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Corruption in Indonesia: A Culturally Embedded Deviant Behavior and Efforts for Its Eradication

Sunarso[1*], Rohid Arya Wiratama[1]
[1]Indonesian, Public Administration, PDKU Ponorogo, Universitas Merdeka Malang
*Corresponding author: sunarso@unmer.ac.id

Abstract.

Corruption in Indonesia has become a systemic and structural phenomenon deeply embedded within the fabric of society, leading many to describe it as a *culture of corruption*. This study explores the dynamics of corrupt behavior through a systematic literature review, focusing on empirical research and contemporary theoretical frameworks. The findings reveal that corruption in Indonesia has historical roots dating back to the pre-independence era and persists today. Rather than being an inherent cultural trait, corruption represents a deviant behavior that has become normalized through habitual practice and social tolerance. The relationship between culture and corruption is evident in the way corruption manifests as a social phenomenon grounded in cultural structures and paternalistic-clientelist mindsets, where loyalty to authority figures often takes precedence over integrity. The persistence of corruption is reinforced by cultural norms that tend to be permissive toward unethical conduct. This study underscores the need for a comprehensive anti-corruption movement involving educational institutions, local communities, traditional authorities, the media, public figures, and exemplary leadership among government officials and politicians. Such collaboration is essential for cultivating an *anti-corruption ecosystem* in which the interaction of values, norms, role modeling, and social control naturally fosters social resistance to corruption. Transformation of values cannot be achieved solely through law enforcement but must also involve socio-cultural and institutional reform. Every individual must be instilled with the values of honesty, responsibility, integrity, and concern for the public interest through education, exemplary leadership, and social habituation. State institutions should be built upon the principles of good governance that uphold integrity and prioritize public trust. Equally important, society, as a socio-cultural system, must transform its perspectives and behaviors that are permissive of corruption by firmly rejecting all forms of corruption. Through evidence-based analysis, this study contributes to the development of comprehensive and sustainable anti-corruption policies and strategies.

Keywords: Anti-corruption ecosystem, Corruption, Culture, Clientelism, Paternalism

1 Introduction

Corruption is a severe and persistent problem in Indonesia. It has existed for decades, yet efforts to eradicate it have failed to break the cycle of corruption. In fact, corruption cases continue to emerge, with increasingly large sums of money involved. This phenomenon not only damages bureaucratic order but also weakens public trust in the government and hampers national development. Corruption does not merely cause financial losses to the state but also erodes moral, ethical, and public values. In Indonesia, corruption has become a systemic and structural phenomenon. It is no longer conducted individually but involves networks of bureaucracy, politics, and even civil society. This condition shows that corruption is not merely a legal violation but has evolved into an entrenched socio-political habit in everyday life. The public is often shocked by the enormous sums of money embezzled—funds that, if properly used, could significantly contribute to public welfare.

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According to Transparency International Indonesia (TII, 2025) In the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), Indonesia remains categorized as highly vulnerable to corruption. In 2024, Indonesia scored 37 on a scale of 0–100 (0 = highly corrupt, 100 = very clean), an increase of three points from its 2023 score of 34. Although the rise in score and ranking suggests optimism regarding anti-corruption efforts, Indonesia remains among the nations with a high level of corruption.

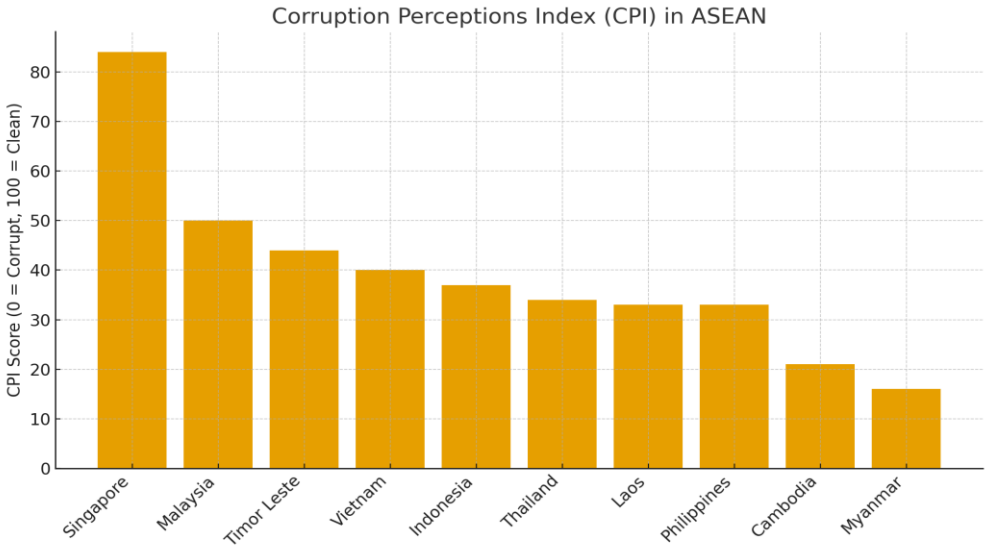

Figure 1. CPI Scores of ASEAN Countries (2024)
Source: TII, 2025

Compared with other ASEAN countries, Indonesia lags behind Vietnam (40), Timor Leste (44), Malaysia (50), and Singapore (84), though it ranks above Thailand (34), Laos (33), the Philippines (33), Cambodia (21), and Myanmar (16).

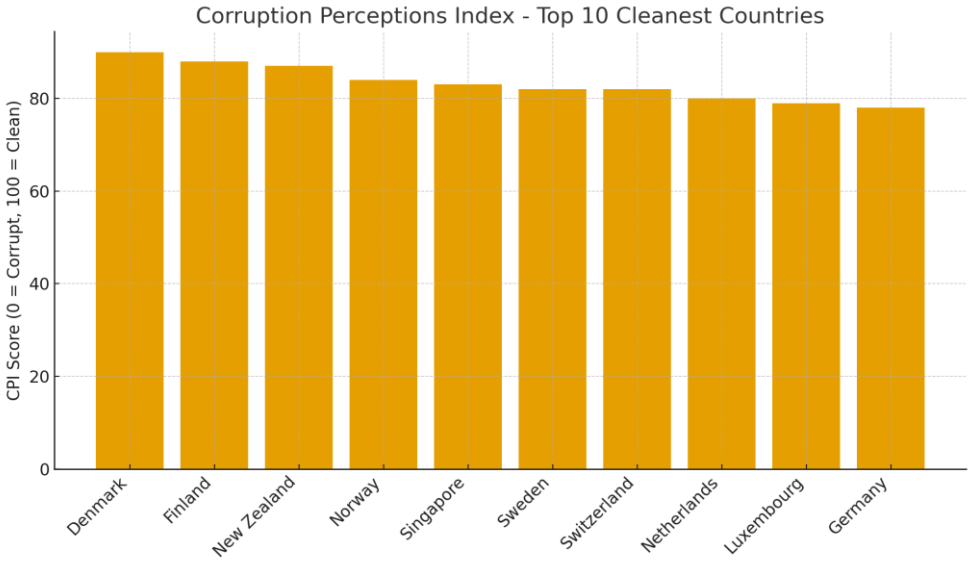

Figure 2. CPI Scores of Top 10 Cleanest Countries
Source: TII, 2025

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In contrast to countries regarded as the cleanest, Indonesia still trails far behind Denmark, which has topped the index for five consecutive years with a score of 90, followed by Finland (88), Singapore (84), and New Zealand (83). The fluctuation in Indonesia's CPI scores indicates that the country still requires significant and sustained efforts to move toward a corruption-free future (TII, 2025).

The persistent nature of corruption has led many to believe that it is deeply rooted in Indonesian society, to the extent that some even call it a "culture." However, the term "culture" in this context does not refer to culture in its proper, noble sense but rather to habitual deviant behavior. Genuine culture carries positive and constructive values that enrich daily life, while corruption, on the contrary, violates both social and legal norms. Referring to corruption as a culture reflects public frustration with the difficulty of eradicating it.

Historically, corruption in Indonesia is not a new or sudden phenomenon but a long-standing social practice with deep historical and cultural roots. It can be considered part of a socio-political dynamic passed down from generation to generation, entrenched within the governance system even before Independence Day (1945). During the Dutch colonial period, the government of the Dutch East Indies established traditional power relations involving patron-client networks, *upeti* (tributes), unofficial levies, and local intermediaries. Colonial institutions often delegated local rulers to collect taxes or labor, making informal rewards and side payments commonplace (Amboyo, 2024). After independence (1945), the newly formed Republic of Indonesia faced the dual challenges of building new institutions and managing power distribution. Many officials and elites gained positions through political proximity or contributions during the struggle for independence, receiving informal compensation through economic access, contracts, and monopolies, practices that gradually became bureaucratic norms. Fragile institutional structures and pragmatic political needs facilitated the reproduction of corruption in the early post-independence bureaucracy (Mukartono, 2019). During the *Orde Lama* era, under President Sukarno's highly personalized and centralized rule, concentrated authority opened the door to favoritism and loyalty-based resource allocation. Bureaucratic professionalism declined as patronage and political loyalty shaped administrative behavior. During the *Orde Baru* era under Suharto (1966/68–1998), corruption became increasingly systemic and institutionalized through large-scale bureaucratic expansion, infrastructure projects, state–business collusion, and networks of cronies controlling licenses, projects, and natural resources. Gratification, nepotism, and the exchange of political support for economic gain became normalized (TII, 2012).

In the Reform era (post-1998), despite political liberalization, decentralization, and institutional reforms—including the establishment of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) — the culture of corruption persisted through new mechanisms, such as regional fund allocations, the politicization of public office, campaign financing, and local patronage systems. Decentralization created multiple decision points susceptible to abuse, leading to what scholars describe as a shift from centralized to decentralized corruption (Gallup, 2011).

Thus, the culture of corruption in Indonesia represents a complex historical legacy- a fusion of colonial exploitation, feudal social structures, and patrimonial political practices that have endured into the modern era. Studies reveal that corruption has become so pervasive in Indonesia that it is no longer merely a legal violation but part of the social and organizational fabric (Prabowo, Hendi Yogi, and Cooper, 2016). Based on this background, the central

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problems of this study are as follows: 1) Why is corruption in Indonesia so difficult to eradicate? 2) What efforts can be undertaken to combat corruption effectively?

2 Method

This study employs a library research method**,** which refers to a research activity conducted by reviewing various books, literature, notes, and reports related to the problem being examined (Nazir, 2014). By assessing, critiquing, and synthesizing the information obtained, new ideas or insights can be generated. The aim is to gain an in-depth understanding of the concepts, theories, and previous findings relevant to the focus of the study (Zed, 2014).

This approach was chosen because the issue of corruption culture in Indonesia is more appropriately analyzed through theoretical and conceptual perspectives, by examining how social, cultural, and institutional values contribute to entrenched corrupt practices in everyday life. The data sources in this study are secondary data**,** namely, various scientific publications relevant to the theme of corruption culture. These data include academic books on culture, corruption, and public ethics; national and international journal articles; official documents such as reports from Transparency International and the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK); and credible online sources, such as news portals, research findings, and academic reports.

Data collection was carried out through a systematic literature review, identifying, reading, and analyzing various sources on corruption culture, followed by classification based on central issues such as cultural heritage and social values that support corruption, behavioral patterns in bureaucracy and society, and efforts toward anti-corruption cultural reform. This step was carefully conducted to achieve a comprehensive conceptual understanding and to avoid bias.

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis and interpretative analysis**.** Content analysis was used to examine documents to identify main ideas, key concepts, and interrelationships between ideas (Zed, 2014). Meanwhile, interpretative analysis involved interpreting data by understanding the meaning behind words, actions, or texts (Meleong, 2019). The analysis followed several stages: 1) Deep reading of relevant sources; 2) Identification of key concepts; 3) Categorization of data into themes such as feudal cultural heritage, *pseudo-gotong royong* (cooperation), the hedonism of officials, and anti-corruption value reform; 4) Developing a comprehensive interpretation based on theories and previous findings.

To maintain validity and credibility**,** source triangulation was applied, comparing multiple literature sources to ensure information consistency and to avoid interpretative bias (Creswell, J. W and Poth, 2018). Triangulation is a data validation technique that uses alternative data or sources as a means of checking and comparing findings (Sugiyono, 2022).

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 The Concept of Culture and Its Relation to Corruption

Culture encompasses the entire system of ideas, actions, and human works that are collectively owned through the process of learning (Koentjaraningrat, 2009). According to Geertz (Geertz, 1973), culture is a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in

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symbols—a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms through which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge and attitudes toward life. In a modern sense, culture is defined as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another"(Hofstede, 1991). Terminologically, culture refers to the values, norms, and practices regarded as noble and transmitted across generations in line with the evolution of human civilization. Culture may take both material and non-material forms. Material culture includes physical objects such as tools of production, places of worship, clothing, and technology, while non-material culture includes values, norms, beliefs, and language.

Corruption, according to Undang-undang No. 31 of 1999 in conjunction with Undang-undang No. 20 of 2001, is defined as an unlawful act committed with the intention of enriching oneself or others, resulting in a loss to the state's finances or economy. Transparency International defines corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. From a social science perspective, corruption can be understood as the misuse of authority, position, or trust to obtain material or non-material benefits that harm the public interest. Corruption, therefore, is not a part of national culture, as it contradicts the values of honesty, integrity, and justice. Culture represents the noble values inherited for the betterment of society, whereas corruption destroys social order. It is thus more appropriate to categorize corruption not as a culture but as a social pathology (Syahroni, Maharso and Sujarwati, 2019). In other words, corruption is not a cultural trait but a deviant behavior that has become culturally embedded-a form of misconduct that persists because it is practiced and tolerated within society. Although corruption is not inherently cultural, it is closely related to culture**.** It is viewed as a social phenomenon rooted in society's cultural structure and mindset. In Indonesia, corruption is deeply entrenched in paternalistic and feudal cultures, where loyalty to superiors is valued more than integrity. The mindset of *asal bapak senang* ("as long as the boss is pleased") encourages individuals to engage in unethical acts, including corruption, to maintain the favor of their leaders (Bihamding, 2018),

Why is corruption often considered a culture? Corruption is often regarded as a form of culture because it aligns with several fundamental functions of culture itself: as a social identity, a guide for behavior, and a medium for the transmission of values across generations. From these three cultural functions, corruption in Indonesia appears to possess cultural-like characteristics, as it has become deeply rooted and widely practiced across social strata. Corruption in Indonesia exhibits features similar to those of culture: 1) Collective in nature, practiced by almost all social groups—from lower to upper classes; 2) Adaptive and dynamic, easily adjusting to changing situations and conditions; 3) Transmitted across generations, continuing through imitation and social learning; 4) Socially tolerated, especially in cases of so-called "minor corruption," such as small bribes, gratuities, or "thank-you money"; 5) Difficult to eradicate, as law enforcement officers themselves are sometimes implicated in corrupt acts. These characteristics illustrate how corruption has become normalized in everyday life, functioning like a *pseudo-culture* that undermines moral and institutional integrity

Findings from the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) and Transparency International categorize corruption into several types: 1) Bribery – the most classic form of corruption, where someone gives or receives money, goods, facilities, or services to influence a public official's decision. Examples include bribery in government project tenders, facilitation payments to expedite business permits or public administration processes, and bribes to judges or law enforcement officers to influence verdicts; 2) Gratification – broadly defined as giving

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something to a public official that is related to their position and contrary to their duties, which can be considered a form of bribery. Examples include travel gifts, luxury items, or cash "tokens of appreciation" following a policy decision or project approval; 3) Embezzlement – occurs when a public official misuses authority to appropriate public funds or assets under their control. Examples include manipulating financial reports for village funds, education funds (*BOS*), or regional budgets (*APBD*), and deducting social assistance funds; 4) Abuse of Power – takes place when an official uses authority for personal, group, or political interests instead of the public good, such as directly appointing project partners without a tender process or assigning positions based on favoritism rather than competence; 5) Collusion and Nepotism – stem from strong patronage and kinship networks, for example, appointing family members or close associates to strategic positions, or collusion between officials and business actors in procurement processes; 6) Mark-up or Budget Manipulation – occurs when project or public spending values are deliberately inflated to gain personal or collective benefits. Examples include falsified meeting activities, exaggerated travel expenses, or fabricated seminars; 7) Political Corruption – involves the misuse of political power for personal or party gain, such as vote-buying in elections (*money politic*), using public funds for campaign purposes, or engaging in transactional politics in budget deliberations; 8) Trading in Influence – happens when individuals leverage their proximity to officials or those in power for personal gain, such as brokers claiming to "arrange" government projects or family members of high-ranking officials influencing tenders; 9) Extortion – occurs when officials demand or coerce individuals to give something in exchange for administrative ease, for example, complicating licensing procedures until bribes are paid or demanding "shares" from local business owners; 10) Structural or Systemic Corruption – refers to corruption that has become ingrained within bureaucratic systems, to the point where it is perceived as normal and institutionalized. Examples include regular "tribute payments" from subordinates to superiors or the routine allocation of project shares among agencies.

3.2 Several relevant theories provide explanations for the phenomenon of corruption

Understanding the roots of corruption can be approached through Cultural Theory**,** which posits that human behavior is profoundly influenced by the values and social norms prevailing within a society (Hofstede, 1991). In the context of corruption, culture determines the extent to which a society perceives certain behaviors as right or wrong. When a culture is permissive toward deviant acts, corruption may be accepted as a part of the social mechanism. Pye (1985) refers to this phenomenon as the cultural dimension of authority, where social traditions and feudal values shape power relations. Cultural Theory thus helps explain why corruption can be accepted, tolerated, and even normalized within a society. Several insights can be derived from this theoretical perspective: 1) Corruption as Part of a Social Value System. In societies characterized by hierarchical and patron–client cultures, corrupt acts are often viewed not as moral violations but as expressions of loyalty or reciprocity toward superiors or groups. For instance, offering "thank-you money" is commonly seen as a gesture of appreciation rather than a bribe; 2) Cultural Justification of Wrongdoing**.** Certain cultures possess mechanisms of social justification for deviant acts, exemplified by sayings such as *"everyone does it"* or *"it is fine as long as you do not get caught."* Such rationalizations reflect the normalization of corrupt behavior within social life; 3) Fatalism and Social Acceptance. In fatalistic societies, people often feel powerless to challenge systemic corruption. They perceive corruption as something deeply rooted and immutable, leading to a permissive cultural attitude that sustains corrupt

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practices; 4) Pragmatic Individualism. In individualistic cultures that emphasize personal gain and results (output-oriented) over ethical procedures, corrupt behavior tends to be reinforced because the primary focus is on outcomes rather than processes. Therefore, corruption is not merely a legal or institutional failure but also a consequence of the internalization of cultural values within bureaucracy and society. It represents an imbalance between formal moral values and informal social norms**,** illustrating the failure of ethical cultural transformation in the modernization process of public administration.

Within the Institutional Theory framework, the existence of institutions significantly contributes to the flourishing of corruption. Institutions are not merely formal structures but also arenas where values and norms are institutionalized. When public institutions are characterized by social values that are permissive toward deviant behaviors, corruption becomes institutionalized. Weak institutions, those lacking oversight, transparency, and accountability, tend to reinforce the continuity of corrupt practices (March, J. G and Olsen, 1989). Corruption, therefore, does not arise solely from immoral individuals but from a corrupt institutional environment marked by several features: 1) Social norms that justify deviant behavior; 2) Organizational structures that protect or normalize corrupt practices; 3) Bureaucratic cultures that instill distorted values regarding power and loyalty (Scott, 2014).

Such institutions become breeding grounds for corruption, where even individuals who initially demonstrate integrity may eventually be drawn into corrupt practices. When organizational culture tolerates misconduct, corruption is perpetuated and becomes embedded within the social and bureaucratic structure as an informal institution, with unwritten rules acknowledged by members of the organization. Examples include “thank-you money,” project quotas, or profit-sharing from positions of authority. Consequently, a dual face of institutions emerges: formally rejecting corruption, yet informally permitting it as part of organizational tradition. This paradox enables systemic corruption to spread throughout institutions, forming a new behavioral standard widely accepted within the bureaucracy.

The Principal-Agent Theory, rooted in institutional economics and public administration, explains the relationship between the principal (the authority delegate, such as citizens or superiors) and the agent (the authority executor, such as public officials). Corruption occurs when agents abuse their delegated authority for personal gain (Rose-Ackerman, 1999). However, this theory tends to be rationalistic, often overlooking cultural dimensions. When social values implicitly support corrupt behavior, the principal’s control over the agent weakens because corruption gains social acceptance. Klitgaard (Klitgaard, 1988) formulates this dynamic through the well-known equation: C=M+D−A. where corruption (C) arises when monopoly of power (M) and discretionary authority (D) are not balanced by strong accountability mechanisms (A).

From the perspective of Principal–Agent Theory, corruption occurs due to: 1) Information asymmetry between citizens and officials; 2) Divergent interests between the principal and the agent; 3) Weak control and sanction systems. Thus, corruption is not merely the result of individual greed but a **s**tructural consequence of unbalanced power relations. The theory emphasizes the importance of accountability, transparency, and ethical incentives in creating a clean, integrity-based bureaucracy. Based on this framework, strategies to combat corruption include: 1) Enhancing information transparency, ensuring that the public can access data related to budgets, decisions, and program implementation; 2) Strengthening accountability mechanisms through independent oversight bodies such as the Corruption Eradication

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Commission (KPK), the Audit Board of Indonesia (BPK), and the Ombudsman; 3) Improving incentives and sanctions, so that agents are motivated to act honestly and deterred by the consequences of corruption; 4) Encouraging public participation, enabling citizens to directly exercise control over agents as a form of principal oversight.

3.3 Why Corruption Is Difficult to Eradicate: A Cultural Perspective

The question of why corruption is so difficult to eradicate remains fundamental for many developing countries. The Indonesian government has undertaken various anti-corruption efforts through regulations and the establishment of specialized institutions. However, corrupt practices persist because they are deeply rooted in society's values, norms, and social habits. In this context, corruption should not be understood merely as a legal deviation but also as a cultural phenomenon. Several cultural factors that reinforce and perpetuate corruption include the following: First**,** the *patronage culture* and *patron–client relationships*, in which a person in power (the patron) provides protection, facilities, or resources to subordinates (clients) who, in return, offer loyalty and support. This culture gives rise to behavioral patterns such as *asal bapak senang* (pleasing the superior), *ewuh pakewuh* (reluctance to criticize or confront authority), and covering up mistakes. Empirical studies in Indonesia show that the *ewuh pakewuh* culture hinders the effectiveness of whistleblowers or internal supervisors in reporting misconduct. For instance, a study by Widayati (Widayati, 2024) identified that the *ewuh pakewuh* norm is a subjective factor influencing an individual's intention to report fraud. Similarly, Frinaldi (Frinaldi, 2014) found that *ewuh pakewuh* is prevalent among Javanese civil servants.

Second**,** the *distortion of the meaning of gotong royong* (cooperation). The original spirit of *gotong royong*, which emphasizes social solidarity, is often misinterpreted as a justification for unethical acts of helping one another. For example, sharing "project blessings" is seen as a sign of solidarity, while refusing to engage in corruption is considered disloyal or uncooperative. Tolerance toward petty corruption fosters a permissive culture that strengthens systemic corruption. KPK (2023) in its anti-corruption education campaigns, it emphasized the dangers of vote-buying practices, or *serangan fajar* ("dawn attacks"), which are often framed by society as a form of sharing or generosity before elections. Such narratives cause people to no longer view the giving of money as a violation but as part of cultural solidarity.

Third, the *culture of gift-giving* as a sign of respect or gratitude. In the context of modern bureaucracy, such practices constitute forms of *gratification* that may lead to corruption. In some cases, cultural norms that tolerate or even encourage gift-giving to "smooth processes" act as drivers of corruption (Tovalina, 2024). Power-oriented political culture further reinforces corrupt practices; acts of gratification are often seen as expressions of respect or reciprocity, even though in practice they can lead to corrupt behavior (Atmadja, A.T. and Atmadja, 2021).

Fourth, *materialistic and hedonistic orientations*. Modernization and social competition have generated new values that measure success in terms of wealth and material status. Public office is thus often perceived as a means of personal enrichment. This orientation creates a culture of "getting rich quickly" through shortcuts, where instant success is glorified without regard for ethical processes (Gule, 2021).

Fifth**,** *weak bureaucratic ethics and poor leadership are examples*. Society is constantly exposed to news of public officials, politicians, entrepreneurs, and other public figures involved in corruption cases, which creates a moral crisis among the public. When elites who are

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expected to set moral examples instead display corrupt behavior, public trust and moral standards decline.

These five factors indicate the existence of a process of *social reproduction*, in which corrupt practices and permissive values are transmitted from one generation to the next. As a result, corruption is not merely a legal or institutional issue but a deeply entrenched cultural phenomenon.

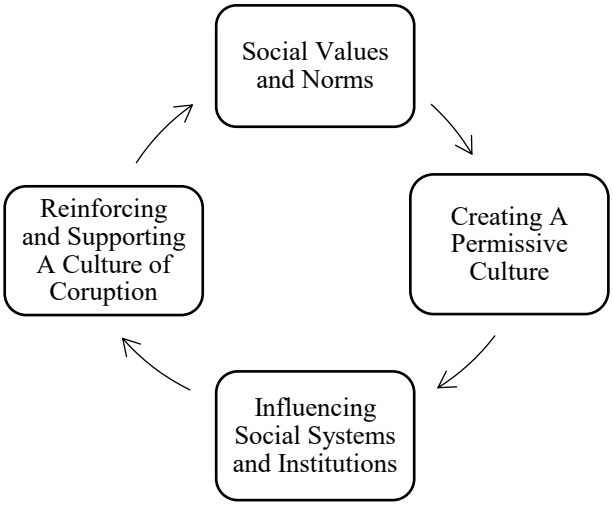

Figure 3. Cycle of Reinforcing Corruption Culture

Social values such as *gotong royong* (cooperation), *ewuh pakewuh* (reluctance to confront or offend others), and *nrimo* (acceptance or resignation) serve as the foundation of social harmony in Indonesian society. However, within the context of modern bureaucracy, the purity of these values has begun to be questioned. For instance, *gotong royong* has transformed into mutual assistance in misconduct, while *ewuh pakewuh* has become a justification for avoiding criticism of unethical behavior. Within the framework of Cultural Theory, this distortion of values shapes a social perception that corrupt behavior is not a serious violation but rather a means to maintain social relationships. A permissive culture toward corruption emerges when corrupt behavior becomes a socially accepted and perpetuated habit. Corruption flourishes because of strong moral justification, such as the belief that "everyone else is doing it." This phenomenon is referred to as *socially embedded corruption*, meaning corruption that is deeply rooted in social structures and cultural norms (Johnston, 2005).

Corruption develops within a patronage-based social system. Patron–client relations, kinship ties, and group loyalty create networks of corruption that are difficult to dismantle. The value of solidarity is often used to justify deviant actions. When such patterns infiltrate government institutions, corruption becomes institutionalized. Institutions that fail to establish systems of reward and sanction based on integrity will instead preserve the culture of corruption. Consequently, corruption becomes a *self-reinforcing system*—a system that sustains itself because social values and structures mutually reinforce one another. This cycle demonstrates that corruption is both cultural and structural in nature (March, J. G., and Olsen, 1989).

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The cycle of forming new values that reject corruption as part of social life proceeds as follows:

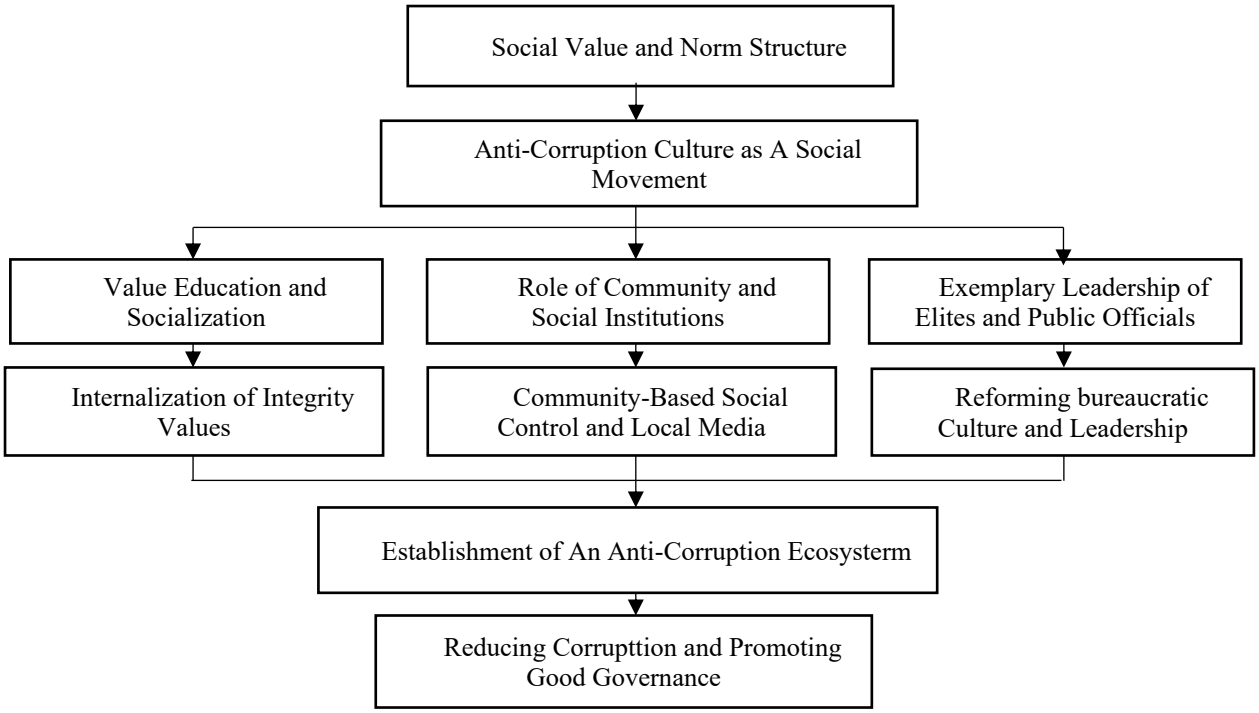

Figure 4. Reform of Value Towards An Anti–Corruption Culture

Efforts to eradicate corruption must begin by identifying the fundamental problems within the structure of social values and norms that underpin social behavior. When values such as cooperation (*gotong royong*), honesty, and a sense of shame for wrongdoing are deeply rooted in society, implementing these norms is already on the right track. Conversely, if permissive attitudes toward corruption are more dominant, the community's value system must undergo reform.

The anti-corruption movement signifies that eradicating corruption is not merely a matter of legal policy, but also a process of social transformation that changes the way people think. This effort involves education, community participation, traditional institutions, the media, and societal leaders. Educational institutions play a vital role in shaping anti-corruption attitudes and behavior through school curricula, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), universities, and career education institutions for future officials and politicians. Local communities, social organizations, and the media play an essential role in exercising social control and promoting transparency and anti-corruption advocacy at all levels of society, from urban to village governance.

Government bureaucracies and politicians have the responsibility to provide moral leadership; therefore, a reform of bureaucratic culture is required, moving from a culture of patronage to one of meritocracy. The interaction between values, norms, leadership by example, and social control creates a social system that naturally rejects corruption—a stable condition in which society actively upholds social integrity. The goal of this social movement is to establish an anti-corruption ecosystem, so that corrupt practices decline and the implementation of good governance becomes stronger.

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Value transformation cannot be achieved solely through law enforcement; it must also be accompanied by socio-cultural and institutional reform. There are three strategic approaches: First, value reform. This reform seeks to transform societal paradigms and moral orientations from permissive values that tolerate corruption toward values of integrity, honesty, and public accountability. Corruption often thrives in cultures that tolerate small-scale gratification, nepotism, and the *ewuh pakewuh* (reluctance to confront wrongdoing) mentality. Therefore, value reform must aim to cultivate an anti-corruption culture through moral and ethical education, exemplary leadership, and the use of social media. Anti-corruption efforts become effective only when accompanied by changes in social norms and public values that reject the misuse of power(Johnston, 2005). Bureaucratic reform requires cultural reengineering, which is the restructuring of bureaucratic values to align with the principles of good governance. Bureaucrats must be educated that true loyalty is owed to the law and the public interest, not to superiors. The steps include: 1) Integrity and public ethics training in every institution; 2) Anti-corruption campaigns based on local culture, such as reinterpreting *ewuh pakewuh* as a sense of responsibility to the public rather than to superiors; 3) Consistent leadership that demonstrates integrity (Dwiyanto, 2015).

Second, institutional and structural reform**.** This reform focuses on creating clean governance (*good governance*) through transparency, accountability, meritocracy, and strong oversight systems. An overly complex, opaque, and unaccountable bureaucracy provides fertile ground for corruption. Strong and transparent institutions close the loopholes that allow corruption to occur (Rose-Ackerman, 1999). A modern bureaucracy must be oriented toward public service (*serving, not steering*) so that the relationship between superiors and subordinates is built on professionalism rather than patronage. The *New Public Service* (NPS) paradigm provides a normative and ethical framework for clean government. NPS emphasizes that eradicating corruption requires not only law enforcement and control mechanisms but also value reform and a transformation of the culture of public service (Denhardt, 2015).

Third, social and cultural reform**.** This reform aims to transform social and cultural behaviors that unconsciously support corrupt practices. Cultural traditions such as reciprocity (*balas budi*), misinterpreted *gotong royong*, and group loyalty above the law often serve as moral justifications for corruption. Therefore, it is necessary to build a new *legal culture* and public ethics that reject such behavior. Socio-cultural reform must involve the media, religious leaders, and local communities to foster a *zero-tolerance culture* toward corruption (Pope, 2000).

From the above explanation, corruption is not merely an act of violating the law but also a reflection of cultural crisis and the weakening of social systems that tolerate deviant behavior. Therefore, eradicating corruption cannot rely solely on legal enforcement and punitive measures; it must also involve comprehensive, sustainable reforms of values, institutions, structures, and socio-cultural systems.

4 Conclusion

From a cultural perspective, the effort to eradicate corruption must begin with value reform as a moral foundation for transforming both individual and institutional behavior. Every individual must be instilled with values of honesty, responsibility, integrity, and concern for the public interest through education, exemplary leadership, and social habituation. These values

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must be internalized not only in classrooms but also in public and bureaucratic spaces, fostering a collective awareness that corruption violates human dignity and social justice.

Meanwhile, institutional and structural reform is a critical prerequisite to ensure that governance operates within the framework of transparency and accountability. State institutions must be built on the principles of *good governance*, where procedures, oversight mechanisms, and incentive systems work effectively to prevent the abuse of power. Strong institutions not only safeguard bureaucratic integrity but also build public trust in the state.

Socio-cultural reform, on the other hand, functions to transform societal attitudes and behaviors toward corruption. In many cases, corruption persists because of social justification, permissive attitudes, and a patronage culture that are seen as usual. Therefore, a social movement is needed to cultivate a culture of integrity, strengthen the role of civil society, and foster anti-corruption solidarity across all social strata. Anti-corruption education in schools, public campaigns, and the role of mass media should be integral components of this social transformation.

The three forms of reform are interrelated and must function synergistically. Value reform without strong institutional support will lose structural momentum, while institutional reform without cultural change will remain formalistic and unsustainable. Therefore, eradicating corruption must be understood as a process of cultural transformation, a continuous effort to build systems, values, and behaviors aligned with the spirit of integrity.

The success of building an anti-corruption culture should not be measured merely by the number of convicted offenders but by how deeply integrity becomes the new social norm. When honesty becomes habitual, and corruption is regarded as a social disgrace intolerable to society, the nation has taken a genuine step toward moral and cultural transformation. Hence, the vision of a corruption-free Indonesia demands the collective commitment of all elements of the nation—government, educational institutions, the private sector, and civil society. Only through unified action and shared awareness can Indonesia uproot the deeply entrenched culture of corruption and replace it with a culture of integrity that serves as the foundation for a just, dignified, and socially equitable nation.

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