



ETHICS OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE INDONESIAN GOVERNMENT

Grace Agustiani Br Tarigan

Universitas Medan Area

Email Korespondensi: graceagustianibrtarigan@gmail.com

Abstract

It is expected that strengthening ethical values and moral standards can significantly reduce the prevalence of corruption in Indonesia. In addition, bureaucratic reform is considered a crucial step in supporting anti-corruption efforts and in establishing a transparent and efficient system of governance. The role of ethics in political life and public administration is seen as essential to the success of these reforms. This paper explores the interrelation between ethics, moral values, and corruption cases in Indonesia, with particular emphasis on the importance of integrity and strong moral character in leadership. The study employs a literature review approach, drawing comparisons from previous research that shares similar cultural values and social perspectives. The findings reveal that many corruption cases in Indonesia are closely linked to the absence of ethical leadership. While corrupt practices may arise from various contributing factors, this research highlights the significant role of ethics and morality in shaping corrupt behavior among national elites.

Keywords: administration, ethics, political leadership.

Abstrak

Diharapkan penguatan nilai-nilai etika dan standar-standar amoral dapat secara signifikan mengurangi prevalensi korupsi di Indonesia. Selain itu, reformasi birokrasi dianggap sebagai langkah krusial dalam mendukung upaya-upaya antikorupsi dan dalam membangun sistem pemerintahan yang transparan dan efisien. Peran etika dalam kehidupan politik dan administrasi publik dianggap penting bagi keberhasilan reformasi-reformasi ini. Makalah ini mengeksplorasi keterkaitan antara etika, nilai-nilai amoral, dan kasus korupsi di Indonesia, dengan penekanan khusus pada pentingnya integritas dan karakter amoral yang kuat dalam kepemimpinan. Studi ini menggunakan pendekatan tinjauan pustaka, membandingkan dengan penelitian sebelumnya yang memiliki nilai-nilai budaya dan perspektif sosial yang serupa. Temuan ini mengungkapkan bahwa setiap kasus korupsi di Indonesia terkait erat dengan ketiadaan kepemimpinan etis. Meskipun praktik korupsi dapat muncul dari berbagai faktor yang berkontribusi, penelitian ini menyoroti peran signifikan etika dan amoralitas dalam membentuk perilaku korupsi di kalangan elit nasional.

Kata kunci: administrasi, etika, kepemimpinan politik.

Introduction

Indonesia continues to struggle against corruption. The government plays a crucial role in providing public services, and the success of these services depends heavily on the strategies used to achieve national goals. Deviations such as corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN) have a detrimental impact on society. One of the primary objectives of nation-building is to improve the welfare of the people. Furthermore, a nation's existence also relies on international recognition based on the presence of a legitimate and sovereign government (Asfarosya, 2017).

A country's progress is fundamentally determined by the government's ability to implement development, which is highly dependent on the quality of human resources. Despite Indonesia's rich natural resources, it ironically lags behind other Asian countries. A key reason for this is the suboptimal



development of human resources, particularly in terms of morality and integrity. The weak character and lack of honesty among public officials contribute to the widespread corruption. Kristiawan (2016) suggests that mental revolution and character education can be solutions to address the moral crisis in Indonesia.

Corruption is a form of white-collar crime, typically perpetrated by influential and powerful individuals (Mahardika, 2019). In Indonesia, corruption has become a serious social disease threatening all aspects of life. Its practice extends beyond the central government to regional areas. Since the implementation of regional autonomy through Law No. 22 of 1999, there has been an increase in corruption by public officials in regional governments. Corruption in bureaucracy is a deliberate deviation from established norms. It is usually done for personal gain, whether monetary or other benefits (Awaludin, 2016). This form of corruption includes bribery, embezzlement, abuse of power, illegal procurement of goods and services, and dereliction of duty by bureaucrats.

Therefore, building a clean government is fundamental for the sustainability of a nation, especially in facing an era of global competition that demands strong human resources, legal systems, and government institutions. The eradication of corruption is no longer an option, but a necessity. Thus, it is important to understand the causes of corruption in bureaucracy, its impact on the nation, and how the role of ethics in politics can serve as a bulwark against corruption in Indonesia.

Method

The research method used in this study is a literature review. This study examines various theories and previous research relevant to the main theme, particularly those with similarities in cultural values and social perspectives. This approach is considered appropriate as it allows the author to explore the understanding of ethics and morality in the context of Indonesian governance through various credible and reliable sources (Sugiono, 2012). Through this literature review, the author can observe the connection between ethical values in political leadership and bureaucratic dynamics, as well as the issue of corruption. Various theories used in previous studies serve as a basis to strengthen the analysis and construct arguments in this paper. Thus, this method not only helps in gathering information but also provides a framework for connecting ethical concepts with actual practices in government.

Discussion

Etymologically, "ethics" comes from the Greek word "Etos," meaning custom or character (Hulaimi, 2017). This word is identical to the origin of the word "moral" from the Latin "Mos" (plural is Mores), which also means custom or way of life (Sagala, 2018). Therefore, both words (ethics and moral) indicate a way of acting that becomes a custom due to the agreement or practice of a group of people. Thus, ethics can be interpreted as a person's willingness to always obey a set of moral rules. Ethics and morality theoretically originate from knowledge (cognitive) rather than affect. Morality is also related to the spirit and collective consciousness of a community. Morality exists when linked to society; there is no morality without society, and ideally, no society without morality, and it is related to the collective consciousness within society. Ethics are normative standards in the form of moral values, norms, and things considered good. Ethics serves as a guide/direction for attitudes and behavior towards a better life. Fundamentally, the true meaning of ethics is to determine guidelines for doing what is right and not doing what is wrong. Thus, living an ethical life is believed to lead to a better condition, one that does not harm the surrounding life.

Ethics is a determinant of leadership success. In an organization, leadership is considered good if leadership functions are implemented in changes according to ethical principles in line with organizational values. Ethical leadership will create a more relaxed work environment, higher productivity, and resolve existing conflicts within the organization. Political leadership is the ability to influence and lead society or political organizations in achieving common goals or interests. Political leadership is the use of power, authority, and influence to make decisions and take actions on behalf of society or the state. Political leadership is a process of influencing and enabling society or political



organizations to achieve common goals and interests. Political leadership is the use of power, authority, and influence to make decisions and take actions on behalf of society or the state. Political leadership is a process of influencing and enabling society or political organizations to achieve common goals and interests. Political leadership requires the ability to make sound decisions, efficient actions, and good relationships with various parties. According to Max Weber, leadership is the ability to influence and lead society through legitimate power and authority.

It is very difficult to find a systematic approach to government ethics because governance constantly changes according to the ruling power. The most important guide in government ethics is power and authority. In terms of government, we need ethics. This is because government issues concern human beings. There are two elements involved in government: the governing element, called the government, and the governed element, called the people. In government ethics, there must be intensive participation with the community. All desires within society must be addressed. Indeed, stimulating this participation is difficult due to diverse individual desires. Intensifying flexible participation for the government is important because the focus is not on the governing but on the governed. The essence of government ethics is the use of power.

In general, the function of government ethics in the practice of governance is twofold: as a guide, reference, benchmark, and pointer in carrying out governmental duties; and as a benchmark for assessing whether the decisions and/or actions of government officials are good or bad, commendable or reprehensible. Ethics questions good and bad, not right and wrong, concerning human attitudes, actions, and behaviors in interacting with others, both in society and in public or business organizations, hence ethics plays an important role in the practice of state administration. Ethics is necessary in state administration. Ethics can serve as a guide, reference, and instruction on what state administrators should do in implementing political policies, and at the same time, it can be used as a standard for evaluating whether the behavior of state administrators in implementing political policies can be said to be good or bad. This is because state administration is not only concerned with the implementation of political policies but also with human issues. The implementation of government ethics includes ethics related to individuals as members of government organizations, all of which ultimately lead to ethical values contained in laws and regulations, religious values, socio-cultural values, values in the principles of governance, and other values related to the administration of the state.

Based on bureaucratic ethics, public service in Indonesia is weakest, due to the high emphasis on morality. In this regard, ethics is often considered unrelated to public service. However, ethics in public administration is also important for increasing public satisfaction and the success of services provided by relevant organizations. Every phase of the public service cycle, such as policy formulation, organizational structure design, and service management, must have a clear ultimate goal. This implies that each phase, along with interested actors, is required to prioritize public interest over personal interest. For instance, in universal moral values, there are truth, goodness, freedom, equality, and justice that can be used to test the commitment of actors to honest statements regarding policy subjectivity, fair employee placement, and objective reporting of service management results (Ismiyarto, 2016). Along with rapid technological advancements and increasing challenges in public administration, there have been improvements in public service functions. This change is marked by a shift from a government paradigm emphasizing legal aspects to a good governance paradigm, which not only focuses on the will of the government but encompasses all components of the nation, including bureaucracy, the private sector, and society as a whole.

Regarding public services, the public can now monitor the government's performance by utilizing Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Several government agencies have implemented ICT in their governance. Governments that utilize ICT can also be referred to as E-Government. E-Government is a public service that utilizes information and communication technology and aims to improve government performance to continuously deliver accurate and transparent information to the public (Supriyanto, 2016). By improving government performance, it is expected that the accountability of government officials in the public sector will also increase. Accountability is very important in the



public service sector. The procurement of goods and services from the government for the people should be conducted responsibly and correctly. Accountability is the obligation of agents or government officials to manage resources, report, and disclose all activities related to the use of public resources to the mandate provider (Eric Try Putra Benawan, David PE Saerang, 2018).

Currently, many cases arise from the abuse of government organizational ethics. One clear example still practiced by individuals within government organizations is KKN (Corruption, Collusion, and Nepotism). KKN is defined as a state crime (in modern concept) that, while serving public interest, is used for individual or private gain. However, corrupt practices such as bribery often occur within society without necessarily involving the state. Ethics, meaning good morality and involving human behavior to act well, is highly necessary in the context of governance. Ethics serves as a guide for government officials in performing and judging their actions, and helps build trust in the government among the public. However, the rampant practice of corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN) among government officials indicates a violation of this ethical principle. Prominent corruption cases, such as embezzlement of funds and bribery, reflect the weak morality and ethics among leaders who should be serving the people well. Despite efforts to eradicate corruption through institutions like the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), significant problems persist in upholding ethics and accountability in the public sector.

The importance of ethics in governance lies not only in legal compliance but also in the moral consciousness of individuals in fulfilling their mandate. Leaders with good ethics can reduce corrupt practices and improve the quality of public services. Therefore, strengthening moral and ethical values among government officials is truly necessary to achieve clean, transparent, and accountable governance that benefits society and the state.

Citing some examples, the BLBI (Bank Indonesia Liquidity Assistance) deviation case has been ongoing for almost 10 years without completion; some perpetrators still enjoy freedom, and some have even been acquitted and freely continue their businesses. What is worse, evidence of bribery involving a high-ranking prosecutor was uncovered a few months ago. KKN practices, especially within government institutions, are issues related to government organizational ethics because they are deviations from what an individual in a government organization should do and possess, which is to serve the people well and strive to provide the best for them. However, KKN practices clearly harm the nation and the state.

Additionally, for example, the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) named the Regent of East Kotawaringin, Central Kalimantan, Supian Hadi, as a suspect in a bribery case related to the issuance of mining business permits (IUP) in East Kotawaringin Regency, Central Kalimantan. Licenses were prepared for three different companies. Based on the IUP issuance by the KPK, suspect Supian, who is also a PDIP cadre, caused state losses of Rp 5.8 trillion and US\$ 711 million (equivalent to Rp 9.9 billion assuming an exchange rate of Rp 14,000). This state loss surpasses the state losses in the e-KTP corruption case (Rp 2.3 trillion) and the BLBI SKL corruption case (Rp 4.58 trillion). This is related to the ethics of leaders in Indonesia who lack good ethics and thus cannot distinguish between right and wrong.

The corruption cases involving government officials and leaders prove that in carrying out public mandates, one must possess good morals and proper ethics. For instance, the former Governor of Banten, Ratu Atut Chosiyah, was sentenced to 5 years and 6 months in prison with a fine of Rp 250 million, or an additional 3 months of imprisonment. Ratu Atut was found guilty of financial irregularities by managing the budgeting process for medical equipment procurement in Banten, resulting in state losses of Rp 79 billion. In its considerations, the panel of judges stated that Atut was proven to have enriched herself by Rp 3.8 billion and her younger brother, Tubagus Chaeri Wardhana, by Rp 50 billion. With good ethics and morals, leaders within the government would not commit corruption, and with good ethics, corruption can be reduced, even from within the individual's own mind, because there are boundaries of right and wrong.



Leaders within political parties are also not exempt from corrupt behavior. It cannot be guaranteed that someone from an Islamic-based party, where the boundaries of right and wrong are clearly defined, will all possess good morals and ethics. An exception is Romahurmuziy, the chairman of the PPP party, who was apprehended by the KPK along with the Head of the East Java Provincial Ministry of Religious Affairs Office, the Head of the Gresik Regency Ministry of Religious Affairs Office, a PPP member of the Gresik Regency DPRD candidate, and an individual identified as S, the driver of the Gresik Regency officials. In that operation, the KPK team seized Rp 156,758,000. According to Laode, this money was only a small portion of previous payments.

Conclusion

Ethics, good morality, and human behavior directed towards doing good are highly necessary in the context of governance. Ethics serves as a guide for government officials in carrying out and judging their actions, and it helps build trust in the government among the public. However, the continued practice of corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN) among government officials demonstrates a violation of these ethical principles. Prominent corruption cases, such as embezzlement of funds and bribery, reflect the weak morality and ethics among leaders who should be serving the people well. Despite anti-corruption efforts by institutions like the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), significant problems persist in upholding ethics and accountability in the public sector. The importance of ethics in government lies not only in adherence to the law but also in the individual's moral awareness in fulfilling their mandate. Leaders with good ethics can reduce corrupt practices and improve the quality of public services. Therefore, strengthening moral and ethical values among government officials is truly essential to achieve clean, transparent, and accountable governance that benefits society and the state.

In the administration of government and public policy, those who act and play a role in it must utilize ethics, which, as explained by Sagala (2018), refers to moral values and norms that should guide all individuals carrying out public policy tasks. Politics is not merely about power but an endeavor to achieve a better society, and thus, the proper application of ethics and morals will fulfill the goal of a better society. A significant number of public policy implementers are political actors, making ethics extremely important.

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