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Corruption, Government, and the Educated Generation: A Social Impact Study from a Marxist Perspective

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Abstract : Corruption in Indonesia is not merely a manifestation of individual moral failure, but rather a structural phenomenon rooted in an unequal social and political system. From the Marxist perspective of Karl Marx's social conflict theory, corruption is understood as a tool of domination used by the ruling class to maintain control over resources and power. This study employs a qualitative approach through a literature review method to analyze the social impacts of corruption, particularly on governance structures and the future of the educated generation. The findings reveal that corruption systematically undermines the government's function as a public servant by fostering an unaccountable and exclusive bureaucracy, thereby triggering social disintegration due to public distrust in the state. In the education sector, corruption exacerbates inequality and hampers social mobility, depriving younger generations of equal opportunities for advancement in a system that prioritizes power relations over meritocracy. Corruption not only results in material losses but also cultivates a permissive mindset toward injustice, posing a threat to human resource development. This study aims to formulate progressive and transformative social strategies to establish more just, transparent, and corruption-free governance and education systems.

Keywords : Corruption, Structural Inequality, Government, Education, Class Domination, Social Alienation, Young Generation, Social Reform.

INTRODUCTION

Corruption is one of the most crucial and deep-rooted social problems in Indonesian society. This phenomenon does not only involve individual actions, but reflects a structural problem that permeates the government system, educational institutions, and social culture. Corruption has become a mechanism that systematically weakens social order, deepens inequality, and creates social disintegration at various levels of society (Amalia, 2022). This practice is not just an ethical or legal issue, but part of the unequal power dynamics between the ruling group and the wider community.

Corruption from a Marxist perspective, especially Karl Marx's social conflict theory, explains that corruption can be understood as a manifestation of unequal power relations between the bourgeois class (rulers, political elites, and capital owners) and the proletariat class (ordinary people who are excluded from decision-making and resource distribution). Marx

asserted that inequality in economic and political structures creates conditions that allow the ruling class to maintain its dominance through exploitation and manipulation of the social system. Corruption is not just an aberration, but a tool for the dominant class to perpetuate power and secure their interests at the expense of the public interest (Putra & Rudianto, 2023).

Indonesia is often caught in a vortex of corruption that involves individuals, systems and larger institutions, such as government, educational institutions and the business sector. Transparency International reports also show that corruption in Indonesia has permeated key institutions such as government, education and the business sector, leading to a decline in the integrity of public services, exacerbating social inequality and lowering the quality of public services, as well as creating social inequalities that hinder sustainable development (Budianto, 2023). The social system that is supposed to provide equal access to welfare has instead become a means of reproducing structural inequality, in line with Marx's analysis of how the state often acts as a tool of ruling class interests.

The impact of corruption on the education sector is also very significant, it can be seen when education funds are diverted for private interests, access to quality education becomes uneven, especially in underdeveloped areas, as a result the younger generation loses the opportunity to develop and experience demoralization due to a system that shows that success is determined more by power relations than competence (Juwita, 2023). Marx's theoretical framework shows how the reproduction of dominant class ideology occurs in educational institutions, which should be a tool for social mobility, but instead are used to maintain the status quo (Santoso, 2022). Corruption is one of the tools that exacerbate social conflict because it exacerbates injustice, worsens poverty and widens the gap between the elite and the lower classes. Governments entangled in corrupt practices also neglect their responsibility to provide fair services to the community. Corrupt practices involving high-ranking officials and businessmen have resulted in unequal access to basic services, especially in remote areas where it is increasingly difficult to obtain equal opportunities to advance and develop (Sugiarto & Pramesti, 2024).

Public trust in the government as a public servant entity will experience significant erosion due to corruption cases involving high-ranking state officials (Ramli, 2023). The state, which should act as a public servant, has actually turned into an entity that serves the interests of the elite class, Marx said that the state in a capitalist society is not a representation of the general will, but a tool of class domination, therefore corruption in the government system becomes a moral problem of class domination in social and political structures (Bahar & Jokhanan, 2021). Karl Marx's social conflict theory view states that corruption is not only an individual problem, but also a structural problem that leads to the formation of an unfair social system and corruption is not enough if it is only seen from a moral or legalistic perspective, but needs to be analyzed through a more critical approach theory (Collins, 2019). One relevant critical approach is social conflict theory which emphasizes that corruption is a product of the struggle for resources and power among unequal social groups that create tensions between social classes.

Through a Marxist perspective on social conflict theory, it can be understood that corruption does not only occur as a result of individual actions, but also as a result of social and political structures that provide space for the exploitation of power. According to Karl Marx's social conflict theory, inequality in the distribution of power and resources will always foster tensions and conflicts between social classes who have access to power and those who do not have it. Corruption is used as a means to maintain and enlarge these inequalities, so a more comprehensive approach is needed to raise social awareness to build a more just and transparent system (Mulyadi & Fitria, 2022). It is important to understand the impact of corruption on society, government and the educated generation in Indonesia, given the nation's dependence on sustainable social and educational reforms (Hidayati et al., 2021). Corrupt practices will create a younger generation that has no trust in state institutions and if not immediately

addressed will form a culture that is more supportive of manipulative, unethical actions and damages the nation's morals (Yuliana, 2023).

This study aims to analyze the social impact of corrupt practices by using a Marxist perspective in the theory of social conflict proposed by Karl Marx. The main focus of this study is to understand how corruption acts as a major factor in creating social inequality, damaging the quality of education, and shaping mindsets that harm the younger generation (Ariani & Salim, 2023). Through this approach, the researcher seeks to highlight the direct impact of corruption and the structural and ideological roots that legalize the practice in Indonesia's social system. It is hoped that the results of this study can contribute to formulating a more progressive and equitable social strategy to build an ideal governance and education system that is able to break the chain of corruption in a sustainable manner.

METHOD

This research is qualitative in nature, using the literature study approach as the main method to analyze the social impact of corrupt practices on government society and the educated generation in Indonesia through the lens of social conflict theory. This approach was chosen because it is suitable for examining social phenomena conceptually and theoretically, and provides space for critical exploration of the structural dynamics behind corrupt practices in society. The literature study in this research was conducted by collecting, classifying and analyzing various relevant scientific sources, such as scientific journal articles and academic books. The sources were selected based on the criteria of theme relevance, recency and relevance to the theoretical framework of social conflict and corruption issues in Indonesia.

The data collection process in this research uses systematic documentation techniques by accessing various journals. The analysis of this research is carried out in a descriptive qualitative manner, where researchers seek to build a comprehensive understanding of how corrupt practices impact social order, power relations, and access to public services such as education and government. The main theoretical framework used in this research is social conflict theory, rooted in the thinking of Karl Marx and further developed by critical sociologists such as Randall Collins. This theory is used to interpret corruption as the result of structural inequality and the struggle of interests between elite groups and marginalized communities. This perspective enables researchers to see corruption not just as a moral or legal aberration, but as a symptom of an unequal social system and unbalanced power relations.

This research is exploratory and analytical with the aim of exploring the structural and ideological aspects that perpetuate corrupt practices, and analytical because it examines the relationship between the impact of corruption and the process of social disintegration in society. Data validity is enhanced through source triangulation, by comparing findings from various literatures that have different perspectives and approaches. Through this method, the research is expected to produce an in-depth theoretical understanding and strong academic arguments regarding how corruption damages social and educational structures, and strengthens social conflicts between groups in Indonesian society. This study is also directed at formulating alternative solutions based on structural and social approaches that can support corruption prevention efforts in a more sustainable and systemic manner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The phenomenon of corruption in Indonesia, if analyzed through the perspective of social conflict theory, cannot be separated from unequal power relations between elite groups and marginalized lower classes. Social conflict theory pioneered by Karl Marx views that society consists of groups that have conflicting interests, and the dominance of the ruling class over the oppressed class is often exercised through control over resources and instruments of power including government and educational institutions (Collins, 2019). Corruption is a manifestation of structural conflicts maintained by a socio-political system that favors the

accumulation of power and wealth in the hands of a few elites. Corrupt practices are carried out not only for economic gain, but also to maintain political dominance and social status, which ultimately creates social inequality (Bahar & Jokhanan, 2021).

1. Corruption as a Tool of Class Domination and Power Reproduction

Refers to the view that corrupt practices are not merely violations of the law or moral deviations, but also instruments used by elite groups or the ruling class to maintain and reproduce their power in the social structure. As explained by Bayart, Ellis and Hibou (1999), in their analysis of the "criminalization of the state" in developing countries, corruption is part of a political system where elites use state wealth to strengthen their power through strategic alliances and patronage networks.

Karl Marx's conflict theory perspective states that the practice of corruption can be interpreted as an instrument of the bourgeois class, which in the contemporary context is represented by political elites and businessmen to maintain their hegemony over the proletariat class or ordinary people. The state, which is supposed to be the arbiter of public interests, in the Marxian framework transforms into a tool of upper-class power (Putri et al., 2022). The results of the field study show that corrupt practices are generally carried out systemically by public officials and economic actors who collude to manipulate policies. This practice is in accordance with Marx's theory of alienation and exploitation: people become alienated from the decision-making process and access to development results (Mukaromah & Kusuma, 2023).

2. Social Alienation and Erosion of Public Trust

Corruption has a serious impact on people's alienation from the state and formal institutions, with the lower classes losing access to basic rights such as education, healthcare and infrastructure. From a Marxian perspective, this reflects social alienation, which is the disconnection of individuals from control over their own social lives due to the dominance of structures controlled by the ruling class. Corruption also causes dysfunction in the legal system and bureaucracy, which ultimately delegitimizes the state in the eyes of the people (Mustopa et al., 2021). Marx's conflict theory states that this kind of phenomenon strengthens the awareness that the state is part of a superstructure formed to maintain an unequal social order.

Corruption weakens the function of public services and creates an unfair resource distribution system that results in people's access to basic needs such as education, health, and infrastructure being very limited, especially for those living in disadvantaged areas (Amalia, 2022). This inequality in public services, according to conflict theory, reflects a social structure that only benefits dominant groups, while subordinate groups experience systemic social exclusion (Putra & Rudianto, 2023). When state institutions are riddled with corrupt practices, an undemocratic and unaccountable system is formed, which in turn leads to social disintegration and increased public distrust of the state (Ramli, 2023).

3. Corruption in Education : Ideological Mechanisms of the Dominant Class

The education sector is one of the areas most affected by corrupt practices. Various forms of corruption such as budget manipulation, fictitious procurement, and nepotism in the recruitment and appointment process in the education environment reflect how this sector is used as a tool by the bourgeois class to maintain its dominance (Santoso, 2022). Education, which is supposed to be an instrument of liberation and enlightenment for society, has instead turned into a space for the reproduction of dominant class ideology. In Marx's theoretical framework, education is part of the ideological superstructure that functions to instill values that sustain the continuity of the capitalist system. Through

curriculum, institutional management, and elite-controlled policy structures, education is directed to produce individuals who are obedient to an unequal social order (Juwita, 2023).

Corrupt practices in the education system not only widen social inequality, but also hinder vertical social mobility, especially for the poor. A corruption-ridden education system also shapes young people who are permissive of social injustice and power manipulation, showing that corruption in education is not just an administrative offense, but also part of the ideological strategy of the dominant class to maintain their hegemony over society. Ideological superstructures such as education are used to instill values that support the continuation of capitalism and a corrupt education system not only inhibits vertical social mobility, but also shapes young people who are permissive of social injustice and power manipulation.

4. Corruption and the Reproduction of Social Inequality

Corruption contributes significantly to widening social inequality, especially in marginalized areas. Data from various financial oversight and audit institutions show that access to basic services such as education, health and infrastructure in underdeveloped areas is often hampered due to budget misappropriation. Development funds that should be allocated for community welfare are often lost in a process characterized by collusion, nepotism, and budget mark-up practices. This phenomenon is in line with Marx's notion of structural violence, which is a form of systematic exploitation of the lower class by the upper class through formal state instruments. In this context, the state no longer acts as a protector of the people's interests, but as a legitimizing tool for the practice of domination and exploitation of the ruling class. Corrupt actors in the village financial management system take advantage of their authoritative position to gain personal benefits, while the village community continues to experience marginalization (Putri et al, 2022).

Corruption is not just an illegal act, but a legalistic mechanism that perpetuates systemic social inequality. Corrupt practices are carried out not only to obtain economic benefits, but also to maintain political dominance and social status, in a corrupt socio-political system, power and wealth are concentrated in the hands of a handful of elites, creating a widening gap of inequality. The most destructive impact of corruption is the delegitimization of the state in the eyes of the people and the government, which is supposed to be the manager of public interests, instead turns into an instrument that serves the interests of certain groups, this condition strengthens structural conflicts in society and weakens public trust in state institutions (Bahar and Jokhanan 2021).

5. Towards Class Consciousness and Resistance to the System

Communities that are constantly suppressed by the impact of corruption, the seeds of social resistance begin to emerge, characterized by the growth of critical consciousness among the people. Marx's theory calls this process class consciousness, which is a collective understanding that the suffering, inequality and oppression experienced by society is not the result of individual failure or fate alone, but the result of an unequal and exploitative socio-political structure. This awareness is an important starting point for the emergence of resistance to a corrupt system. The anti-corruption movement, led by non-governmental organizations, academics, independent journalists and civil society groups, is an early form of transformation of class consciousness into collective action. People began to realize that corruption is not just an individual moral problem, but a manifestation of unequal power relations in the social life system, so the demand for structural changes became stronger. This awareness encourages people to not only reject acts of corruption sporadically, but also demand a systemic overhaul of the institutions that have been supporting corrupt practices.

The phenomenon of corruption in Indonesia, if explained through the perspective of social conflict theory, cannot be separated from the unequal power relations between elite groups and marginalized lower classes. The social conflict theory pioneered by Karl Marx views society as consisting of groups with conflicting interests, and the domination of the ruling class over the oppressed class is often carried out through control of resources and instruments of power including government and educational institutions (Collins, 2019). Corruption, when viewed from the perspective of social relations, causes polarization between people who benefit from the corrupt system and those who are marginalized, in line with Dahrendorf's thinking which states that social conflict arises when there is domination of one group over another in an unequal social structure (Hidayati et al., 2021).

Political and economic elites tend to maintain their privileges through systemic corruption, and when society begins to realize this inequality, social resistance arises in the form of distrust, political apathy, and even radicalism, which in the long term this latent conflict can metamorphose into an open conflict that threatens social stability that can affect ethical and moral values (Yuliana, 2023). Corruption not only causes material losses, but also much broader social damage, such as loss of public trust, weakening social solidarity, hampering human development, and damaging future generations. Resolving the problem of corruption must be through a structural approach that challenges the roots of power conflicts and resource distribution in society. Reform efforts must be directed at improving the bureaucratic system, strengthening education based on social ethics, and establishing a legal culture that upholds transparency and accountability (Mulyadi & Fitria, 2022).

CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of corruption in Indonesia, analyzed through the perspective of social conflict theory, shows that the social inequality that occurs is the result of unequal power relations between elite groups and marginalized lower classes. Corruption is not only a violation of the law, but also an instrument of upper-class domination to maintain their political and economic power. Through control over state institutions, political and economic elites can manage and manipulate resources, creating a social system that benefits a handful of parties, while the general public is increasingly alienated and marginalized. In the context of governance, corruption exacerbates injustice in the distribution of resources, leading to unequal access to basic services such as education, health, and infrastructure. This injustice creates social disintegration, erodes public trust in the government, and degrades the quality of public services, thus increasing inequality in society.

The social impact of corruption is also very pronounced for the educated generation. Corruption that plagues the education sector hinders access to quality education and widens the gap between elite groups and lower classes. An education system that is exposed to corrupt practices exacerbates social inequality, limits opportunities for young people to achieve vertical social mobility, and hinders their potential to develop according to their abilities. In this context, education, which should function as a tool for liberation and social mobility, instead becomes a tool for reproducing the ideology of the dominant class, exacerbating social inequality. Therefore, in order to create a more just government and an educated generation that is able to contribute to the development of the country, structural changes are needed that can reduce corrupt practices, improve the resource distribution system, and strengthen the integrity of education as a means of social empowerment.

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