

Dynamics of Corruption Eradication in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

The eradication of corruption has become an important issue in many countries, including Saudi Arabia and Indonesia. Saudi Arabia has implemented rapid, stringent measures to combat corruption, including the establishment of anti-corruption commissions and the arrest of princes and ministers suspected of corruption. This research method utilizes a literature review and an opinion survey. However, the application of Saudi Arabia's methods in Indonesia faces challenges and contextual differences that need to be considered, including legal context, cultural and local values, transparency and accountability, education and public awareness, and structural reforms.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Islam views corruption as a very heinous act. In the book *Mizan*, published by Muhammadiyah, Nahdatul Ulama-Partnership (2010), it is written that corruption in the context of Islam is the same as *fasa*, namely an act that destroys the order of life, the perpetrator of which is categorized as committing a crime. *The greatness of the great* (major sin). Arifin (2015) states that corruption in Islam is an act that violates Islamic law. Islamic law aims to bring about the welfare of humanity through what is known as *Shariah objectives*. Among the benefits that are aimed at is the preservation of wealth (*hifzul maal*) from various forms of violations and abuses.

The word corruption comes from English, namely: *corruption* (J.M. Echols and Shadily, 1992), and corruption in Indonesian means: misappropriation or embezzlement (state or company money, etc.) for personal or other people's benefit (Lukman Ali, 1999). If viewed from this definition, then corruption is a person who takes property that is not their right or has not been rightfully given. In other words, wrongfully taking other people's property. It can be concluded that corruption is something related to taking property that is not his or has not been his in a wrongful way. Whether the way is by cutting money before it is given to the owner, by accepting bribes, or by enriching him in court (Harahap, 2016).

Corruption itself is thought to have existed since ancient Egypt, around 3100-2700 BC. This corruption occurred in the Egyptian judiciary. Beyond ancient Egypt, corruption has been evident since ancient times, such as in the Chinese Empire. Furthermore, in ancient Greece, bribery was also recorded, involving the Alcmaeonid family, who bribed the priests of the Delphic Oracle.

Major corruption cases began to spread globally as the world entered the modern economic era, specifically at the beginning of the 20th century. During this period, corruption cases were difficult to trace because the world was experiencing a major military crisis, particularly due to the world wars. Consequently, corruption cases became invisible because they were carried out in secret and undetected due to the wars. Today, the phenomenon of corruption is increasingly rampant every year in various countries. Corruption has become one of the most difficult problems that plagues many countries. This is undeniable: a common problem for which solutions are constantly being sought to eradicate corruption in every country around the world. Not only are countries in Southeast Asia experiencing an increasing trend of corruption, but also countries outside of Southeast Asia, one of which is the Arab countries.

Corruption is also a major problem in Arab countries, fueling high poverty rates, widening social inequality, discrimination, high unemployment, and skyrocketing property prices. Protests against governments have occurred in many Arab countries since 2011, highlighting the direct link between corruption and the political system and the escalation of social problems across various sectors in each of these countries.

Saudi Arabia, which holds the largest and most important role in other Arab countries and has even been crowned as the leader of the Arab world, has the same problem of corruption as most other Arab countries. This problem has sparked growing public protests. IRIB Indonesia (2014) stated that several media outlets reported that corruption and money laundering cases in Saudi Arabia continue to increase. One media outlet stated that over the past two years, there have been at least 500 cases of money laundering and corruption in Saudi Arabia. This is due to the government system, which adopts a monarchy, and the absence of a strong system of oversight and civilian control over state management. It is therefore not surprising that the phenomenon of corruption is unavoidable and increasingly widespread.

The King of Saudi Arabia is trusted with the great title of 'Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques', which in this case is the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque. This title makes King Salman even more burdened to shoulder the responsibility as the highest leader in the Arab world, because Islam itself has perfectly taught the values of goodness and prohibition to avoid evil and crime. Therefore, it is very naive to set aside religious teachings as a solution to awaken corruptors and eradicate the root of the disease of corruption. In Islam, corrupt behavior has been strictly prohibited, as in the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) narrated by Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "No body will enter Paradise that is fed with unlawful food." 3 The word of Allah (peace be upon him) in the Quran, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 188: "And do not consume the wealth of one another unjustly, and do not bring the wealth to the judge, so that you may consume some of the wealth of others in sin, while you know."

King Salman finally firmly established a planned structure as an anti-corruption commission, led by his own son, Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who had been appointed crown prince. Following his official appointment, Prince Mohammed, within hours of his appointment, arrested several princes and ministers suspected of corruption in Saudi Arabia. This sparked a new controversy over the prince's lightning-fast arrest of hundreds of names in a matter of hours.

2. METHOD

This research will use a literature study method. This method involves reviewing various literature, including academic articles, research reports, government publications, and news sources related to the Saudi Arabian government's swift action in handling

corruption cases and the establishment of an anti-corruption commission. Literature studies can provide a deeper understanding of the various views and responses of the public, both inside and outside Saudi Arabia, towards these actions. This method also uses a public opinion survey. In conducting a public opinion survey to collect data directly from the public about their views and responses to the Saudi Arabian government's swift action in handling corruption cases and the establishment of an anti-corruption commission. Public opinion surveys can involve the use of carefully designed questionnaires to explore public perceptions, opinions, and attitudes regarding this issue (Lambsdorff, J. G., 2007).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of the Anti-Corruption Strategy in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has become one of the countries in the world that has begun to raise the flag of war against corruption. This is because in recent years, the issue of corruption in Saudi Arabia has become increasingly worrying and disturbing for all levels of Saudi Arabian society. King Salman, as the supreme leader of the Saudi Kingdom, issued a royal decree announcing the formation of the Anti-Corruption Committee (AKC). The king also appointed his own blood—his beloved son, Mohammed bin Salman—as head of the commission.

The Anti-Corruption Committee that has been formed has the authority to investigate cases, make arrests, prohibit travel, and freeze assets on any individual suspected of being involved in corruption cases. As quoted by Reuters in the online news postkota news (2017), "The homeland will not survive unless corruption is exposed and the corruptors are held accountable," explained the decree issued directly by the kingdom.

Rampant corruption in Saudi Arabia, including bribes, kickbacks, and "luxury gifts," has long been an integral part of doing business in the world's richest oil-producing nation. The arrests implicate princes and cabinet ministers who held key positions, amassing vast fortunes far exceeding their official salaries.

The Attorney General, who also played a key role in the massive corruption crackdown carried out by Saudi Arabia, revealed the amount of funds embezzled by the princes. In an online report by Tribunnews (2017), it was stated that the amount of funds embezzled by the princes being investigated by the Anti-Corruption Commission reached US\$100 billion, equivalent to Rp 1,352 trillion. This embezzlement has been carried out systematically for the past several decades. In addition to carrying out large-scale arrests, Saudi security forces have also banned private jets in Jeddah from obtaining flight permits. This is believed to prevent the targeted prominent figures from leaving the country.

As Crown Prince, Prince Mohammed bin Salman has targeted wealthy Saudis for various reasons. Prince Mohammed bin Salman's decisive actions clearly demonstrate that the old ways of doing business are no longer acceptable in Saudi Arabia. He believes reform and modernization are necessary if the country is to survive in this century.

An overview of the anti-corruption strategy in Saudi Arabia, especially that implemented by Prince Mohammed bin Salman through the anti-corruption commission he leads, can include several steps or approaches, including:

- a. **Strict Law Enforcement:** One of the strategies used to eradicate corruption in Saudi Arabia is to strictly enforce the law against corruptors, including princes and ministers suspected of corruption. Prince Mohammed bin Salman arrested hundreds of people within hours of establishing the anti-corruption commission, demonstrating a firm stance in enforcing the law against corruptors.

- b. **Recovery of Suspected Assets:** In addition to law enforcement, the anti-corruption commission led by Prince Mohammed bin Salman is also pursuing recovery efforts for assets suspected of being the proceeds of corruption. This measure aims to reduce incentives for perpetrators of corruption by retrieving assets suspected of being ill-gotten.
- c. **Transparency in State Financial Management:** The Saudi Arabian government, under the leadership of Prince Mohammed bin Salman, has also adopted a transparent approach to state financial management to reduce the risk of corruption. This includes fiscal policy reforms, more transparent budget planning, and rigorous audits of the use of public funds.
- d. **Enhanced Oversight and Guidance:** In addition to law enforcement, strict oversight of government institutions, including princes and ministers, is also a key strategy for eradicating corruption in Saudi Arabia. In this regard, the anti-corruption commission, led by Prince Mohammed bin Salman, plays a crucial role in guiding and overseeing government performance and identifying potential corruption.
- e. **Public Awareness and Participation:** Increasing public awareness and participation in anti-corruption efforts is also part of Saudi Arabia's strategy. Prince Mohammed bin Salman has intensified his anti-corruption campaign and is working to involve the public in monitoring and reporting suspected corruption. **Structural Reforms:** In addition to law enforcement, asset recovery, oversight, and public awareness campaigns, Saudi Arabia's anti-corruption strategy also involves structural reforms within the government system and the public sector. This includes institutional reforms, more transparent procurement procedures, and increased accountability and transparency in the Saudi government's decision-making process.

Saudi clerics have supported this new initiative, calling it as important as fighting terrorism. Just hours after the commission's formation, dozens of prominent politicians, princes, and businessmen were arrested on corruption charges. The crown prince's new policies have shattered the entire network of patronage and power alliances in Saudi Arabia. He knows that implementing his modern reform program will likely face massive resistance, so he is now demonstrating his ruthlessness in eliminating anyone or anything that might stand in his way. Consequently, many, including political observers, believe that his actions are not only aimed at eradicating corruption but also have political undertones. Some observers even explicitly state that this is part of a power struggle and a power struggle within Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia is a large, monarchical country that lacks a written constitution or independent government institutions such as a parliament or courts. Therefore, allegations of corruption are difficult to evaluate. Furthermore, the thin line between public funds (allegedly embezzled) and the royal family's vast, hereditary wealth is unclear. Many have concluded that Prince Mohammed bin Salman's actions have a hidden purpose: to strengthen his position as crown prince. This suspicion is further heightened by the arrests of the princes and many other prominent figures within the kingdom, which occurred just hours after King Salman reshuffled the cabinet and established the anti-corruption commission.

King Salman also dismissed the security and economic ministers from his cabinet. Allegations related to the Qatar case have become a hot topic in many circles, considering that figures detained on corruption charges were arrested by Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Kompas online news (2017) reported that many of Prince Mohammed bin Salman's policies have been widely criticized, such as the privatization of state assets and his cuts in state subsidies. Foreign diplomats ultimately predicted that Prince Mohammed

bin Salman would soon become the first millennial to ascend the Saudi throne, ruling for the next half-century.

Public Views on Corruption

An overview of the views and responses of the public, both inside and outside Saudi Arabia, towards the kingdom's swift action in dealing with corruption cases and the formation of the anti-corruption commission he leads.

1. Views within Saudi Arabia:

Support for the kingdom's swift action: The vast majority of Saudis support the government's swift action in addressing corruption cases and the establishment of the anti-corruption commission it chairs. They see this as a serious effort by the government to clean up corruption in their country and punish those who harm public finances.

Satisfaction with corruption prevention measures: Saudi Arabian citizens are also satisfied with the government's corruption prevention measures, such as increased oversight of the public and private sectors, and stricter implementation of anti-corruption laws. They hope these measures will help reduce corruption in their country (Rose-Ackerman, S., 1999).

2. Views outside Saudi Arabia:

Praise for government efforts: Some outside Saudi Arabia have praised the Saudi government's efforts to address corruption and establish an anti-corruption commission. They see this as a positive step toward eliminating corrupt practices that harm public finances and improving governance in the country.

Criticism of the legal process: However, there is also criticism of the legal process used in handling corruption cases in Saudi Arabia. Some parties worry that the rapid and intensive legal process used by the government may compromise individual rights, including the right to a fair trial and adequate legal protection for defendants. They also worry that the government's swift action could be used as a political tool to eliminate opposition or consolidate political power (Rose-Ackerman, S.:1999).

Uncertainty about transparency: Some outside Saudi Arabia also remain uncertain about the government's handling of corruption cases. They hope for greater transparency in the investigation and prosecution process, as well as assurances that individual rights are fully respected.

The actions of Saudi Arabian leaders in dealing with corruption cases, including the establishment of an anti-corruption commission and the arrest of princes and ministers suspected of involvement, have had significant political, social, and economic implications. Some of these implications include (Heywood, P. M.:2012);

1. Political Implications:

- a) **Increasing government authority and power:** The establishment of an anti-corruption commission and swift action in handling corruption cases in Saudi Arabia can strengthen the government's authority and power in dealing with corruption, as well as demonstrate the government's commitment to eradicating corruption at the highest level.
- b) **Shifts in the political landscape:** The arrests of princes and ministers suspected of corruption could lead to changes in Saudi Arabia's political elite and alter power dynamics within the kingdom. This could impact domestic politics and the political relationships between the parties involved.

2. Social Implications:

- a) **Public perception of corruption:** The Saudi Arabian government's swift action in addressing corruption cases could impact public perception of corruption. The arrests of princes and ministers suspected of involvement could raise public

awareness of corruption among the political elite and could influence public perceptions of government integrity and fairness.

- b) Tensions and divisions within society: The crackdown on corruption, particularly involving princes and ministers, could fuel tensions and divisions within Saudi Arabian society. There is the potential for divisions between supporters and opponents of government actions, as well as potential rifts within the political elite.
3. Economic Implications:
- a) Impact on investment and business: Government actions in addressing corruption cases could impact the investment and business climate in Saudi Arabia. Political uncertainty and changes in power dynamics could affect investor and business confidence, as well as the country's business climate.
 - b) Efficient resource management: Corruption cases involving princes and ministers can disrupt the management of state resources and undermine the efficiency of public administration. Government action in addressing corruption can result in changes in the management of state resources and impact the efficiency and effectiveness of government.

The Impact of Corruption in Various Fields

a. Economic Field

Corruption can hinder investment and economic growth, as evidenced by the investment shocks experienced by investors in Saudi Arabia in recent years. Corruption also weakens the capacity and ability of the government system to implement development programs. This hampers efforts to alleviate poverty and income inequality and can ultimately lead to high poverty rates and widening social disparities.

b. Socio-Politics and Culture

The socio-political impacts of high levels of corruption, particularly in Saudi Arabia, are unavoidable. The resulting social inequality is particularly concerning, as social conditions inevitably create a visible divide among citizens. Saudi Arabia's anti-corruption campaign, in particular, is undeniably politically motivated, driven by a struggle for power and prestige.

Implementation of Saudi Arabian Eradication Methods in Indonesia

Corruption eradication methods in Saudi Arabia and Indonesia differ in several aspects, including the political, legal, cultural, and governmental contexts of each country. The following is a comparison of several methods used to eradicate corruption in Saudi Arabia and Indonesia.

Establishment of the Anti-Corruption Commission: Both Saudi Arabia and Indonesia have dedicated anti-corruption bodies. In Saudi Arabia, the Anti-Corruption Commission (Nazaha) was established by the Crown Prince and has broad powers to investigate, detain, search, supervise, and prosecute individuals suspected of corruption. In Indonesia, the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) was established by law and has a similar mandate, but the selection and election of its leadership involves several institutions and more complex mechanisms.

Arrests and Prosecutions of Corruption Perpetrators: Both Saudi Arabia and Indonesia have arrested and prosecuted high-ranking officials and businesspeople suspected of corruption. However, the process of arrest, investigation, trial, and asset recovery in Indonesia often involves a complex legal system, including the presumption of innocence, lengthy court proceedings, and challenges in recovering assets obtained

through corruption. Improving Transparency and Accountability: Both Saudi Arabia and Indonesia have taken steps to improve transparency and accountability in public financial management, but challenges remain in actual implementation. In Indonesia, there are policies to strengthen public accounting and financial oversight systems, such as transparent financial reporting systems, financial audits, and public participation in public budget oversight.

Public Education and Awareness: Both Saudi Arabia and Indonesia have conducted public education and awareness campaigns to educate the public about the dangers of corruption and encourage public participation in reporting suspected corruption. In Indonesia, there are integrity-strengthening programs and anti-corruption campaigns involving civil society, the mass media, and the education sector. Structural Reform: Both Saudi Arabia and Indonesia have undertaken structural reforms in several sectors, such as energy, finance, and infrastructure, to reduce the risk of corruption and increase transparency in the management of resources and development projects. However, the implementation and results of these reforms remain a matter of debate and challenge in both countries.

Implementing the anti-corruption methods used in Saudi Arabia in Indonesia may face several challenges and contextual differences that need to be considered. Some things to consider if Saudi Arabian methods are implemented in Indonesia are as follows:

- 1) Legal Context: Saudi Arabia has a different legal system from that of Indonesia, including the investigation, arrest, and trial processes for corruption cases. The application of Saudi Arabian methods in Indonesia must comply with applicable Indonesian laws and regulations, including legal procedures, the presumption of innocence, and individual rights guaranteed under the Indonesian legal system.
- 2) Local Culture and Values: Local culture and values in Indonesia also differ from those in Saudi Arabia. The methods used in Saudi Arabia, such as searches or detention of individuals suspected of corruption, must take into account cultural sensitivities and local values in Indonesia to avoid potential conflict or social tension.
- 3) Transparency and Accountability: While both Saudi Arabia and Indonesia have made efforts to improve transparency and accountability, the two countries have different conditions in terms of government administration systems, public policies, and governance that must be considered. The implementation of Saudi Arabian methods in Indonesia must take local conditions into account and make appropriate adjustments to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of corruption eradication efforts.
- 4) Education and Public Awareness: Education and public awareness regarding corruption eradication in Indonesia have their own dynamics and characteristics. Implementing Saudi Arabian methods in Indonesia must consider approaches appropriate to the country's education and public awareness situation, including involving civil society, the media, and the education sector in anti-corruption campaigns.
- 5) Structural Reforms: Structural reforms implemented in Saudi Arabia may not be immediately applicable in Indonesia due to the differences in conditions and structural challenges in both countries. The application of Saudi Arabian methods in Indonesia must take into account the local context, including reforms tailored to sectors requiring improvements in resource management and development projects.

Adopting anti-corruption methods from other countries, including those used in Saudi Arabia, must be done with caution and take into account the differences in the local context and conditions in Indonesia. The anti-corruption process must remain

based on legal principles, respect human rights, and involve public participation to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of anti-corruption efforts in Indonesia.

4. CONCLUSION

Saudi Arabia, as the highest-ranking Arab nation and with a king who presides over all Arab countries, is not immune to the challenges it faces, like many other countries: corruption. Islamic laws regarding corruption are clearly outlined in numerous verses of the Quran and Hadith. Therefore, King Salman, as the supreme leader, faces a heavier burden due to these unwritten demands.

King Salman chose to establish an Anti-Corruption Commission to fight corruption in his country. He also appointed his favorite son, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, as chairman of the Anti-Corruption Commission. King Salman legally authorized the crown prince's authority as chairman of the commission to eradicate corruption. Prince Mohammed bin Salman immediately launched a massive, indiscriminate, and expeditious arrest campaign.

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