

Restoring Public Trust: Analyzing Corruption Cases and Their Impact on Governance in Indonesia

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Abstract

Public trust in state administrators is being torn apart by corruption scandals. The public can see how corrupt behavior occurs sporadically at almost all levels of government. This article presents the results of research in the form of the phenomenon of criminal acts of corruption, which is closely related to the emergence of a level of public trust in Indonesia's law and government. This study is a qualitative research using the literature review method. The approach used in this paper is a review and analysis of the case along with all relevant laws and regulations. The results of this research are that the criminal corruption case that ensnared Firli Bahuri included two types of crimes, namely, extortion, which involves the abuse of power to force civil servants or state administrators to provide personal benefits, as defined in Article 368 of the Criminal Code, which can lead to a prison sentence of up to nine years. The implication of this research is the need to strengthen supervision and consistent implementation of the law and restore the integrity of law enforcement institutions to prevent corruption and restore public trust.

Keywords *Corruption, Public Trust, Development*

INTRODUCTION

Corruption remains a significant challenge to governance and public trust in Indonesia. The widespread perception that corrupt practices are frequently punished inadequately or met disproportionate penalty undermines public confidence in the legitimacy of law and the integrity of government institutions. This erosion of trust threatens the stability of democratic foundations and the efficacy of state institutions (Rinaldi et al., 2023). The perceived leniency in addressing corruption has led to a dangerous belief that the legal system is unevenly applied and that corrupt behaviors may go unpunished, further destabilizing societal trust in governance.

To address this crisis, comprehensive reforms in government systems and law enforcement mechanisms are essential. These reforms should focus on enhancing oversight, ensuring fair and consistent law enforcement, and fostering a robust culture of integrity across all government levels. Without these fundamental changes, public distrust is likely to persist, undermining national stability and progress.

Recent surveys have highlighted the severity of public dissatisfaction with bureaucracy. For example, a recent survey revealed widespread negative perceptions of the government across various levels, from local to national administration (Pringgaskti & Zulfiani, 2019). This dissatisfaction was further illustrated by the Corruption Perception Index (CPI), which placed Indonesia at 115th out of 180 countries in 2023, with a stagnant score of 34. This represents a decline from previous years and places Indonesia below several Southeast Asian neighbors, underscoring ongoing challenges in combating corruption (Transparency Internasional, 2023).

The increasing number of corruption cases, as documented by the Indonesia Corruption Watch (ICW), further emphasized the urgency of reform. In 2023, ICW reported 791 corruption cases

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involving 1,695 suspects. This trend of increasing cases and suspects over recent years reflects a persistent and growing problem ([Ardito Ramadhan, 2024](#)).

Considering these issues, this research focuses on analyzing the impact of high-profile corruption cases, such as the one involving a prominent figure in Indonesian governance, on public trust in government and law enforcement agencies. By examining the relationship between high-profile corruption cases and public perception, this study identifies effective strategies for restoring trust and reinforcing the integrity of government institutions. This research will provide insights into how such cases influence public trust and contribute to the development of targeted reforms necessary to revitalize public confidence and ensure more effective governance in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review explores the intersection of corruption, public trust, and governance, with a particular focus on Indonesia. This review synthesizes recent studies and theoretical frameworks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how corruption impacts public trust and the necessary reforms to restore it.

The Impact of Corruption on Public Trust

Corruption significantly undermines public trust in government institutions. According to [Alatas and Cameron \(2021\)](#), corrupt practices erode confidence in public officials and institutions, leading to widespread dissatisfaction and disengagement from political processes. This erosion of trust has been particularly evident in developing countries, where systemic corruption often results in poor governance and instability ([Piatkowski, 2022](#)).

Recent studies have highlighted the negative effects of corruption on Indonesian public trust. [Mardiasmo and Rahardjo \(2023\)](#) emphasized that corruption scandals in Indonesia have led to a pervasive distrust of both law enforcement and government institutions. This sentiment is supported by the Corruption Perception Index (CPI), which shows Indonesia's stagnation in its efforts to combat corruption despite various anticorruption efforts ([Transparency Internasional, 2023](#)).

Corruption and Democratic Stability

The stability of democratic institutions is intricately linked to the public perception of corruption. [Bohn and Deacon \(2022\)](#) argue that high levels of corruption can destabilize democratic systems by undermining the legitimacy of democratic processes and institutions. This destabilization often manifests as reduced public participation in governance and weakened rule of law.

In the Indonesian context, [Pratama and Nasution \(2021\)](#) observed that persistent corruption scandals have led to a crisis of confidence in democratic processes. This erosion of trust threatens the effectiveness of democratic institutions and hinders socioeconomic development ([Rinaldi et al., 2023](#)).

Reform and Governance

Addressing corruption requires comprehensive reform strategies. According to [O'Rourke and Liu \(2023\)](#), effective reforms should include strengthening oversight mechanisms, ensuring transparency, and implementing fair and consistent law enforcement. These reforms are crucial for restoring public trust and improving the integrity of government institutions.

In Indonesia, various scholars have advocated systemic reforms to tackle corruption. [Andi and Surya \(2022\)](#) highlighted the need for increased transparency and accountability within governmental institutions. Similarly, [Cahyono \(2023\)](#) stressed the importance of building a robust culture of integrity and ensuring that anticorruption measures are consistently applied.

High-Profile Corruption Cases

High-profile corruption often serves as a catalyst for public disillusionment. [Harahap \(2023\)](#) discussed how such cases can amplify public perceptions of systemic corruption, further erode public trust in the integrity of legal and governmental systems. The case of Firli Bahuri, for instance, has been particularly impactful, drawing significant public and media attention.

[Hinting \(2023\)](#) noted that high-profile cases can either prompt significant reforms or intensify public cynicism if not addressed effectively. The way in which these cases are managed can significantly influence the public perception of the legal system and its ability to uphold justice.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach to analyze the impact of corruption on Indonesia's public trust and governance. The methodology integrates normative legal research, a comprehensive literature review, and a case study approach to explore the relationship between corruption, public perception, and legal frameworks.

Case Study Approach

The case study approach is central to this research, allowing for an in-depth examination of specific corruption cases and their impact on Indonesian public trust and legal integrity. The steps involved in this approach include:

Case Selection

This study focuses on significant corruption cases, such as the Firli Bahuri case, which are analyzed for their relevance to public perception and governance.

Data Collection

1. Documentation: Data are gathered through document analysis, including court rulings, legal documents, regulations, and media reports related to selected cases.
2. Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with legal experts, government officials, and researchers to gain insights into corruption cases and their effects on public trust.
3. Observation: Observations of ongoing legal processes and public reactions to highlighted corruption cases are also included.

Data Analysis

1. Contextual Analysis: The social, political, and legal contexts surrounding corruption cases are analyzed to shed light on the factors influencing public perception and legal effectiveness.
2. Data Triangulation: Findings from various data sources (documentation, interviews, and observations) are integrated to ensure validity and provide a holistic view.
3. Thematic Analysis: The data are organized into themes, such as motives for corruption, public response, and the effectiveness of law enforcement, and are then analyzed for patterns and implications.

Normative Legal Research

Normative legal research, also known as doctrinal research, forms the core component of this study. This method examines legal norms and principles enshrined in positive law and analyzes their application in the context of corruption cases. The steps include

1. Identification of Legal Norms: This research begins by identifying and selecting relevant legal norms, statutes, and regulations related to corruption in Indonesia. This includes reviewing the Criminal Code, anticorruption laws, and judicial rulings.
2. Literature Review: Legal literature, including books, journal articles, and legal commentaries, is reviewed to shed light on the theoretical and practical aspects of corruption and its impact on public trust.

3. Case Analysis: Specific corruption cases, such as the Firli Bahuri case, are analyzed to understand their impact on public perception and legal integrity, including court decisions, legal arguments, and media reports.
4. Legislative Analysis: This involves a detailed examination of existing laws and regulations to assess their adequacy and effectiveness in addressing corruption and restoring public trust.
5. Material Organization: Legal materials are systematically organized through editing, classification, verification, and analysis to provide insights and recommendations.

Literature Review

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to supplement the qualitative analysis. It involves:

1. Systematic Search: This study conducts a systematic search for relevant academic journals, books, and articles published in the past 1-5 years to incorporate the most current findings on corruption, public trust, and governance.
2. Critical Analysis: This study reviews recent studies to understand the broader context and implications of corruption on public trust and democratic stability.
3. Integration and Synthesis: Insights from the literature are integrated with normative legal analysis and case study findings to develop comprehensive conclusions and recommendations.

By combining a case study approach with normative legal research and a rigorous literature review, this study aims to provide a detailed analysis of the impact of corruption on public trust and the effectiveness of Indonesia's legal reforms.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Case of Firli Bahuri and Its Relationship with Public Trust in Anti-Corruption Institutions in Indonesia

The corruption case that ensnared Firli Bahuri above can be categorized into two types of corruption crimes, namely extortion. Based on Article 368 of the Criminal Code, it is stated that anyone who with the aim of unlawfully benefiting himself or others, forcing another person by violence or threat of violence to give something that belongs wholly or partially to another person, or to give a debt or write off a receivable, is threatened with imprisonment for a maximum of 9 years for extortion ([Maghfuri, 2020](#)).

The crime of extortion has many forms and has been regulated and explained in article 12 letters e, g, and h of Law Number 20 of 2001. The crime of extortion regulated in Chapter XXIII of the Criminal Code basically consists of two groups of criminal acts: the crime of extortion (*afpersing*) and the crime of threatening (*afdreiging*) ([Rijanta et al., 2018](#)). Both types of crimes have the same nature: they are acts that aim to extort others. Because of their similarities, these two criminal acts are commonly referred to by the same name, namely "extortion", and are regulated in the same article ([Antow & Bawole, 2023](#)).

Option to Dissolve the KPK or Replace the Chairman of the KPK If the Case Is Proven

If KPK Chairman Firli Bahuri is proven to have committed extortion, do you think it is better for the KPK to be dissolved or simply dismiss the KPK Chairman and replace the

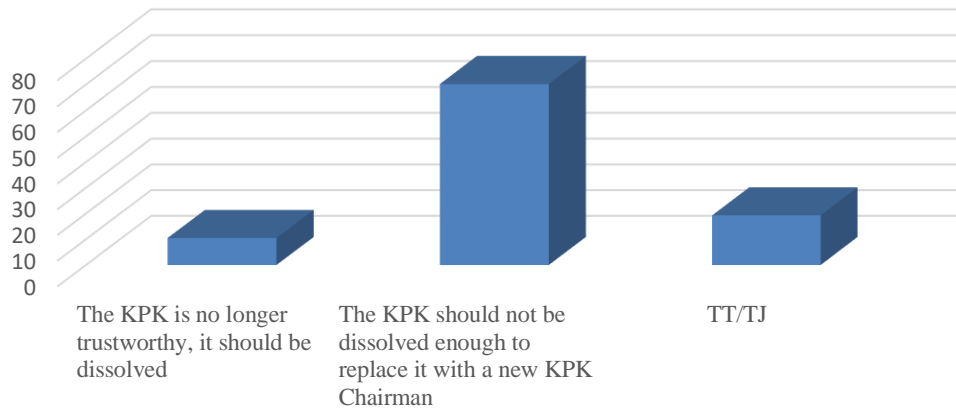


Figure 1. Survey Diagram

According to the results of a survey conducted by the indicator, most respondents (70.2%) still have a high level of confidence in the existence and performance of the KPK as an anticorruption institution in Indonesia. However, it should be noted that 10.5% of the respondents in the survey lost their full confidence in the KPK’s performance.

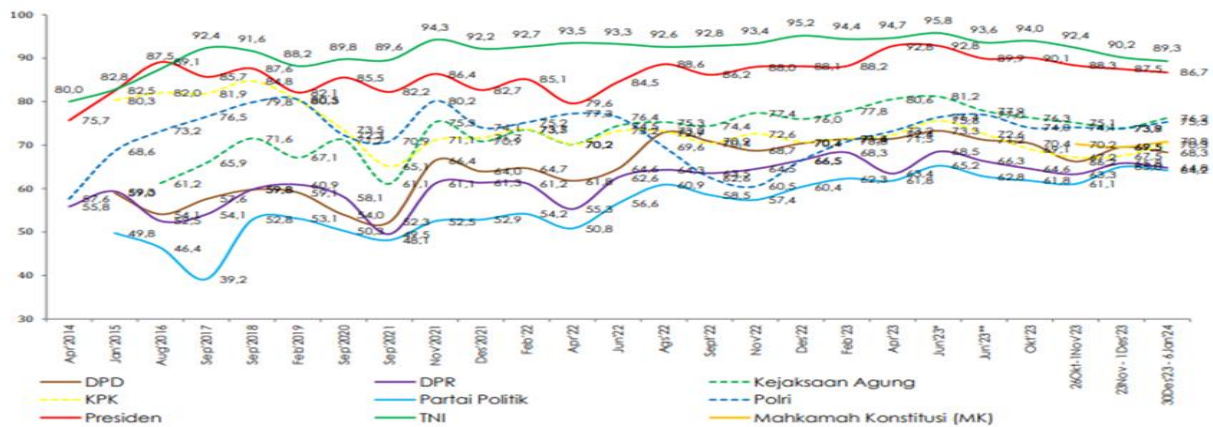


Figure 2. Indonesian Indicator Survey Institute (2024)

The level of public trust in anticorruption institutions reached 75.7%. This figure consists of 10% which are greatly confident and 65.7% which are quite confident. In fact, the trend of public trust in previous years until 2019 always reached 80%. The KPK even had a higher level of public trust than the president in 2014, 2015, and 2018. The public trust survey on the KPK in 2021 even declined, at only 65.1%. Since then, this anticorruption institution has never broken through the 80% mark in the realm of public trust in Indonesia (Tutoroong et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI) released the results of a trust survey on state

institutions. LSI said that public trust in the KPK has declined compared to 3 years ago. In 2023, the KPK's score reached 61%. Corruption Crimes and Their Implications for Government Holistic Trust: The concept of trust in general can be divided into two types: political trust and social trust ([Tutoroong et al., 2021](#)).

Corruption Crimes and Their Implications for Trust in the Government Holistic

From a political perspective, public trust in the government is reflected in the belief that government institutions and their leaders can fulfill their promises and perform their duties efficiently, fairly, and honestly. When government institutions, public officials, and their policies are perceived positively by citizens, trust in the government tends to be high ([Elfira et al., 2024](#)). The community believes that the government acts for the common good and will not abuse its power for personal gain or for a particular group. At this level, external oversight may no longer be considered important because the government is believed to act correctly without external pressure ([Hasibuan, 2023](#)).

Public trust in the government, at both organizational and individual levels, is highly dependent on credibility in policymaking. When citizens feel that government policies are in line with their needs and aspirations, their trust in government institutions increases. Government credibility is also intricately linked to transparency and accountability in the policymaking process, where clarity in policy objectives, procedures, and impact strengthens public trust ([Widodo, 2022](#)).

Maintaining and enhancing public trust through credibility in policymaking has a far-reaching impact on public stability and welfare. When people feel confident that the policies implemented by the government are based on objective considerations and clear objectives, they are more likely to support and comply with those policies ([Muhafidin & Yadiman, 2020](#)). This creates an environment in which collaboration between the government and the community can flourish, allowing for the implementation of effective and sustainable policies to improve social, economic, and environmental conditions ([Dini, 2023](#)).

Therefore, it is important for the government and anticorruption agencies to ensure that they perform their duties with high integrity and professionalism. This includes fair and indiscriminate enforcement of the law against corrupt actors and ensuring transparency and accountability in every step taken. Only by strengthening the credibility of anti-corruption agencies and improving the level of public trust in them can we build a strong foundation to address the problem of corruption and ensure justice for all citizens ([Kurniawan, 2015](#)).

CONCLUSIONS

This research demonstrates a strong correlation between high levels of corruption and a significant decline in public trust in the government and its institutions. In countries like Indonesia, where corruption is pervasive, the public's negative perception of the political system undermines the legitimacy and effectiveness of governance. This erosion of trust critically hampers the government's ability to function effectively and deliver essential services. Given the importance of public trust in maintaining a stable and functioning government, Indonesia must intensify its anticorruption efforts. This includes implementing more robust transparency measures, reinforcing good governance practices, and ensuring that anticorruption institutions, particularly the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), operate with credibility and integrity. Restoring public confidence in the KPK is crucial for it to regain its role as a leading institution in the fight against corruption. The findings of this research highlight the need for comprehensive legal reforms and sustained public engagement to restore trust in governance and support national development. By effectively addressing corruption, Indonesia can strengthen its political system, enhance governance, and create a more conducive environment for sustainable development.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

This study, while providing significant insights into the relationship between corruption and public trust in Indonesia, is limited by several factors. The focus on a few high-profile cases, such as the Firli Bahuri case, may not fully capture the breadth of corruption across different levels of government. Reliance on secondary data, including legal documents and media reports, may limit the depth of real-time perspectives. Additionally, the findings are context specific to Indonesia, which may affect their generalizability to other countries. Potential biases in expert interviews and the evolving legal and political landscape in Indonesia also pose challenges, as these factors influence the objectivity and relevance of the conclusions over time. Moreover, the limited time frame of the literature review, which focuses on the past 1-5 years, may not adequately reflect long-term trends in the relationship between corruption and public trust. These limitations highlight the need for further research with broader case studies, longitudinal approaches and real-time data to enhance the understanding of how corruption impacts governance and public trust.

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