun penjara* [Anas Urbaningrum sentenced to 8 years in prison]. (2014, September 24). BBC News Indonesia. [https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/berita\\_indonesia/2014/09/140924\\_vonis\\_anas\\_urbaningrum](https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/berita_indonesia/2014/09/140924_vonis_anas_urbaningrum)
- Anna, L. K. (2013, December 12). *Orang Indonesia paling senang memberi hadiah* [Indonesians are the most gift-giving people]. Kompas.com. <https://lifestyle.kompas.com/read/2013/12/09/1120282/Orang.Indonesia.Paling.Senang.Memberi.Hadiah>



---

Ashforth, B. E., & Anand, V. (2003). The normalization of corruption in organizations. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 25, 1–52. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0191-3085\(03\)25001-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0191-3085(03)25001-2)

Bachner, M. (2021, February 8). Netanyahu formally pleads not guilty in 2<sup>nd</sup> court appearance of corruption trial. *The Times of Israel*. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-in-court-for-corruption-trial-hearing-on-response-to-indictment/>

Badarneh, M. A. (2020). Discourses of defense: Self and other positioning in public responses to accusations of corruption in Jordan. *Discourse Studies*, 22(4), 399–417. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445620914670>

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

Cabelkova, I. (2001). *Perceptions of corruption in Ukraine: Are they correct?* (Working paper No. 176). The Center for Economic Research and Graduate Education—Economics Institute. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.288726>

*Corruption perceptions index 2022*. (2023, January 31). Transparency International. <https://www.transparency.org/en/publications/corruption-perceptions-index-2022>

*Corruption perceptions index 2023*. (2024, January 30). Transparency International. <https://www.transparency.org/en/publications/corruption-perceptions-index-2023>

De Klerk, J. J. (2017). “The devil made me do it!” An inquiry into the unconscious “Devils Within” of rationalized corruption. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 26(3), 254–269. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492617692101>

*Dozens of corruptors still in Limbo*. (2013, October 22). Tempo.co. <https://en.tempo.co/read/523710/dozens-of-corruptors-still-in-limbo>

Dupuy, K., & Naset, S. (2018). *The cognitive psychology of corruption. Micro-level explanations for unethical behavior*. The U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre. <https://www.u4.no/publications/the-cognitive-psychology-of-corruption>

Enste, D., & Heldman, C. (2017). *Causes and consequences of corruption: An overview of empirical results* (IW-Report No. 2/2017). Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln. <https://hdl.handle.net/10419/157204>

Fachrunisa, R. A., & Chizanah, L. (2021). An explanation of corruption cases in Indonesia from Al-Ghazali’s psychological construct of nafsu. *International Journal of Islamic Psychology*, 4(1), 19–25.

Gago-Rodríguez, S., Márquez-Illescas, G., & Núñez-Nickel, M. (2018). Denial of corruption: Voluntary disclosure of bribery information. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 162(3), 609–626. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-3989-9>

Gannett, A., & Rector, C. (2015). The rationalization of political corruption. *Public Integrity*, 17(2), 165–175. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10999922.2015.1000654>

---

*Helping countries combat corruption: The role of the World Bank* (Working paper 24687). (1997). World Bank. <https://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/799831538245192753/Helping-countries-combat-corruption-the-role-of-the-World-Bank>

Heywood, P. M., & Rose, J. (2015). The limits of rule governance. In A. Lawton, Z. van der Wal, & L. Huberts (Eds.), *Ethics in public policy and management: A global research companion* (pp. 181–196). Routledge.

Ihsanudin. (2015, December 16). *Meski mundur dari ketua DPR, Setya Novanto merasa tak bersalah* [Despite Resigning as DPR Chair, Setya Novanto Claims Innocence]. Kompas.com. <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2015/12/16/22450161/Meski.Mundur.dari.Ketua.DPR.Setya.Novanto.Merasa.Tak.Bersalah>

Iskandar, A., & Hernawan, D. (2017). The analyzes of handling of bad-character officials to corruption level towards public officials in the framework of “Gone Theory” in province DKI Jakarta and West Java. *International Journal of Sciences: Basic and Applied Research*, 36(4), 222–243. <https://gssr.org/index.php/JournalOfBasicAndApplied/article/view/8178>

Jackson, D., & Köbis, N. (2018, October 15). *Anti-corruption through a social norms lens*. The U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre. <https://www.u4.no/publications/anti-corruption-through-a-social-norms-lens>

Kajsiu, B. (2018). The ideological malleability of corruption. A comparative analysis of official corruption discourses in Albania and Colombia, 2010–2017. *Comparative Southeast European Studies*, 66(3), 299–324. <https://doi.org/10.1515/soeu-2018-0026>

Kjellberg, F. (1994). Conflict of interest, corruption or (simply) scandals? The “Oslo case” 1989–91. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 22(4), 339–360. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01302924>

*Komisi Pemberantasan Tindak Pidana Korupsi* [Commission for the Eradication of Corruption]. (2022). Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 30. <https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Details/44493/uu-no-30-tahun-2002>

*Koruptor cengar-cengir hanya ada di Indonesia* [Corruptors smirking only exist in Indonesia]. (2013, November 15). detikNews. <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-2413900/koruptor-cengar-cengir-hanya-ada-di-indonesia>

Kuncoro, A. (2006). Corruption and business uncertainty in Indonesia. *ASEAN Economic Bulletin*, 23(1), 11–30.

Lambsdorff, J. G. (2006). Consequences and causes of corruption: What do we know from a cross-section of countries? In S. Rose-Ackerman (Ed.), *International handbook on the economics of corruption* (pp. 3–52). Edward Elgar. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781847203106.00007>

Latif, R., & Chu, M. M. (2021, December 8). *Malaysia court upholds guilty verdict for former PM Najib*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/malaysia-appeals-court-upholds-former-pm-najibs-guilty-verdict-2021-12-08/>

---

McKinlay, A., & McVittie, C. (2008). *Social psychology and discourse*. Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444303094>

McVittie, C., & Sambaraju, R. (2019). Discourse of corruption and anti-corruption. In J. Ellis (Ed.), *Corruption, social sciences and the law* (pp. 149–165). Routledge.

Measures against corruptibility, gifts and gratification: “Bribery” in the Middle East. (2000). *Arab Law Quarterly*, 15(4), 363–367. <https://doi.org/10.1163/A:1017362831111>

Melgar, N., Rossi, M., & Smith, T. W. (2010). The perception of corruption in a cross-country perspective: Why are some individuals more perceptive than others? *Economia Aplicada*, 14(2), 183–198. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1413-80502010000200004>

Moore, C. (2016). Always the hero to ourselves: The role of self-deception in unethical behavior. In J. W. van Prooijen & P. A. M. van Lange (Eds.), *Cheating, corruption, and concealment: The roots of dishonesty* (pp. 98–119). Cambridge University Press.

Mulder, L. B., & van Dijk, E. (2020). Moral rationalization contributes more strongly to escalation of unethical behavior among low moral identifiers than among high moral identifiers. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, Article 2912. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02912>

Mulyana, A., Iskandarsyah, A., Prathama Siswadi, A. G., & Srisayekti, W. (2019). Social value orientation on corruption prisoners. *Mimbar*, 35(1), 245–252. <https://doi.org/10.29313/mimbar.v35i1.4479>

Myint, U. (2000). Corruption: Causes, consequences, and cures. *Asia-Pacific Development Journal*, 7(2), 33–58.

Nahartyo, E., & Haryono. (2018). Magnitude of corruption, rationalization, and internal control quality: An experimental study on subsequent offense. *Jurnal Akuntansi dan Keuangan Indonesia*, 15(2), 163–179. <https://doi.org/10.21002/jaki.2018.09>

Nazifah, L. (2019). Strategy to respond gratification by identifying gift-giving to government employee. *Monas: Jurnal Inovasi Aparatur*, 1(2), 47–58.

Nuralam, C. Y. (2021, April 18). *KPK: Masih banyak pengusaha bandel lakukan suap* [KPK: Many stubborn businesspeople still engaged in bribery]. Media Indonesia. <https://mediaindonesia.com/politik-dan-hukum/398813/kpk-masih-banyak-pengusaha-bandel-lakukan-suap>

OECD. (2008). *Corruption: A glossary of international standards in criminal law*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264027411-en>

*Perubahan Atas Undang-Undang Nomor 31 Tahun 1999 tentang Pemberantasan Tindak Pidana Korupsi* [Amendment to Law No. 31 of 1999 on the Eradication of the Crime of Corruption]. (2001). Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 20. <https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Details/44900/uu-no-20-tahun-2001>

Potter, J. (2003). Discursive psychology: Between method and paradigm. *Discourse & Society*, 14(6), 783–794. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09579265030146005>

---

Potter, J., & Edwards, D. (2001). Discursive social psychology. In W. P. Robinson & H. Giles (Eds.), *The new handbook of language and social psychology* (pp. 103–118). Wiley.

Pratomo, A. Y. (2014). *Andi Mallarangeng tetap tidak merasa bersalah* [Andi Mallarangeng still denies his guilt]. Merdeka.com. <https://www.merdeka.com/peristiwa/andi-mallarangeng-tetap-tidak-merasa-bersalah.html>

Pusparisa, Y. (2021, January 3). *Kalangan swasta, politisi, dan pejabat pemerintah yang paling banyak dicokok KPK* [Private sector, politicians, and government officials most frequently arrested by the KPK]. Databoks. <https://databoks.katadata.co.id/datapublish/2021/03/01/kalangan-swasta-politisi-dan-pejabat-pemerintah-yang-paling-banyak-dicokok-kpk>

Rabl T., & Kühlmann, T. M. (2009). Why or why not? Rationalizing corruption in organizations. *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal*, 16(3), 268–286. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13527600910977355>

Rastika, I. (2013, February 14). *Kasus Suap, Nominal Berapapun Bisa Ditangani KPK* [KPK's case of bribery, any nominal can be handled]. Kompas.com. <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2013/02/14/21385855~Nasional>

Restya, W. P. D., & Amalia, H. (2019). Corrupt behavior in a psychological perspective. *Asia Pacific Fraud Journal*, 4(2), 177–182. <https://doi.org/10.21532/apfjournal.v4i2.113>

Ritchie, T. D. (2014). Denial. In T. R. Levine (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of deception* (Vol. 2, pp. 279–280). SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483306902>

Rose, J. (2018). The meaning of corruption: Testing the coherence and adequacy of corruption definitions. *Public Integrity*, 20(3), 220–233. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10999922.2017.1397999>

Rose-Ackerman, S. (Ed.). (2006). *International handbook on the economics of corruption*. Edward Elgar.

S. *Africa's ex-president Zuma pleads not guilty to corruption charges*. (2021, May 26). Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/safricas-ex-president-zuma-appears-court-corruption-plea-2021-05-26/>

Sahama, S., Shofia, A., Reiza, M., & Riyono, B. (2019). Corruption in Indonesia: An investigation from mental health, spirituality, and leadership perspectives. *Malaysian Journal of Medicine and Health Sciences*, 15(Suppl. 1), 45–53.

Salama, N. (2014). Motif dan Proses Psikologis Korupsi [The motive and psychological process of corruption]. *Jurnal Psikologi*, 41(2), 149–164. [https://jurnal.ugm.ac.id/jpsi/article/view/6946/pdf\\_46](https://jurnal.ugm.ac.id/jpsi/article/view/6946/pdf_46)

Suramin, S. (2021). Indonesian anti-corruption law enforcement: Current problems and challenges. *Journal of Law and Legal Reform*, 2(2), 225–242. <https://doi.org/10.15294/jllr.v2i2.46612>

---

Syamsudin, Saleh, C., & Supriadi, D. (2022). Analysis of Indonesian corruption prisoners' religious behaviour. *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 6(S7), 748–759. <https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v6nS7.11240>

Syarif, L. M., & Faisal, F. (2019). Addressing the root of political corruption in Indonesia. *Integritas: Jurnal Antikorupsi*, 5(2), 191–198. <https://doi.org/10.32697/integritas.v5i2.487>

Tanno, S. (2020, January 23). *Somalia, South Sudan and Syria are ranked the world's most corrupt nations while Denmark, New Zealand and Finland top list of "clean" countries, international report finds*. MailOnline. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7920469/Somalia-Sudan-Syria-ranked-worlds-corrupt-nations-international-report-finds.html>

*Tentang Pemberantasan Tindak Pidana Korupsi* [On the eradication of the crime of corruption]. (1999). Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 31. <https://peraturan.bpk.go.id/Details/45350/uu-no-31-tahun-1999>

van Dijk, T. (2000). Ideologies, racism, discourse: Debates on immigration and ethnic issues. In J. T. Wal & M. Verkuyten (Eds.), *Comparative perspectives on racism* (pp. 91–116). Routledge.

van Prooijen, J.-W., & van Lange, P. A. M. (Eds.). (2016). *Cheating, corruption, and concealment: The roots of dishonesty*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316225608>