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UNDERSTANDING ATTITUDES TOWARD CORRUPTION IN INDONESIA: REGIONAL DISPARITIES AND THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Corruption remains a significant challenge in Indonesia, undermining governance, economic development, and public trust. This study adopts a survey-based approach to assess the attitudes towards corruption within Indonesian society, focusing on tolerance levels, public knowledge about corruption, and how these factors intersect with demographics such as region, education, and income. A nationwide survey drew responses from 1,060 participants across Indonesia's Western, Central, and Eastern regions, representing diverse educational backgrounds (senior high school, undergraduate, and postgraduate levels). Findings reveal regional disparities in corruption tolerance, with the Western region displaying significantly lower tolerance than the Central and Eastern regions. Notably, individuals in the Western region exhibit greater knowledge of corruption and its legal consequences. Furthermore, the study identifies a negative correlation between knowledge levels and tolerance for corrupt behaviour, with higher education and income levels linked to reduced acceptance of corruption. This research contributes to Indonesia's anti-corruption discourse by providing empirical evidence on how demographic and knowledge factors shape attitudes towards corruption. The findings underscore the importance of targeted anti-corruption education, particularly in regions with higher tolerance levels, as a critical policy measure. Targeting these regional and demographic disparities enables policymakers to create more effective anti-corruption strategies that foster a culture of integrity and resilience against corruption across Indonesia.

Keywords: Corruption, demographic, gender, education, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Corruption is an old phenomenon, yet it remains a big problem in almost all countries in the world, including Indonesia. Transparency International (2017) argues that corruption is one of the most significant challenges of the contemporary world, which undermines good government, distorts public policy, leads to the misallocation of resources, harms the private sector, and particularly impairs people with low incomes.

Corruption and economic development have a mutual relationship. Corruption obstructs economic growth by reducing investment, diverting public resources, and increasing business costs (Wei 2000; Lambsdorff 2003). Conversely, underdevelopment, identical to poor governance

and law enforcement, is more conducive to corruption (Rose-Ackerman 2004; Truex 2011; Godinez and Liu 2018).

Several scholars have conducted analyses at the cross-country level to investigate the factors influencing corruption. These studies have identified various determinants, including exposure to democracy, political competition, level of education, level of development, and trade openness (Ades and Di Tella 1999; Treisman 2000; Montinola and Jackman 2002; Shabbir and Anwar 2007; Brown et al. 2021). However, limited research has examined the underlying factors shaping corruption tolerance, such as societal attitudes towards different forms of corrupt behaviour. These attitudes, often influenced by social norms, can profoundly impact corruption levels within a society. Yet, empirical evidence regarding Indonesian society's attitudes towards corruption remains scarce.

This study aims to address this research gap by providing empirical insights into Indonesian society's attitudes and knowledge levels regarding corruption, with a particular focus on corruption tolerance. The study investigates the impact of knowledge on corruption, as well as demographic factors such as gender, age, level of education, and income, on the tolerance towards various forms of corruption. Additionally, this study compares the tolerance level towards corruption based on different regions of Indonesia (Western, Central, and Eastern). By examining societal attitudes towards different forms of corrupt behaviour and considering the influence of knowledge and demographic factors, this study aims to offer a nuanced understanding of the factors shaping corruption tolerance in Indonesia.

Indonesia stands out as a developing nation with a population of 270 million and promising economic growth. However, it presents a paradoxical situation as it is consistently ranked among the ASEAN countries with a high prevalence of corruption, as indicated by the Transparency International (2023) report. This high level of corruption in Indonesia suggests that while some segments of the population may exhibit leniency towards corruption, others within the community openly reject corrupt practices.

The struggle against corruption in Indonesia is ongoing. On the one hand, establishing the independent and influential Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi, KPK) in 2003 has yielded promising outcomes, with many corrupt bureaucrats and businesspersons facing trials and imprisonment as part of the pursuit of justice. However, on the flip side, Transparency International's report consistently ranked Indonesia lower than other ASEAN countries such as Singapore and Malaysia. This persistent struggle against corruption highlights the need for comprehensive research to understand the underlying factors driving corruption tolerance in Indonesian society.

The latest Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) published by Transparency International (2025) underscores that Indonesia grapples with substantial challenges in its anti-corruption efforts. In 2023, Indonesia consistently scored 34 out of 100 on the CPI, placing it 115th out of 180 countries surveyed (as shown in Figure 1). If this trend persists, it suggests that corruption remains a lurking threat in the daily lives of the Indonesian people. It must be acknowledged that corruption has recently become even more prevalent, permeating various levels of the Indonesian bureaucratic system (KPK 2013).

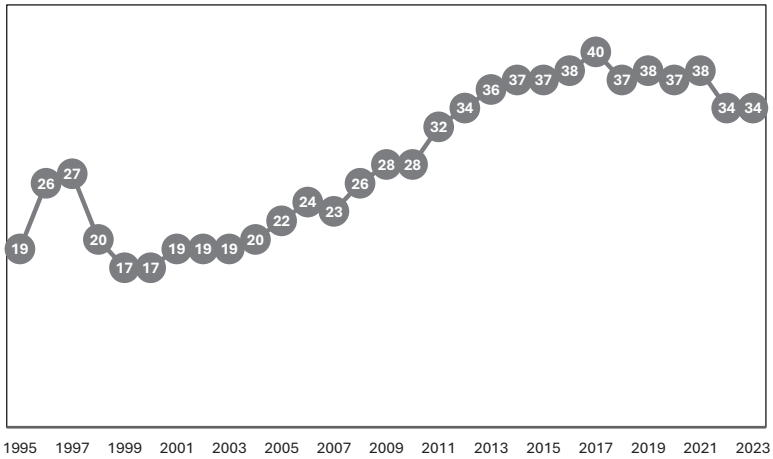

Figure 1: Indonesia corruption perception index, 1996–2023.
Source: Transparency International (2025).

Shleifer and Vishny (1993), Truex (2011), and Pan et al. (2023) argue that corruption in developing countries can be best described as a "culture of corruption", which is indicated by social norms and perception towards a certain level of corrupt behaviour. As commonly found in particular countries with high corruption levels, the attitudes towards corruption behaviours in Indonesian society could be hypothesised to be inconsistent, where some parts of society actively fight against corruption, whereas others demonstrate a relatively high tolerance towards corruption. However, empirical evidence on the attitudes of Indonesian society towards corruption seems to be very limited.

This research aims to fill the gap by conducting a survey and offering policy suggestions for anti-corruption initiatives in Indonesia. In particular, the study focuses on the following key aspects: (1) exploring variations in societal attitudes in Indonesia concerning different forms of corrupt conduct; (2) assessing the depth of knowledge within Indonesian society regarding various types of corruption and their associated legal consequences; and (3) examining how demographic variables, including age, gender, educational attainment, regional location, and income, as well as levels of corruption awareness, influence an individual's tolerance towards corrupt activities in Indonesia.

This research is anticipated to be one of the earliest empirical insights into Indonesian society's attitudes and knowledge levels regarding corruption within Indonesia. Specifically, the questionnaire of this study delved into various dimensions of corrupt behaviour, including perceptions of bribery, embezzlement, and favouritism across sectors such as government, business, and education. By examining these nuanced aspects of attitudes towards corruption, this study offers valuable insights for policymakers and provides empirical evidence to assist them in formulating effective anti-corruption strategies.

Many prior investigations into the subject of corruption have predominantly centred on its impact on economic development and business operations, as evident in works by Wei (2000), Lambsdorff (2003), Wedeman (2004), Olken (2006), and Brown et al. (2021). However, there have been limited inquiries into the underlying factors contributing to corruption, including examining people's attitudes towards various forms of corrupt conduct. These attitudes can shape social norms, promoting a more lenient stance on corruption. An example of such a study is the empirical work by Truex (2011) in Nepal.

The envisioned benefits and outcomes of this research encompass two key aspects. Firstly, it aims to furnish empirical evidence regarding the perspectives of Indonesian society concerning various forms of corrupt behaviour, alongside an assessment of the level of corruption-related knowledge within Indonesia. These empirical findings are anticipated to offer valuable insights for policymakers, aiding them in determining the most effective strategies for educating the public and combating corruption within Indonesia. Secondly, the research seeks to provide empirical evidence regarding the demographic factors that wield the most significant influence over an individual's stance towards corruption. These findings are envisioned as valuable input for Indonesian policymakers, helping them identify which demographic factors warrant particular attention when supporting anti-corruption initiatives in the country.

CORRUPTION IN INDONESIA

Indonesia's struggle with corruption is deeply rooted in its political history, particularly during President Suharto's lengthy regime (1965–1998), which established a system of crony capitalism where state and corporate power became deeply intertwined (McLeod 2000). The era institutionalised corrupt practices, with Suharto's inner circle controlling key industries and allegedly embezzling vast sums, estimated at USD35 billion (Blank 2019). This system thrived on reciprocal arrangements where favoured businesses received government concessions, lucrative contracts, and resource extraction rights in exchange for kickbacks, shares, and other illicit benefits, creating a self-perpetuating cycle of graft.

The economic consequences of this systemic corruption remain severe and well-documented. A World Bank (2000) survey highlighted how bribery and excessive taxation stifled business growth, while Henderson and Kuncoro's (2004) research revealed that Indonesian companies wasted over 10% of their expenditures on bribes and a similar proportion of management time navigating corrupt bureaucracies. These findings underscore how corruption distorts markets and hampers development. Across Southeast Asia, similar patterns emerge despite varying economic conditions, with shared governance challenges including weak legal frameworks, lack of transparency, and elite capture of institutions (Transparency International 2019; Horowitz 2020).

Several structural factors continue to sustain corruption in modern Indonesia. The country's abundant natural resources have become a double-edged sword, creating lucrative opportunities for rent-seeking behaviour among officials and private actors alike. This is compounded by systemic issues such as inadequate civil servant salaries, which incentivise petty corruption, and a lack of judicial independence that enables more sophisticated forms of graft (Martini 2012). As Robertson-Snape (1999) observed, collusion and nepotism became so normalised during the Suharto era that they persist as unwritten rules of engagement in business and government, despite being formally outlawed. The depth of this cultural acceptance was starkly revealed in a 1998 poll where 78% of respondents admitted that bribery remained essential when dealing with government offices.

A recent study has provided new insights into corruption's societal impacts. Tambunan's (2023) comprehensive study demonstrated how corruption erodes the very foundations of democratic governance, with both quantitative and qualitative data showing its corrosive effects on public trust in institutions. These findings align with Transparency International's advocacy work (2014), particularly their "Unmask the Corrupt" campaign, which highlights how corruption

proportionately harms vulnerable groups while undermining political stability. The issue gained renewed political attention during Joko Widodo's successful 2014 presidential campaign, which prominently featured anti-corruption pledges (Merkle 2018).

The Joko Widodo administration's approach has yielded mixed results. While the KPK has secured hundreds of convictions, including high-profile cases, Transparency International's (2019) metrics show persistent challenges. Many convictions target lower-level officials, while systemic issues like weak whistleblower protections and political interference in anti-corruption agencies remain unresolved. The KPK's 2022 annual report revealing that 58% of cases involved subnational officials points to how decentralisation has redistributed rather than eliminated corrupt practices.

Looking ahead, Indonesia's anti-corruption efforts face three interconnected challenges. The resource curse continues to fuel patronage networks, with local elites replicating Suharto-era extractive practices through decentralised governance structures. Institutional reforms have progressed unevenly, with judicial independence and civil service professionalism lagging behind other governance improvements. Perhaps most stubborn is the cultural dimension, where certain corrupt practices remain socially tolerated despite legal prohibitions. As the country approaches its 2024 elections, the sustainability of recent anti-corruption gains will depend on moving beyond cyclical enforcement surges to implement deeper structural reforms that address these root causes while building robust, transparent institutions capable of resisting corrupt pressures in the long term.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Recent studies have increasingly examined corruption as a multifaceted phenomenon that undermines institutional integrity and equitable development. Corruption, typically defined as the misuse of public office for private gain (Vogl 1998; Giannetti et al. 2021), encompasses diverse practices from bribery and kickbacks to nepotism and embezzlement. These practices distort economic systems, weaken public trust, and exacerbate social inequalities (Quiñones 2000). Empirical studies demonstrate corruption's pervasive impacts, including skewed resource allocation (Zhang et al. 2019), reduced business competitiveness (Batra and Stone 2008), and the erosion of citizen-state relations when governments fail to fulfil their obligations (Kelman 2000).

The persistence of corruption can be understood through Jain's (2001) framework identifying three key elements, i.e., discretionary bureaucratic power, economic rents associated with such power, and the probability of detection and punishment. The first two elements create incentives for corruption, while the third serves as a deterrent (Becker 1968). This risk-reward calculus explains why corruption endures even in systems with anti-corruption laws, when potential gains outweigh perceived risks. Economic inequality may exacerbate corruption by enabling wealthier groups to exploit systemic advantages (You and Khagram 2005), though Husted's (1999) cross-national study found no universal correlation between income inequality and corruption levels, suggesting other contextual factors mediate this relationship.

Indonesia presents a compelling case for examining how geographic and economic disparities influence corruption tolerance. The Western region, particularly Java, benefits from concentrated infrastructure investment and economic activity centred around Jakarta (Hill 2021), while Eastern regions face developmental challenges despite natural resource wealth due to uneven distribution systems and connectivity gaps [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and

Development (OECD) 2013; Wicaksono et al. 2017]. These disparities create divergent attitudes; developed regions with greater economic opportunities exhibit lower tolerance as legal avenues exist (Martini 2012), whereas marginalised areas may view corruption as a survival strategy when formal systems fail. This contextual understanding leads to the first hypothesis:

H_1: Corruption tolerance levels in the Western region of Indonesia surpass those observed in the Central and Eastern areas of the country.

Understanding the relationship between knowledge of corruption and tolerance towards corrupt behaviour is essential in anti-corruption efforts. Hunady (2019) highlights the positive impact of internet usage on corruption awareness and reporting. Increased internet activity is associated with greater knowledge of where to report corruption and more accurate estimations of corruption levels. Furthermore, frequent internet users are more likely to report instances of corruption, suggesting a link between knowledge and anti-corruption behaviour. These findings suggest that promoting internet access could effectively combat corruption by empowering individuals with information and encouraging proactive reporting on corruption.

A more recent study by De Sousa et al. (2022) delves into the relationship between knowledge of ethical standards among public officials in Portugal and tolerance towards corruption. They argue that corruption often deviates from established legal and ethical norms, and individuals' readiness to tolerate it depends on their understanding of these norms. Citizens' willingness to accept corruption as normal or beneficial is influenced by their knowledge of official ethical standards, acquired through academic and experiential learning. The study explores how citizens' awareness of these standards impacts their tolerance towards corruption. Drawing from individual-level data collected from focus groups in Portugal, the findings suggest a potential negative association between knowledge of official ethical standards and tolerance towards corruption. Based on this, the next hypothesis of this study is as follows:

H_2: Knowledge of corruption adversely affects the acceptance of corruption.

Gender differences in corruption tolerance have been consistently documented across cultures. Women demonstrate a lower propensity to engage in or tolerate corrupt practices (Dollar et al. 2001; Swamy et al. 2001), potentially due to higher risk aversion (Paternoster and Simpson 1996) and a stronger internalisation of ethical norms. Experimental studies reveal nuanced dynamics, with women showing particular intolerance when corruption harms collective welfare (Guerra and Zhuravleva 2022). On this basis, the third hypothesis of this study is as follows:

H_3: Females exhibit a lower tolerance for corruption than males.

Age-related patterns in corruption attitudes reflect broader life-course developments. Theoretical frameworks suggest ageing correlates with increased conventionality and risk aversion (Hirschi and Gottfredson, 2000), with empirical evidence showing older individuals are more likely to view corrupt acts as unjustifiable (Torgler and Valev 2006). However, education moderates this relationship, as younger, educated individuals can display stronger anti-corruption attitudes than older, less-educated counterparts (Mangafić and Veselinović 2020). This complex interplay informs the fourth hypothesis, as follows:

H_4: Age adversely affects the acceptance of corruption.

Income is also another demographic factor that may influence corrupt behaviour. Income can have a mixed impact. Some studies suggest that lower-income individuals may be more tolerant

of corruption if they perceive it as a means to access services or opportunities that are otherwise unavailable to them (Lambsdorff et al. 2004).

However, higher-income individuals may also engage in corrupt behaviour due to increased resources and influence. Treisman (2007) and Gundlach and Paldam (2009) argue that there exists a long-term negative relationship between income levels and corruption, with Husted (1999) providing empirical support by indicating that countries with higher per capita gross national product tend to experience lower corruption levels.

A recent study by Basharat (2019) examines the relationship between income inequality and corruption attitudes. It finds that higher levels of income inequality are associated with greater tolerance for corruption, suggesting that socioeconomic factors shape attitudes towards corruption. Thus, the fifth hypothesis is as follows:

H_5: Income adversely affects the acceptance of corrupt conduct.

Another demographic factor that may impact corrupt behaviour is the level of education. Education emerges as perhaps the most consistent anti-corruption factor across studies. Its transformative power operates through multiple pathways: increasing awareness of legal rights and procedures (Glaeser and Saks 2006), fostering critical thinking to challenge corrupt norms (Lambsdorff 2002), and instilling ethical frameworks from early childhood (Birhan et al. 2021). While the effects of education manifest gradually (Sanjaya and Trifena 2023), its long-term impact on shaping values and behaviours justifies the final hypothesis of this study, as folllows:

H_6: Level of education adversely affects the acceptance of corrupt conduct.

The Indonesian context presents unique cultural dimensions that shape corruption dynamics. Local practices like gratification (small gifts for services) have become normalised despite their corrupt nature (Supit et al. 2023), requiring culturally sensitive interventions. Institutional responses like the National Integrity System (Lukito 2016) combine structural reforms with behavioural approaches targeting individual decision-making (Prabowo 2014). This comprehensive perspective recognises corruption as both a systemic and cultural challenge, necessitating multilayered solutions that address Indonesia's regional diversity while maintaining consistent ethical standards across jurisdictions.

METHODOLOGY

Questionnaires were distributed to gather data and assess participants' attitudes toward corrupt behaviour, knowledge of various forms of corruption, and legal ramifications. A total of 1,200 questionnaires were disseminated among participants in Indonesia in 2018, spanning different educational levels (high school, undergraduate, and postgraduate) and covering three geographical regions, namely, the Western region (Java and Sumatra), the Central region (Bali, Kalimantan, and Sulawesi), and the Eastern region (Maluku and Papua). Within each geographical area, 400 questionnaires were distributed, further categorised by educational level as follows: High school (300), Undergraduate (600), and Postgraduate (300).

While efforts were made to encourage participation and minimise non-response, seven of the 1,067 returned questionnaires were incomplete and unusable, resulting in a response rate of 83.33% (1,060 out of 1,200). The non-response rate of approximately 17% may be attributed to factors like participants' busy schedules, lack of interest or motivation, logistical challenges, and personal commitments or unavailability during the survey period.

The sample selection for this research involved participants from various educational levels, including high school, undergraduate, and postgraduate students. Participants in the Western area (Sumatra and Java) were drawn from five high schools and four universities. In the Central area (Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Bali), participants were selected from five high schools and four universities. Similarly, in the Eastern region (Maluku and Papua), participants were chosen from five high schools and four universities. The criteria for participant inclusion were active student status, completion of the first year of study, and willingness to participate in the research. This multi-level approach ensured representation across different educational backgrounds and geographic regions, enhancing the diversity and generalisability of the findings.

The questionnaire employed in this study consists of two primary sections: one assesses attitudes toward corruption, and the other evaluates knowledge about corruption in Indonesia. The first section comprises thirteen questions related to seven dimensions of corrupt behaviour. Participants respond on a Likert scale ranging from one, signifying "very unacceptable", to five, meaning "very acceptable", with three indicating "neutral". Lower scores correspond to lower levels of tolerance for specific corrupt behaviours. The questionnaire utilised in this research is available upon request from the researcher.

The second section assesses knowledge about corruption through thirty questions designed to gauge participants' understanding of various forms of corruption as defined by Indonesian corruption regulations, as well as their awareness of high-profile corruption cases involving politicians and public officials in Indonesia, which received extensive coverage in print and broadcast media. Higher scores indicate a better grasp of corruption-related matters.

The section measuring acceptance levels across different dimensions of corruption was adapted from Truex (2011) and encompasses seven corruption dimensions: minor vs grand corruption, cash gifts vs bribery, private vs public figure corruptors, politicians vs government employees, deserved vs illicit gifts, giver vs receiver of bribes, and favouritism (friends/family vs non-friends/non-family). Some questions from Truex (2011) were translated into Indonesian and adjusted to the Indonesian context.

The section assessing participants' knowledge of various types of corruption and the associated legal consequences was meticulously developed to align with Indonesian corruption laws (Indonesian Corruption Law; Free Anti-Corruption in Indonesia) and was informed by comprehensive research on corruption cases investigated by KPK. To enhance the questionnaire's content and face validity, the researcher engaged in intensive discussions with two esteemed academicians from the Faculty of Law at Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia, who specialise in Indonesian corruption law, and one professional from the KPK. Their valuable insights and expertise were instrumental in refining the questionnaire, ensuring its alignment with the most current Indonesian regulations regarding corruption and gratification.

Following the expert consultations, the questionnaire underwent careful revisions to address the suggestions and recommendations provided. The revisions focused on clarifying definitions, refining questions, and ensuring alignment with Indonesia's legal framework and prevailing anti-corruption efforts. Subsequently, the revised questionnaire was subjected to a pilot test involving thirty-five participants. During the pilot test, participants were asked to review each sentence of the questionnaire and provide feedback on its clarity, comprehensibility, and relevance. Their input was invaluable in further refining the questionnaire's quality and readability, enhancing its validity and reliability.

Through a collaborative effort with experts in Indonesian corruption law and professionals from the KPK, coupled with rigorous pilot testing, the questionnaire was refined to ensure its effectiveness in eliciting accurate participant responses. The iterative process of consultation, revision, and pilot testing played a crucial role in enhancing the questionnaire's content validity, face validity, and overall quality.

Following the assessment of content and face validity, the reliability of the research indicators was evaluated using Stata, employing Cronbach's alpha test. The reliability test yielded a scale reliability coefficient of 0.88, indicating a high level of internal consistency among the research indicators. This coefficient suggests that the research instruments are reliable in measuring the intended constructs. Additionally, the instrument's validity was assessed using pairwise correlation analysis, which revealed significant correlation coefficients ranging from approximately 0.45 to 0.69. These findings further support the instrument's validity, indicating significant relationships among the measured variables. The validity and reliability test results are available upon request from the researcher.

A comprehensive introduction was provided to participants before data collection to ensure ethical standards were upheld throughout the research, especially regarding participant consent and confidentiality. This introduction detailed the study's objectives and underscored the confidentiality of participant responses. The questionnaire preamble explicitly stated participants' right to decline participation and assured them of the confidential use of their data for research purposes only. Additionally, measures were taken to safeguard participant privacy during data collection and analysis, ensuring the secure handling and storage of sensitive information. In conclusion, the study was conducted in accordance with stringent ethical principles, emphasising participant consent, confidentiality, and well-being.

The study employed a range of statistical analyses to fulfil its research objectives effectively. Univariate analyses, including independent sample *t*-tests and paired sample *t*-tests, were utilised to examine regional and demographic variations in tolerance scores and knowledge scores related to corruption. These analyses allowed for a comprehensive exploration of differences in attitudes toward corrupt behaviour among participants from different regions and demographic groups.

In addition to univariate analyses, multivariate analyses were conducted using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression. The choice of OLS regression was deliberate and aligned with the research objectives, as it enabled the examination of the association between knowledge about corruption and specific demographic factors with attitudes toward corrupt behaviour. The OLS regression model outlined in the methods section included independent variables representing knowledge about corruption and some demographic factors such as gender, age, education level, and income, while the dependent variable was participants' attitudes toward corrupt behaviour.

The inclusion of OLS regression in the analysis allowed for identifying significant predictors of attitudes toward corruption, controlling for potential confounding variables. By incorporating both univariate and multivariate analyses, this study provided a nuanced understanding of the factors influencing attitudes toward corruption among participants in Indonesia. The econometric model of OLS regression is as follows:

$$\text{Attitude toward corrupt behaviour} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Knowledge about corruption}) + \beta_2(\text{Gender}) + \beta_3(\text{Age}) + \beta_4\ (\text{Education level}) + \beta_5(\text{Income level}) + \varepsilon$$

where β_0 is the intercept term, β_1, β_2, β_3, β_4, and β_5 represent the coefficients for knowledge about corruption, gender, age, education level, and income level, respectively, and ε is the error term.

The novelty of this study's methodology lies in its regionally stratified sampling approach combined with a questionnaire specifically adapted to the Indonesian legal and cultural context. Unlike previous studies that often adopt generalised instruments, this research developed unique items informed by Indonesia's corruption laws and prominent corruption cases, with input from experts at Gadjah Mada University's Faculty of Law and KPK.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Description of Participants

Table 1 provides an overview of the study's participant characteristics, including their geographical distribution and demographic traits (gender and education level). Out of the 1,060 participants who completed the questionnaire in full, the distribution across geographical regions is as follows: 37.8% reside in the Western part of Indonesia, 26.3% in the Central area, and the remaining 35.8% in the Eastern region. Regarding gender, 46.6% of the participants are male, while 53.4% are female. Regarding education levels, 45.7% of the participants are in senior high school, 30.9% are at the undergraduate level, and the remaining 23.4% are pursuing post-graduate studies.

Table 1: Description of participants

	Number	%
Geographical area of Indonesia		
Western region	401	37.83
Central region	279	26.32
Eastern region	380	35.85
Total	1,060	100.00
Demographic factor		
Gender		
Male	494	46.60
Female	566	53.40
Total	1,060	100.00
Education level		
Senior high school	484	45.67
Undergraduate	328	30.94
Post-graduate	248	23.39
Total	1,060	100.00

Knowledge of Corruption and Acceptance Level Against Corrupt Behaviour

The study also explored participants' understanding of various forms of corruption in accordance with Indonesian law and their familiarity with prominent corruption cases handled by the KPK that received extensive media coverage in Indonesia.

Table 2 provides an overview of participants' knowledge levels regarding corruption, categorised by geographical distribution, gender, and education level. Participants' knowledge levels were assessed based on their correct responses to thirty questions presented in the questionnaire, with scores ranging from 0% to 100%. On average, participants achieved a score of 53.29%. These results suggest that participants' overall knowledge levels remain relatively modest, falling considerably short of the maximum possible score.

Regarding geographical distribution, it is noteworthy that participants residing in the Western part of Indonesia tended to exhibit higher knowledge levels (61.62%) compared to their counterparts in the Central region (58.55%) and the Eastern region (41.93%). In terms of gender, female participants demonstrated a higher average knowledge score (54.51%) than their male counterparts (51.87%). An analysis of education levels indicated that participants with higher levels of education tended to possess a better knowledge about corruption.

Table 2 also presents a comparative analysis of mean knowledge scores among participants based on geographical distribution, gender, and education level. The independent sample t-tests revealed significant differences in knowledge levels based on geographical distribution (Western vs Central; Central vs Eastern; and Western vs Eastern). Notably, participants from the Eastern part of Indonesia exhibited lower knowledge scores, while those residing in the Western part tended to have the highest scores.

Furthermore, the findings in Table 2 indicate that female participants have a higher knowledge level than male participants, with statistical significance at the 5% level. These results align with the observations made by Guerra and Zhuravleva (2022), and Dollar et al. (2001), who also noted that women typically exhibit greater awareness and knowledge. One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that women often have heightened exposure to both positive and negative influences from an early age. This occurs naturally within Eastern and Indonesian cultures, where women are traditionally nurtured to exercise greater discernment between right and wrong throughout their lives, benefiting from increased protection and guidance relative to men.

The findings also revealed a positive correlation between the education levels of participants and their knowledge about corruption. Participants with higher levels of education demonstrated a greater understanding of corruption. This observation is supported by the results of the mean difference test, which indicated a significant disparity at the 1% confidence level. These findings underscore the necessity of disseminating knowledge concerning various forms of corruption and their legal consequences to communities in Indonesia, particularly in the Central and Eastern regions.

Additionally, these results highlight the importance of enhancing educational efforts, mainly through formal education channels. In Indonesia, the integration of corruption-related knowledge into the curriculum, both at the secondary and university levels, appears to be lacking. The knowledge demonstrated by participants is more likely acquired outside the formal classroom setting, such as through news media, television, newspapers, or the internet.

Table 2: Knowledge level of participants regarding corruption

	Geographical area of Indonesia				Gender		Education level		
	Whole	Western	Central	Eastern	Female	Male	High school	Undergraduate	Postgraduate
Knowledge (%)	53.29	61.62	58.55	41.93	54.51	51.87	47.81	52.57	66.42
Mean-comparison: Independent sample *t*-test									
Western vs Central		1.87*							
Central vs Eastern			9.41**						
Western vs Eastern				15.24**					
Female vs male					1.91*				
High school vs undergraduate							–3.21**		
Undergraduate vs postgraduate								–7.78**	
High school vs postgraduate									–11.45**

Note: *, ** indicate significant mean differences at the 1% and 5%.

The study also evaluated participants' intolerance towards various actions that contribute to corruption. The dimensions of corruption types used in this study were adapted from the research instrument employed in Truex (2011). To accommodate the specific context in Indonesia, the questions from Truex (2011) were translated into Indonesian, and some questions were modified to align with the Indonesian context. The various dimensions of corrupt acts presented to participants are detailed in Table 3. Participants' tolerance levels for these corrupt actions were measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, with lower scores indicating lower tolerance for the specified types of corruption.

The results regarding the degree of intolerance towards various types of corruption are presented in Table 3. The study also conducted separate tests to compare the average intolerance levels across the multiple dimensions of corruption, taking into consideration geographical regions, gender, and education levels.

One initial test aimed to determine if there were differences in participants' average tolerance levels for grand corruption involving cash (Q1) compared to petty gifts. Participants displayed a relatively low tolerance level, with scores approaching the lowest range (between 1.31 and 2.25). Based on geographical aspects, it was observed that participants living in regions where grand corruption involving cash was compared to petty gifts tended to exhibit this pattern, with significance levels of 10%, particularly among participants in the Western region of Indonesia and males.

Concerning education levels, participants with university-level education (undergraduate and postgraduate) tended to display greater intolerance than participants with lower levels of education (high school). Similar trends were likely present when comparing corruption dimensions involving cash and petty gifts. These results indicate that participants in the study generally exhibited lower acceptance of grand and petty cash corruption than petty corruption involving small gifts.

Another test sought to assess differences in participants' acceptance levels regarding corruption dimensions perpetrated by politicians during unfair recruitment processes (Q4) compared to similar unfair practices carried out by private individuals (Q5). The results indicated that participants tended to be more tolerant of corruption dimensions involving unfair recruitment processes conducted by private entities rather than politicians, with a significance level of 1% observed across various geographical regions, genders, and education levels.

A similar pattern was also evident when comparing corrupt acts of politicians versus bureaucrats. These findings suggest that participants in this study offered distinct assessments when corruption was perpetrated by politicians, who are generally public figures, compared to private individuals.

The results, detailing participants' levels of intolerance for various forms of corruption, are presented in Table 3. The table provides insights into how participants collectively viewed and tolerated each dimension of corrupt behaviour. Furthermore, the study conducted thorough analyses to compare the average intolerance levels across different dimensions of corruption, considering factors such as participants' geographical locations, genders, and education levels. Notably, one test compared participants' tolerance for grand corruption involving cash to that for petty gifts, revealing that, on average, participants exhibited relatively low tolerance levels for both forms of corruption.

Table 3: Level of tolerance towards various types of corruption

Forms of corruption	Geographical areas of Indonesia				Gender		Education level		
	Whole	Western	Central	Eastern	Female	Male	High school	Undergraduate	Postgraduate
Q1. Grand cash	1.80	1.49	1.58	2.19	1.69	1.86	1.96	1.75	1.31
Q2. Petty cash	1.79	1.56	1.65	2.11	1.68	1.92	1.93	1.83	1.44
Q3. Petty gift	1.81	1.56	1.59	2.25	1.76	1.95	2.04	1.89	1.40
Q4. Politician job	2.03	1.98	1.81	2.17	1.89	2.18	2.07	1.98	2.00
Q5. Private job	1.79	1.64	1.57	2.08	1.71	1.90	1.93	1.85	1.44
Q6. Bureaucrat job	1.82	1.59	1.63	2.16	1.73	1.93	1.94	1.89	1.44
Q7. Public contract	1.75	1.49	1.58	2.10	1.69	1.82	1.89	1.79	1.37
Q8. Private contract	1.85	1.57	1.67	2.24	1.71	2.02	1.91	1.95	1.58
Q9. Favouritism contract	2.15	1.84	2.05	2.54	2.04	2.29	2.21	2.33	1.77
Q10. Deserved giver	2.31	2.17	2.21	2.51	2.16	2.49	2.26	2.42	2.29
Q11. Illicit giver	1.97	1.92	1.97	2.03	1.89	2.07	1.97	2.10	1.79
Q12. Illicit receiver	1.77	1.59	1.74	1.97	1.69	1.86	1.89	1.77	1.50
Q13. Favouritism ticket	1.71	1.65	1.74	1.76	1.64	1.79	1.69	1.70	1.76
Mean-comparison: Paired-sample t-test									
Q1. Grand cash vs Q3. Petty gift	−0.22	−1.61*	−0.26	−0.68	−1.19	−1.59*	−1.35*	−2.56***	−2.51***
Q2. Petty cash	−0.81	−0.05	1.26	−1.43*	−0.35	−0.83	−2.47***	−1.95**	1.15

(*continued on next page*)

Table 3: (*continued*)

Forms of corruption	Geographical areas of Indonesia				Gender		Education level		
	Whole	Western	Central	Eastern	Female	Male	High school	Undergraduate	Postgraduate
Q3. Petty gift									
Q4. Politician job	6.38***	7.30***	3.81***	1.37*	4.48***	4.59***	2.55***	2.25***	7.76***
Q5. Private job									
Q5. Private job	–0.85	1.91**	–1.22	–4.48*	–0.55	–0.66	–0.29	–1.27	–0.05
Q6. Bureau-crat job									
Q4. Politician job	5.52***	7.84***	2.62***	0.21	3.79***	4.04***	2.28**	1.29*	7.05***
Q6. Bureau-crat job									
Q7. Public contract	–2.93***	–1.84**	–1.78**	–1.90**	–0.32	–3.58***	–0.15	–3.14***	–3.68***
Q8. Private contract									
Q9. Favouritism contract	11.54***	4.44***	3.88***	10.61***	8.17***	8.17***	9.13***	8.93***	0.10
Q13. Favouritism ticket									
Q10. Deserved giver	8.83***	5.43***	2.82***	6.55***	5.76***	6.73***	4.89***	4.49***	6.82***
Q11. Illicit giver									
Q11. Illicit giver	5.29***	6.72***	3.07***	0.79	4.08***	3.43***	1.17	5.24***	5.61***
Q12. Illicit receiver									

Note: ***, **, and * indicate significant mean differences at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels.

However, significant differences in tolerance emerged when considering geographical regions, with a particular emphasis on the Western part of Indonesia and gender disparities. Additionally, participants with higher levels of education tended to display less tolerance for corrupt practices. Another analysis focused on participants' acceptance levels for corruption dimensions involving politicians orchestrating unfair recruitment processes versus similar actions carried out by private individuals. The findings indicated that participants were more tolerant of corruption involving private entities than actions directed by politicians. This trend held across various geographical regions, gender groups, and education levels.

Participants were also inquired about their tolerance for different types of corrupt practices, including corruption in public contract bidding processes (Q7) versus private contract bidding processes (Q8). The responses reflected a general lack of tolerance for both forms of corruption, with participants assigning scores ranging from 1.37 to 2.24 on average. Notably, the mean difference tests unveiled a noteworthy disparity, indicating that participants exhibited a stronger aversion to corruption in public contract bidding processes compared to private contract bidding processes. This divergence in tolerance levels was statistically significant, with significance levels of 1% and 5%.

To sum up, the study comprehensively explored how participants perceived and tolerated diverse forms of corrupt behaviour. Through adaptations for the Indonesian context, using a Likert scale, and analyses of tolerance levels based on geographical location, gender, and education, the research uncovered valuable insights into the factors influencing individuals' attitudes toward corruption.

The Association Between Demographic Factors and Corruption Knowledge with Tolerance Level Towards Corruption

The study also delved into the influence of knowledge levels and various demographic factors (gender, age, education level, and income) on the tolerance levels toward corrupt behaviour. The findings, summarised in Table 4, were derived from OLS regression, with the dependent variable being the degree of acceptance exhibited by participants towards various forms of corruption.

Recent research has provided valuable insights into the relationship between knowledge about corruption and attitudes toward corrupt behaviour, findings that resonate with the results of this study. Consistent with studies such as De Sousa et al. (2022), Hunady (2019), Agerberg (2019), and Ferraz and Finan (2011), the finding of this study reveals a negative association between knowledge level and tolerance toward corrupt behaviour among participants in Indonesia. Specifically, the findings indicate that individuals with higher levels of knowledge about corruption tend to express more negative attitudes toward corrupt practices. This aligns with the notion that informed citizens are less likely to tolerate corrupt behaviour.

Furthermore, this study underscores the importance of contextual factors in shaping attitudes toward corruption, as highlighted in research by Agerberg (2019) and Sanjaya and Trifena (2023). While knowledge of its legal, ethical, and societal implications about corruption plays a significant role in influencing attitudes, the impact can be mediated by factors such as institutional trust and exposure to anti-corruption messages. In the Indonesian context, where issues of corruption are prevalent and public awareness campaigns are ongoing, the negative association between knowledge level and tolerance toward corrupt behaviour may be particularly pronounced. This suggests that efforts to enhance knowledge about corruption through education and awareness campaigns could effectively foster a culture of integrity and combating corruption in Indonesia.

The outcomes indicate a noteworthy and negative correlation between the level of knowledge about corruption and the acceptance of corrupt behaviour. In simpler terms, participants with a more extensive understanding of corruption-related matters displayed lower tolerance towards various types of corrupt actions. As people become more informed about corruption, their willingness to tolerate or accept corrupt behaviour diminishes. This supports the finding of Mangafić and Veselinović (2020) that individuals with higher levels of education tend to have more negative attitudes toward corruption. Education is a significant factor influencing perceptions of corruption, with higher-educated individuals being more likely to condemn corrupt behaviour.

The finding also aligns with the conclusions drawn by Treisman (2000) and Lambsdorff (2002). This trend is attributable to well-informed individuals, who possess a comprehensive understanding of corruption encompassing its repercussions and ethical dimensions and are more inclined to perceive its detrimental impact on society, the economy, and public confidence in institutions. Moreover, they are more prone to endorse anti-corruption initiatives and are less accommodating of involvement in or endorsement of corrupt activities.

Furthermore, when examining various demographic factors, it was evident that education and income levels exhibited a negative association with the acceptance of corruption. In essence, participants with higher educational and income levels demonstrated reduced acceptance of various corrupt acts. These results align with the findings of Truex (2011), who reached a similar conclusion regarding the link between higher education, income, and lower tolerance for corruption.

Higher levels of education are consistently associated with reduced tolerance for corruption. Well-educated individuals tend to possess a more profound awareness of the detrimental consequences of corruption on society and the economy (Sanjaya and Trifena 2023; Treisman 2000). They are often guided by ethical values prioritising honesty, fairness, and integrity, directly opposing corrupt practices. Additionally, education equips individuals with critical thinking skills, empowering them to question authority and scrutinise government actions, leading to a more critical stance on corruption (Lambsdorff 2002).

Empirical research has shown that educated individuals are more likely to actively participate in anti-corruption efforts, such as advocating for policy reforms and supporting transparency initiatives (Dollar et al. 2001). For instance, community-based educational campaigns targeting regions with higher tolerance for corruption can focus on raising awareness about the societal costs of corrupt practices and promoting civic responsibility. Programmes like the Transparency Education Initiative in Southeast Asia demonstrate how integrating anti-corruption topics into school curricula can lead to long-term attitudinal changes (Binder et al. 2023). These efforts not only instil ethical values but also foster an informed citizenry equipped to challenge corruption actively. Their influence on social norms can further contribute to the overall reduction in tolerance for corruption within their communities.

Higher levels of education are also often associated with a diminished tolerance for corruption. This correlation can be attributed to various factors. Well-educated individuals tend to be more aware of the detrimental consequences of corruption on society and the economy (Husted 1999; Agerberg 2019). They are more likely to understand that corrupt practices divert resources from essential public services, hinder economic growth, and perpetuate inequality (Treisman 2000).

Additionally, education fosters ethical values and a sense of social responsibility, instilling honesty, fairness, and integrity principles. Educated individuals are more informed and equipped with critical thinking skills, enabling them to critically evaluate government actions and advocate for transparency and accountability (Rothstein and Teorell 2008; Munro and Kirya 2020). Furthermore, higher education levels often lead to active participation in anti-corruption efforts, such as policy advocacy and support for anti-corruption organisations (Svensson 2005). In summary, education plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes toward corruption, with well-educated individuals typically exhibiting lower tolerance and greater engagement in anti-corruption activities.

Education and perceptions of corruption significantly influence attitudes toward governance, particularly in contexts shaped by regional disparities and political dynamics. Truex (2011) argued that education fosters political engagement and critical governance evaluations by equipping citizens with the tools to assess government performance. However, as Jiang and Zhang (2021) highlight, the interaction between education and corruption perceptions varies across urban and rural settings. Higher education amplifies sensitivity to corruption in rural areas, leading to lower political trust when misconduct is perceived. Conversely, education uniformly erodes political trust in urban areas regardless of perceived corruption levels. These findings resonate with the results of this study, which reveal regional disparities in how education impacts attitudes toward corruption, with rural populations demonstrating heightened responsiveness to government integrity.

Moreover, Jiang and Zhang (2021: 13) note that such disparities align with the "Asian exceptionalism" thesis, where cultural values like Confucianism emphasise political loyalty and order. Rural elites, for instance, tend to evaluate governments more critically when corruption is evident but reward integrity with greater trust. This dynamic offers critical insights into the

"authoritarian resilience" puzzle, where governments in some Asian contexts maintain high political trust by controlling public perceptions of corruption (Yang and Tang 2010; Nathan 2017). Together, these findings underscore the importance of tailoring anti-corruption initiatives and governance reforms to regional and cultural contexts, leveraging education and transparency to build public trust in both rural and urban areas.

Table 4 presents the findings from OLS regression analysis, exploring the impact of knowledge levels and demographic factors (gender, age, education level, and income) on participants' tolerance levels toward corrupt behaviour. The results indicate a negative correlation between knowledge about corruption and the acceptance of corrupt practices. Moreover, education and income levels show a negative association with the acceptance of corruption, while gender demonstrates a positive correlation, with female participants exhibiting lower acceptance levels than males. Interestingly, age did not significantly affect the acceptance of corruption statistically.

The findings emphasise a significant negative relationship between knowledge of corruption and tolerance toward corrupt behaviour. This suggests that individuals with greater awareness and understanding of corruption are less likely to justify or accept corrupt actions. This relationship can be explained by the broader awareness of the ethical, legal, and societal implications of corruption among informed individuals. As highlighted by De Sousa et al. (2022), knowledge of official ethical standards and legal norms reinforces individuals' ability to recognise corruption as a deviation from accepted societal values. Furthermore, the findings align with the findings of Hunady (2019), suggesting that increased access to information—whether through formal education or digital platforms—empowers individuals to critically evaluate corruption and its consequences. This expanded understanding not only reduces tolerance for corruption but also fosters support for anti-corruption measures, thereby, underscoring the critical role of knowledge in shaping attitudes and driving behavioural change.

In summary, while the study underscores the negative correlation between corruption knowledge and acceptance of corrupt behaviour, it also emphasises the pivotal role of education in shaping attitudes toward corruption. Addressing these findings underscores the importance of anti-corruption education initiatives and policies to effectively promote transparency, integrity, and accountability in combating corruption.

The findings further indicate that gender positively correlated with the tolerance for corrupt behaviour. This aligns with the patterns observed in Table 4, emphasising that female participants demonstrated reduced acceptance levels compared to their male counterparts. These results are consistent with the research conducted by Dollar et al. (2001), Truex (2011), and Guerra and Zhuravleva (2022), which supported the notion that women generally have a diminished inclination toward engaging in corrupt activities. This trend is also related to cultural norms that often emphasise ethical behaviour and integrity for women, as well as the correlation between higher levels of education and reduced acceptance of corruption, which is observed among both genders. One plausible explanation is that women, being less frequently represented in positions of power or decision-making roles, encounter fewer opportunities to engage in corrupt practices, which shapes their perceptions and tolerance levels. Additionally, societal expectations and traditional gender norms that ascribe greater moral responsibility to women could contribute to their stronger aversion to corruption. This suggests that gender differences in tolerance for corruption may stem from individual values and broader structural and cultural influences.

Table 4: Regression findings examining the relationship between corruption knowledge level, demographic factors, and tolerance for corrupt behaviour

	Tolerance level towards many types of corrupt behaviour												
	Grand cash	Petty cash	Petty gift	Politician job	Private job	Bureaucrat job	Public contract	Private contract	Favouritism contract	Deserved giver	Illicit giver	Illicit receiver	Favouritism ticket
Knowledge on corruption	–1.940***	–1.130***	–1.490***	–1.110***	–1.370***	–1.680***	–1.750***	–1.400***	–1.480***	–0.720***	–0.850***	–1.150***	–0.470***
Gender	0.070	0.220***	0.220***	0.250***	0.160**	0.160**	0.080	0.270***	0.220***	0.300***	0.170**	0.140**	0.130**
Age	–0.030	–0.010	0.050*	0.040	–0.010	–0.010	0.010	–0.001	–0.030	0.010	–0.060**	0.001	0.030
Education level	–0.090*	–0.080*	–0.120***	0.08	–0.080*	–0.050	–0.040	0.040	–0.002	–0.150**	–0.010	–0.040	–0.070*
Income	–0.070***	–0.100***	–0.090***	–0.030	–0.060**	–0.060**	–0.080***	–0.110***	–0.110***	–0.090***	–0.020	–0.090***	0.003
F-value	35.42***	28.41***	38.43***	9.95***	22.46***	28.48***	28.18***	21.93***	25.58***	9.02***	6.94***	19.11***	3.20***
R^2	0.20	0.17	0.21	0.06	0.14	0.17	0.17	0.13	0.15	0.06	0.05	0.12	0.02

Note: ***, **, and * indicate significant mean differences at the 1%, 5%, and 10% levels; N = 1,060.

This study also reveals a negative correlation between income and tolerance towards corruption, aligning with prior research by Basharat (2019) and Husted (1999). This consistency suggests that individuals with higher income levels tend to exhibit lower tolerance towards corrupt practices. One possible explanation is that individuals in higher income brackets are less financially vulnerable and, therefore, less likely to view corruption as a necessary means of overcoming economic challenges. Moreover, higher-income individuals often have greater access to education and information, which enhances their awareness of the broader societal costs of corruption and reinforces their opposition to it. This underscores the significance of economic factors in shaping attitudes towards corruption, as financial stability may reduce the perceived personal benefits of corrupt behaviour and amplify the moral and ethical considerations against it.

The regression analysis conducted to assess the influence of age on tolerance levels toward corruption yielded intriguing results. Surprisingly, the findings did not reveal a statistically significant impact of age on the acceptance of corruption. This finding contrasts with the results of previous studies by Torgler and Valev (2006) and Mangafić and Veselinović (2020), which suggested that age influences attitudes towards corruption, particularly indicating that younger individuals and those with higher education tend to hold more negative attitudes towards corruption. A possible explanation for the lack of significance in this study could be attributed to Indonesia's unique cultural or societal dynamics, where generational differences in attitudes toward corruption might be less pronounced due to shared socio-economic challenges. Additionally, it is possible that access to information and awareness campaigns targeting corruption have reached both younger and older demographics equally, thereby, reducing the variance in attitudes across age groups. These nuances suggest that factors other than age, such as education and exposure to anti-corruption efforts, may play a more pivotal role in shaping tolerance levels.

This outcome may also be attributed to several factors that warrant consideration. Firstly, it is worth noting that a substantial portion of this study's respondents fell within a similar age range. This skewed distribution of age groups within the sample could limit the variability necessary to detect significant statistical effects. In other words, the relative homogeneity of age among participants may have masked any underlying age-related trends in corruption tolerance. Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge the multifaceted nature of factors influencing tolerance for corruption. While undoubtedly influential, age operates within a complex interplay of demographic, cultural, and socioeconomic variables. The impact of age on corruption tolerance may be more nuanced and contingent upon interactions with these other factors. As such, future research may benefit from exploring these intricate relationships and considering how they collectively shape attitudes toward corruption.

These findings provide a strong basis for expanding the theoretical frameworks linking education and anti-corruption attitudes. By demonstrating that education influences not only knowledge but also ethical behaviour and civic engagement, this study enriches social learning theory (Bandura 1977; Grusec 1992) as it applies to corruption tolerance. It emphasises that education does not merely impart information but also shapes individuals' social and moral frameworks, contributing to a culture of accountability and integrity. Furthermore, the results align with institutional theory (Marquis and Tilcsik 2016) highlighting how education acts as a vehicle for embedding societal norms and values that discourage corrupt practices. The findings suggest a need to incorporate a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between education systems and broader institutional reforms in theoretical models addressing corruption.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings offer actionable strategies for corruption mitigation, emphasising the critical role of education in reducing tolerance for corrupt practices. Given the demonstrated link between awareness and decreased corruption acceptance, policymakers should prioritise integrating civic education into national curricula while enhancing government transparency initiatives. Targeted educational programmes in underserved regions, coupled with scholarship schemes to improve higher education access, could significantly alter perceptions of corruption, particularly in areas with limited opportunities.

Gender-sensitive approaches merit special attention, as the results confirm women's lower propensity to tolerate corruption. Increasing female representation in public administration and law enforcement through inclusive recruitment policies could strengthen institutional integrity. Regionally tailored strategies are equally vital, requiring local governments to develop context-specific anti-corruption measures that address unique socioeconomic disparities.

Institutional support for the KPK remains paramount. Strengthening whistleblower protections and expanding secure reporting channels would encourage public participation in exposing malfeasance. Complementary economic policies—including fair wage structures, poverty alleviation programmes, and social safety nets—could reduce vulnerabilities to corrupt practices by addressing underlying inequalities.

These recommendations align with Indonesia's National Strategy for Corruption Prevention (Stranas PK) by augmenting structural reforms like the One-Map Policy with behavioural interventions. Existing initiatives such as integrity zones and e-government systems would benefit from parallel investments in public awareness campaigns and gender-balanced governance structures. Periodic legislative reviews should ensure anti-corruption regulations evolve with emerging challenges, while continuous monitoring mechanisms would enable evidence-based policy refinement. Ultimately, a dual focus on institutional strengthening and societal attitude change offers the most promising pathway for sustainable anti-corruption progress.

CONCLUSION

Corruption continues to pose a significant challenge for Indonesia, ranking among the highest in ASEAN nations despite its economic potential, as noted by Transparency International (2023). While the establishment of the KPK in 2003 marked important progress, this study provides new insights into societal attitudes by examining tolerance levels, knowledge about corruption, and demographic correlations across different regions. The findings reveal striking regional disparities, with Western Indonesia demonstrating both lower tolerance for corrupt practices and a better understanding of legal frameworks compared to Central and Eastern areas. Particularly significant is the inverse relationship uncovered between knowledge about corruption and its acceptance, a pattern most evident among more educated and affluent groups. These findings strongly suggest that awareness campaigns and educational initiatives could play a pivotal role in anti-corruption efforts, especially when tailored to address regional socioeconomic disparities.

The study's limitations, including its reliance on self-reported attitudes rather than observed behaviour and the need for deeper cultural analysis, point to valuable directions for future research. Experimental designs could help bridge the gap between expressed attitudes and actual decision-making, while longitudinal studies might track how attitudes evolve alongside

anti-corruption policies. Comparative research across ASEAN nations could help contextualise Indonesia's progress, and sector-specific investigations could yield targeted insights for high-risk areas like healthcare and education procurement. The growing role of digital platforms in shaping public engagement with transparency issues also merits dedicated exploration.

Ultimately, these findings underscore that addressing Indonesia's corruption challenge requires comprehensive strategies that account for regional variations, knowledge gaps, and structural inequalities. By grounding anti-corruption policies in these empirical insights while addressing the identified research gaps, Indonesia can strengthen its framework for integrity while contributing to a broader understanding of corruption tolerance in developing economies. The path forward lies in balancing institutional reforms with targeted educational initiatives and continuous monitoring of evolving public attitudes.

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COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

This study followed ethical protocols for questionnaire-based research as per Universitas Gadjah Mada's academic guidelines and Indonesian social science norms. Participants were fully informed of the study's objectives and their rights, with guaranteed anonymity and data security compliant with Indonesia's Personal Data Protection Law.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The author declares that no financial conflicts exist. Funding was provided solely by the Konosuke Matsushita Research Grant, Japan, without involvement in study execution.

NOTE

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