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Child Perception toward Corruption: an Empirical Study in Indonesian Context

Corruption is one of the major problems for many countries including Indonesia. The word corruption is one word that is often heard in the television media and written in the print media. It can be said that there is no day without news of corruption in Indonesia. Research on perceptions of corruption has been undertaken by many researchers; on the other hand, no research has focused on children's perceptions of corruption. The importance of understanding the perception of children against corruption is based on the reality that perception shapes one's attitude and behavior. Improper child perception of corruption should be corrected so that children have a proper understanding of corruption and then are expected not to commit such corruption. Therefore, this research is an exploratory research. An open question questionnaire was distributed to 235 respondents in grade 5 and 6 in several public schools. The data is processed by using frequency statistics. Results show that more than half of respondents cannot define corruption. However, more than half of the respondents can illustrate that the person doing the corruption is an evil, irresponsible, and sinful person. The results of this exploratory study can be used as a basis for further descriptive research. Not only that, the results of this study can also be used as a basis in scale development of the perception of children toward corruption.

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Sabrina O. Sihombing

INTRODUCTION

Corruption is one of the main problems facing the Indonesian nation over the years (e.g., Maulana & Situngkir, 2013; Dick & Mulhollamd, 2010; McLeod, 2000). The word of corruption is a word almost daily reported on television, newspapers, social media, and others. News of arrest of state officials as a result of corruption becomes something that seems common. Chairman of the House of Representatives, Governors, Regents, Mayors, and many others officials or politicians are examples of those whose have been arrested in connection with corruption. Efforts have been made by the government to prevent corruption from becoming systemic. One such effort is prevention through a transparent system of governance and accountability. Furthermore, the Corruption Eradication Commission of the Republic of Indonesia (commonly abbreviated as KPK) established in 2002 is a state institution established with the aim of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of efforts to eradicate corruption.

In relation to the society, education on corruption has been introduced and delivered to elementary school students up to senior high school students. This effort is a basic effort that is expected to form children into adults who will not commit corruption. Though many research about corruption has been conducted (e.g., Melgar et al., 2010; Andersson & Heywood, 2009; De Maria, 2008; Van de Walle, 2008; Sulistyowati, 2007), but very rarely do studies relate to children's perceptions of corruption. In fact, understanding the

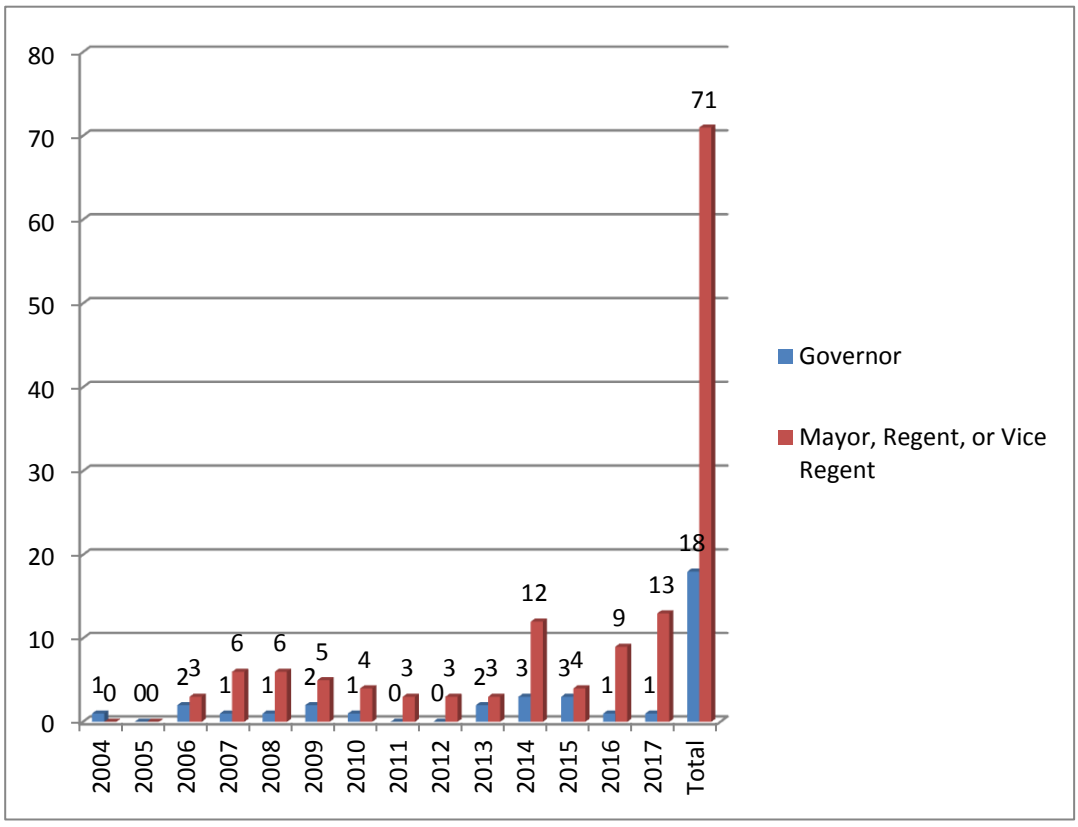
perception of children about corruption is important in particular whether they understand corruption itself. moreover, perception can shape attitudes and behavior of individuals. Perception is related to any stimulus that can be accepted by one's five senses which will then be processed to be interpreted.

Perception is important because perception is influenced by the individual's ability to receive, organize, and interpret stimuli. Perception can be described as how we see the world around us (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015). Everyone can see the same stimulus but can then be interpreted to be different for those people. Specifically, perception is about subjective understanding and not objective realitities (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015). Therefore, understanding perception is important as perception as the basis for behavioral formation. Thus, this study will focus on elementary school children because at the age of primary school children can already associate any form of behavior with the concept of right-wrong or good-bad. Furthermore, at this age the child can understand the reasons underlying a rule. Based on the research problem above, then the research question of this study is as following: "What is the child's perception of corruption in Indonesian context?"

Corruption is a global phenomenon (Hodgson & Jiang, 2007; Cameron et al., 2005). There are several ways to define corruption. Researchers defines corruption as the illegal, or unauthorized, profiteering by officials who exploit their positions for personal gain (Blackburn, Bose, & Haque, 2004; Drury et al., 2006). The term corruption covers a broad range of human actions including bribery, nepotism, theft, and many other misappropriate behavior (Drury *et al*., 2006).

In Indonesian context, the reporting of corruption in Indonesia is often associated with regional heads and political parties. The reporting of corruption by regional heads has increased in line with the planned direct election of regional heads in Indonesia in 2018. Specifically, The General Elections Commission of the Republic of Indonesia has set the date of voting for the regional head elections simultaneously in 2018 on 27 June 2018. There are 171 regions that follow elections 2018. However, Table 1 shows the number of regional heads that include the governors, mayors, district heads and vice regents that have been arrested by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK).

Table 1. District Heads and Corruption in Indonesia (2004-2017)



Source: Lee (2018)

Corruption in Indonesia has become a systemic phenomenon and is firmly rooted in may areas such as government and also society. The birth of KPK in 2002 is based on the thought that corruption is extraordinary crime. This label are considered appropriate for the Indonesian context, given the corrupt power of corrupt practices has reached a high level. Table 2 shows the efforts undertaken by the KPK in efforts to combat corruption in Indonesia.

Table 2. Combating corruption by the KPK in figures

Number of case prosecution				
The stage of action	2015	2016	2017	Total
initial investigation *(penyelidikan)*	87	96	114	962
investigation (*penyidikan*)	67	99	118	685
prosecution (*penuntutan*)	62	76	94	559
inkracht	38	71	73	461
execution (eksekusi)	38	81	76	490
The position of the perpetrators of corruption				
Position	2015	2016	2017	Total
house of representatives/ regional people's representative assembly	19	23	20	62
head of the institution/ministry	3	2	0	5
echelon I, II, III, and IV	7	10	43	60
judge	3	1	3	7
prosecutor	0	3	1	4

police	0	0	0	0
Types of cases				
Cases	2015	2016	2017	Total
procurement of goods / services	14	14	15	43
permissions	1	1	2	4
bribery	38	79	93	210
extortion	1	1	0	2
misappropriation of budget	2	1	1	4
money laundering	1	3	6	10

Table 2 shows that the Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi / KPK) conducted a number of investigations and investigations of corruption cases over 2017 more than in 2016 and earlier data. Specifically, during 2017, the KPK conducted 114 investigations of corruption cases, 118 case investigations, and 94 corruption prosecution activities. Not only that, the number of corruption cases that have been successfully handled to a permanent legal force or incracht, in 2017 also increased. The late 2017 record released by KPK concludes that bribery cases continue to dominate corruption cases handled by this institution. Recorded, there are 93 bribery cases handled by KPK in 2017. This number increased from 79 cases in 2016.

The KPK also noted, during 2017, most corruption perpetrators came from central and local government bureaucratic officials. There are 43 corruption cases involving echelon 1 to 4. Officers from the private sector are involved in 27 cases. In third place, DPR and

DPRD members are stuck in 20 cases. While 12 other cases concern the head of the region.

Since 1995, Transparency International has published a Corruption Perception Index (CPI) each year that ranked countries in the world based on public perceptions of corruption in. Specifically, CPI is a composite index that measures public perception of corruption in the countries of the world. CPI describes the various determinants such as public services, legal certainty, and the ease of doing business, the relationship between politics and business, and others (www.transparency.org, 2017). Since its launch in 1995 the CPI has been used by many countries as a reference to the situation of periodic per year corruption.

In a recent survey conducted by Transparency International, Indonesia ranked 96 (from 180 countries in the world) on the Corruption Perceptions Index 2017. The score obtained by Indonesia in the index list is 37 (Table 3), still the same as the score obtained by Indonesia in the previous year. CPI report uses score from 0 – 100. The value of 0 means that a country is perceived as highly corrupt and a 100 means that a country is perceived as very clean. Furthermore, a country's rank indicates its position relative to the other countries included in the index.

Table 3. CPI scores (2012-2017)

Country	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Singapore	87	86	84	85	84	84
Brunei Darussalam	55	60	NA	NA	58	62

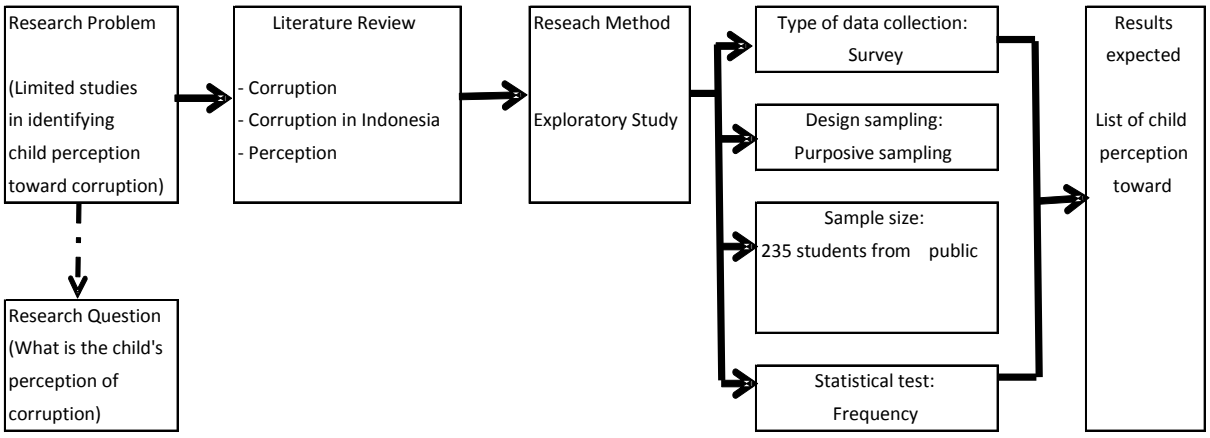
Malaysia	49	50	52	50	49	47
Thailand	37	35	38	38	35	37
Philippina	34	36	38	35	35	34
Indonesia	**32**	**32**	**34**	**36**	**37**	**37**
Vietnam	31	31	31	31	33	35
Myanmar	15	21	21	22	28	30

Source: www.transparency.org (2017)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

An exploratory study was conducted in this research. The main reason for applying this type of research is because fewer phenomenons were understood in understanding child perception toward corruption. The sampling design was be purposive sampling with two main criteria, i.e. students at grade 5 or 6 from national school (private school) and public school. The sample size involved 235 students from public schools. Data was then analyzed through descriptive statistics (i.e., frequency). The research process is described in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research process



RESULTS

A total of 235 usable questionnaires with open questions were distributed to state schools in the Tangerang area. There is no particular reason for the selection of Tangerang area other than the reason for the location close to the researcher so it is easier to distribute the questionnaire. The entire questionnaire was given to students in grades 5 and 6. Specifically, more than sixty percent (60.4%) of respondents came from grade 6 and the rest of the 5th grade (39.6%). All respondents come from 3 public elementary schools.

In the questionnaire they were asked to define what corruption was. A total of 10 out of 235 children did not write down the meaning of corruption. Many of the answers are not profoundly, only a short statement. In addition to not only brief, respondents write the meaning of corruption with a variety of answers. For the remaining 225 questionnaires, they define corruption as an act that harms others, eat other people's money, and steal people's money, bribe, and others. The large number of answers provided so that the results of frequency statistics show that only 3 answers answered by more than 10 percent of respondents. Specifically, 38 respondents perceived corruption as embezzlement of

state money. Furthermore, 34 respondents interpreted corruption as taking away the rights of others and as many as 26 respondents answered corruption as a misappropriation or embezzlement of money for personal gain (Table 4).

Table 4. Definition of Corruption

Definition of corruption is…	Frequency (percentage)
Embezzlement of state money	38 (16.8%)
Taking the rights of others	34 (15.1%)
abuse of money for personal gain	26 (11.5%)

Not many respondents write the definition of corruption with complete sentences. Some of them write as follows:

> *Korupsi adalah perbuatan yang memperkaya diri sendiri atau orang lain atau perusahaan. Perbuatan itu dilakukan dengan tidah sah sehingga dapat merugikan keuangan negara* (Respondent A, Grade 5). Corruption is an act that enriches itself or others or the company. The act was done illegally so that it could harm the state finances.

> *Orang yang mencuri uang orang atau negara tanpa sepengetahuan siapa-siapa dan mereka ini melakukan kecurangan dan sama saja mereka telah berbohong dan "makan" uang yang bukan hak kita* (Responden B, Grade 6). People who

steal money or country people without anyone's knowledge and they cheat and it means they lie and "eat" money that is not ours.

However, respondents' answers also show that some of them are not very well understood with the words of corruption. For example, they define corruption as follows:

Menurut pendapat saya, korupsi itu licik dalam perbuatannya (Respondent C, Grade 6). In my opinion, corruption is cunning in his deeds.

Menurut pendapat saya, korupsi adalah memakan uang haram (Respondent D, Grade 6). In my opinion, corruption is eating forbidden money.

When asked about their perceptions of corrupt people, these children are better able to answer than questions related to the definition of corruption. All 235 distributed questionnaires were filled with the specific questions. However, only 3 answers answered more than 10 percent of respondents (Table 5). The rest, the answer are varies. Almost a third of respondents answered that the person who did the corruption was evil person. The other answer is that people who do corruption are irresponsible people and sinners. The other respondents' answers are diverse, including those of lax, cheat, sly, greedy, dishonest, and others.

Table 5. Perception of People who do Corruption

People who do corruption are....	Frequency (percentage)
Evil people	66 (28.08%)
Not responsible person	34 (14.5%)

Sinner	26 (11.06%)

DISCUSSION

Of the two main questions given concerning corruption, it appears that children are not easy to interpret corruption even if all respondents reply that they have heard the word of corruption. Their answers about the definition of corruption are diverse and there are only 3 answers answered by more than 10 percent. Those three answers also represent less than 50 percent respondents (i.e., 98 respondents; 43.5 %). In other words, it can be stated that more than a half of respondents did not really understand the definition of corruption. Their diverse answers can show that although they have heard (and may often hear especially from news on television) but they have not been able to define of what corruption is.

The results of this study indicate that there is still a diverse perception of what corruption is among primary school children. Wrong interpretations of corruption must be corrected so that they understand what corruption is. Persons who engage in corruption are perceived as bad, irresponsible, unkind, and sinful. The interpretation of the attributes of the person who did the corruption is correct so it is expected that the children do not commit corruption in the future.

According to an expert in language, Dardjowidjojo (2012), the way the child determines meaning is not an easy thing. From the existing stimulus, the child must organize the stimulus and interpret it so that it gets the same meaning it gets as an adult. For example, the word corruption is known by children. The strategy used by the child to understand the meaning of corruption is to refer to things, deeds, processes, and attributes. It can be

stated that it is much easier for children to describe people who do corruption than asking them to interpret corruption.

The problem of corruption is a problem all citizens have faced for a long time. Corruption becomes more systematic, organized, and its form and scope is widespread. It appears that corruption is an activity that processes over time. However, the results of research conducted by Association for Psychological Science (2017) show that current corruption can occur not because of a process, but because of a sudden opportunity. This opportunity is called the golden opportunity. Therefore, corruption needs to be regarded as a serious illness that needs to be cured in many ways, and one of them is to provide a clear understanding of corruption to children.

The results of this study provide a contribution for practitioners, especially teachers and policy makers, relating to the perception of children against corruption. For practitioners, this study provides insights for practitioners such as teachers and even for the corruption eradication commission (KPK) that proclaims anti-corruption education since elementary school. Understanding the perception of children against corruption will help practitioners continue to be able to continue giving anti-corruption materials or correct misperceptions of corruption for children in primary schools. For academics, the results of this exploration study provide the foundation for further research such as descriptive research and even research on the scale of development of children's perception of corruption.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The aim of this research is to identify child perception toward corruption. The results show that children still have limitations in interpreting the word corruption but they can

better describe their perception of people who are corrupt. The results of this research, i.e., identification of children's perception of corruption, can be foundation for further research on the scale of development of children's perception of corruption. Alternatively, further research can replicate this study and compare respondents between students from public schools, private national schools, and religious-based private schools.

End Notes

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