



Conscientiousness and Collectivism as the Predictors of Shame and Guilt Proneness

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Abstract

This research investigated the relation between conscientiousness, collectivism, and corrupt tendency—which is represented by moral emotions (shame and guilt proneness). The study was conducted on 117 students (76 male, 41 female; $M_{age} = 18.93$ years old; $SD_{age} = 1.67$ years old) in Jakarta. The result shows that (1) Collectivism and conscientiousness positively predict guilt proneness, and (2) Collectivism and conscientiousness can not predict shame proneness.

Keywords: Corruptive tendencies; moral emotion; psychology of corruption; integrity

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1.0 Introduction

Corruption is "... behaviour which deviates from the normal duties of public role because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary or status gain; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence." (Nye, 1967). However, recent definitions, stimulated by the Enron and Wall Street scandals, now extend corruption to be the abuse of any sort of "entrusted authority", as would occur by a board chairman (Sampson, 2005). Study which seeks to explain "why people behave in a corrupt manner" becomes central specifically in order to prevent corruption. This study is different from previous studies in some ways. The measurement was conducted toward corruptive tendencies, i.e. moral emotions, namely shame and guilt proneness, rather than the actual corruptive behaviour. The unit of analysis was the individual. Rozin, Lowery, and Imada (1999) stated that the emotions:

"... involve ongoing assessments of the moral worth and fit of the individual self within a community. These emotions motivate the individual to want to fit in, to behave in a culturally acceptable fashion, and to avoid harming people. They are self-focused and are sometimes referred to as the self-conscious emotions."

Moral emotion is emphasized in this article to examine corruption because the contemporary theoretical models regarding moral judgment and moral development (1) shows that emotion is part of a significant instrument for and close to moral judgment and decision if compared to moral reasoning, (2) indicates that moral involvement and attachment play a pivotal role as motivational power which embody moral cognitions towards moral behaviour, (3) urges that moral emotions trigger moral psychology researches that are not fixed or glued in the "human as *Homo economicus*" paradigm, (4) moral emotion variables able to capture the linkage between human and its social environment context, because it is assumed that moral emotion is preceded by social nuanced elicitors, (5) shows that moral action has more co-variation with moral emotion rather than moral reasoning, as well as (6) the latest research notions are being accommodated that emotion is not always irrational and that reasoning is not always reliable (Haidt, 2001; Haidt, 2003; Haidt, Koller, & Dias, 1993).

This research employed both personality dimension of conscientiousness and cultural dimension of collectivism/individualism as predictors of corruptive tendency. Cultural value orientation in this research was also measured in individual level. Some studies have linked corruption with personality and culture. However, most of those studies are conducted on the unit of analysis of country, nation, or organization, and corruptive perception index (CPI)—at country level—is often assigned as the dependent variable (e.g. de Graaf, 2007; Dong, Dulleck, & Torgler, 2012).

This research also gives construct validity (in terms of corrected item-total correlations) and reliability index of the instrument that measure moral emotion in Indonesian college

students. In the future, it is hoped that this instrument can be improved to make mapping about levels of tendencies and/or permissiveness toward corruption in young people in their own environment and generally in Indonesia.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Participants and design

Participants of this study were 117 college students (74 men, 43 women; $M_{age} = 19.02$ years; $SD_{age} = 1.71$ years) taken using convenience sampling technique from a private university in Jakarta. Distribution of the study programs of the students are as follows: Visual Communication Design (42), Computer Science (37), Economy & Accountancy (28), and Communication Science (10).

The design of this study is predictive correlational. Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regressions with predictor variables in the form of collectivism and conscientiousness, and criterion variable in the form of shame and guilt proneness (or corruption tendency) (Figure 1).

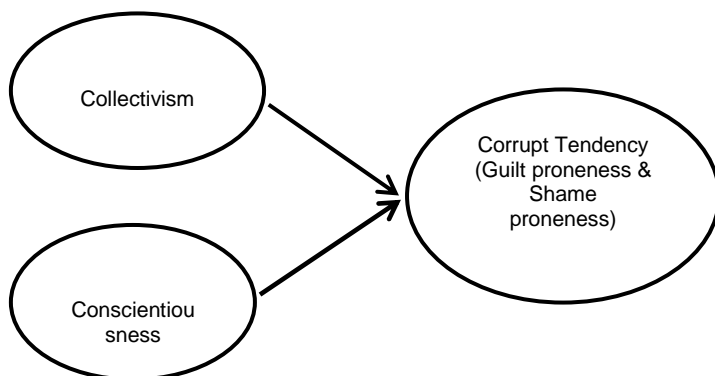


Figure 1: Hypothetical model

2.2 Materials and procedures

Participants are given psychological scales in Indonesian which consist of three segments, to measure the predictor and criterion variables. The measuring instruments are tested on 100 respondents (64 men, 36 women).

The Corruption Tendency measuring instrument is adapted from Guilt and Shame Proneness (GASP) Scale constructed by Cohen, Wolf, Panter, and Insko (2011). This instrument consists of 16 items, and consists of 4 sub-dimensions, namely Guilt-Negative-Behaviour-Evaluation (NBE; *feeling bad about how one acted*), Guilt-Repair (REP; *action*

tendencies, i.e., behaviour or behavioural intentions, focused on correcting or compensating for the transgression), Shame-Negative-Self-Evaluation (NSE; feeling bad about **oneself**), and Shame-Withdraw (WIT; action tendencies focused on hiding or withdrawing from public). The instrument response options range from *Very Unlikely* (score of 1) to *Very Likely* (score of 7).

The reliability test results for Guilt (NBE and REP) sub-scales indicate internal consistency index of $\alpha = 0.685$ by eliminating 3 of the 8 items. Corrected item-total correlations have a range from 0.281 to 0.550. Reliability test results for Shame-NSE sub-scale indicate internal consistency index of $\alpha = 0.608$ by eliminating 2 of the 4 items. Corrected item-total correlations are 0.441. Reliability test results for Shame-WIT sub-scale indicate internal consistency index of $\alpha = 0.680$ by not eliminating any items. Corrected item-total correlations have a range from 0.326 to 0.607.

Collectivism/Individualism instrument measurement is adapted from the Collectivism dimension of CVSCALE (Yoo, Donthu, & Lenartowicz, 2011), a form of measurement towards Hofstede's cultural value orientation (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010) on an individual level. This instrument consists of 6 items. The response options of this instrument ranged from *Strongly Disagree* (score of 1) to *Strongly Agree* (score of 7). Reliability test results shows internal consistency index of $\alpha = 0.636$ by eliminating 4 items. Corrected item-total correlation is 0.466. The high score achieved by the participants on this scale indicates that the participants adhere to collectivism values. Conversely, the low score achieved by the participants indicate that the participants adhere to individualism values.

Conscientiousness measuring instrument is adapted from Conscientiousness of The HEXACO Personality Inventory-Revised (HEXACO-PI-R) (Ashton & Lee, 2007; Lee & Ashton, 2004). The instrument consists of 16 items, with the following sub-sub-dimensions: Organization, Diligence, Perfectionism, and Prudence. Response options of this instrument ranged from *Strongly Disagree* (score of 1) to *Strongly Agree* (score of 5). Reliability test results indicate internal consistency index of $\alpha = 0.660$ by eliminating 10 items. Corrected item-total correlations have a range of 0.331 to 0.439.

3.0 Results and Discussions

Multiple linear regression analysis with criterion/dependent variable of Guilt proneness shows that $R^2 = 0.147$, $F(2, 116) = 9.838$, $p = 0.000$. It is found that collectivism ($\beta = 0.310$, $p < 0.05$) and Conscientiousness ($\beta = 0.196$, $p < 0.05$) positively predict tendency of not doing corruption in terms of guilt moral emotion traits (see Table 1).

Multiple linear regression analysis with criterion/dependent variable of Shame-NSE shows that $R^2 = 0.007$, $F(2, 116) = 0.428$, $p = 0.653$. It is found that collectivism ($\beta = 0.087$, $p > 0.05$) and Conscientiousness ($\beta = -0.012$, $p > 0.05$) cannot predict tendency of not doing corruption in terms of shame moral emotion traits (see Table 2).

Multiple linear regression analysis with criterion/dependent variable of Shame-WIT shows that $R^2 = 0.007$, $F(2, 116) = 0.392$, $p = 0.676$. It is found that collectivism ($\beta = -0.083$, $p > 0.05$) and Conscientiousness ($\beta = 0.012$, $p > 0.05$) cannot predict tendency of not doing corruption in terms of shame moral emotion traits (see Table 3).

This study found that **collectivism positively predicts guilt proneness**. This is in line with the finding by Dolan-Henderson (2003, p. vii, 197):

“Guilt-proneness was significantly related to ... Meaningful Connectedness Persons with a Communitarian ethical orientation are more prone to healthy guilt and to an approach to life that values and finds meaning and purpose in connection to others and to the community.”

What is also interesting from the finding of this study is that **collectivism does can not predict shame proneness**. The result might be caused by the existence of two natures of shame, namely adaptive and maladaptive. Shame (or: feeling of disgust toward the self; Terrizzi, 2013) can be maladaptive because it creates depression symptoms, also produce feelings of deficit or inadequacy in the self that are not as easily repaired (Haidt, 2003; McLeod, 2002; Navaratnam, 2011). However on the other hand, shame also has an adaptive function (Dansie, 2009; Wong & Tsai, 2007). Dansie (2009) shows that shame serves as an appeasement function in social relationships. Expression of shame also hampers assertive or dominant behaviour and communicate to other parties in the social group that themselves understood that they have committed a violation and shows submissive expression. Expression such as this further reduces punishment and aggression tendencies from other parties (Dansie, 2009; Haidt, 2003). Because there are two functions of shame, then it is not surprising when uncertainties in the direction of the correlation occurs, causing a lack of correlations between collectivism with shame proneness.

Table 1: Multiple linear regression analysis predicting guilt proneness ($n = 117$)

Variable	B	SE B	β	p
Collectivism	0.590	0.166	0.310	0.001
Conscientiousness	0.306	0.136	0.196	0.026

Note. $R^2 = 0.147$, $p < 0.05$; SE = standard error

Table 2: Multiple linear regression analysis predicting shame proneness-NSE ($n = 117$)

Variable	B	SE B	β	p
Collectivism	0.082	0.089	0.087	0.357
Conscientiousness	-0.010	0.073	-0.012	0.896

Note. $R^2 = 0.007$, $p > 0.05$

Table 3: Multiple linear regression analysis predicting shame proneness-WIT ($n = 117$)

Variable	B	SE B	β	p
Collectivism	-0.137	0.155	-0.083	0.378
Conscientiousness	0.017	0.127	0.133	0.894

Note. $R^2 = 0.007$, $p > 0.05$

This study found that **conscientiousness is able to predict in a positive direction the guilt proneness** even though its predicting power is weaker than the collectivism predictor. The researchers (e.g. Becker, 1998; Bogg & Roberts, 2004; Christopher, Zabel, & Jones, 2008; Price, 2001) agreed that in the conscientiousness concept, there are several common variances that can be given a label of “responsibility” (morally, socially).

Responsibility (in several literatures are synonymic with “dutifulness”, “reliability”) is called as one of the facets of conscientiousness. Responsibility as one of the components of conscientiousness has a characteristic as follows (Roberts, Lejuez, Krueger, & Richards, 2012, p. 3): “On the high end of the spectrum, responsibility reflects the tendency to follow through with promises to others and follow rules that make social groups work more smoothly.” Meanwhile, responsibility is a feature of guilt. The responsibility contained in both constructs (conscientiousness and guilt proneness) enables both to correlate.

Conscientiousness is found not able to predict shame proneness (NSE and WIT). Klibert, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, and Saito (2005) found that socially prescribed perfectionism is one of the elements of conscientiousness that positively correlate with shame. However, on the contrary, “Those who have higher, maladaptive levels of conscientiousness are characterized by an aversion to shame” (Schoenleber & Berenbaum, 2012, p. 302). Because conscientiousness is related with shame from various directions and ways, thus the absence of predictive correlation can be understood.

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

The contribution of this study is the construction of a theoretical model on an individual level consisting of two predictors simultaneously, namely in personality (conscientiousness of HEXACO) and culture (collectivism of Hofstede’s cultural value orientation), to predict corruption tendency (guilt and shame of GASP). This theoretical model surpasses the trend of current research, namely: (1) measurement of corrupt behaviour is mostly conducted on the group and organization level (including country), not individual; (2) measurement on the individual level mostly focus on integrity, not corruption; (3) corruptive behaviour research (specifically bribery) on the individual level is mostly conducted with experimental methods (with a risk of weakening ecological validity), not survey method; and (4) corruptive behaviour research is mostly conducted using economical and sociological approach rather than psychological.

This study found that (1) collectivism positively correlate with guilt proneness, (2) collectivism does not correlate with shame proneness, (3) conscientiousness correlate positively but weakly with guilt proneness, and (4) conscientiousness does not correlate with shame proneness.

The result of this study stressed that the type of personality that seems closest to morality and integrity (i.e. conscientiousness) apparently has little or no role in predicting corruption tendency. Integrity is more than conscientiousness (Becker, 1998). That is to say

if a person is organized, diligent, perfectionist, and prudent, it does not necessarily mean that he/she lacks or has fewer tendencies to corrupt.

Moreover, if culture such as collectivism “shifts”, whether as its implication, moral behaviour *always* changes according to culture? It is not as simple as it seems. This raises urgency on the need of other psychological construct to bridge this logical gap, and the most potential answer to this gap is moral identity. Moral identity includes (Bauman, 2011, p. 86): “... moral values while introducing the coherent identity-conferring commitments and determination that provide the stable character needed to be trustworthy,” and it needs substantial skills, planning, and comprehension (Zaman, 2012) to implement it. The influence of moral identity construct on corrupt tendencies needs to be further tested in terms of its main effect and especially its interaction with collectivism, conscientiousness, and other related psychological variables.

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