Research Article

THE PRICE OF POLITICS: INSTITUTIONAL REENGINEERING AS ANTI-CORRUPTION DISMANTLEMENT UNDER JOKOWI'S ADMINISTRATION (2014-2024)

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ABSTRACT

Despite waves of democratization and reform in Indonesia, corruption has evolved from a governance challenge into an institutionalized system, becoming more entrenched during President Joko Widodo's decade in office (2014-2024)—a period defined by increased anti-corruption rhetoric alongside worsening corrupt practices. Through systematic literature analysis and focus groups with 107 participants across Indonesia, this study encapsulates how corruption functions not as an anomaly but as an intrinsic component of governance. It further finds how anti-corruption institutions were deliberately weakened through legal changes such as the 2019 KPK Law revision; how political elites gained control over regulations; how fixed percentages for illegal payments became established practice in government projects; and how law enforcement actually managed corruption rather than fought it. This study contributes to the reconceptualization of corruption in Indonesia, tracing its transformation from isolated incidents of malfeasance into an essential mechanism for political and economic power—challenging conventional perspectives that frame corruption as governance failure when, in Indonesia, it manifests as governance itself.

Keywords: *Jokowi's Administration, Anti-Corruption Reform, Indonesia's Democratic Decline, Political Corruption*

ABSTRAK

Meskipun Indonesia telah mengalami banyak gelombang demokratisasi dan reformasi, korupsi justru berkembang dari sekadar tantangan pemerintahan menjadi sistem yang tertanam dalam lembaga, dan semakin mengakar selama masa jabatan Presiden Joko Widodo (2014-2024)—periode yang ditandai dengan meningkatnya retorika anti-korupsi namun bersamaan dengan memburuknya praktik korupsi. Melalui analisis literatur sistematis dan diskusi kelompok dengan 107 peserta dari berbagai daerah di Indonesia, penelitian ini menunjukkan bagaimana korupsi berfungsi bukan sebagai penyimpangan tetapi sebagai bagian tidak terpisahkan dari tata kelola pemerintahan. Penelitian ini juga menemukan bagaimana lembaga anti-korupsi sengaja dilemahkan melalui perubahan hukum seperti revisi Undang-Undang KPK tahun 2019; bagaimana elit politik mendapatkan kendali atas peraturan; bagaimana sudah ada "tarif tetap" untuk uang suap dalam proyek pemerintah; dan bagaimana penegak hukum justru mengelola korupsi daripada memberantasnya. Penelitian ini memberikan pemahaman baru tentang korupsi di Indonesia, mengikuti transformasinya dari kasus-kasus penyelewengan terpisah menjadi mekanisme penting untuk kekuasaan politik dan ekonomi—menantang pandangan umum yang menggambarkan korupsi sebagai kegagalan pemerintahan padahal di Indonesia, korupsi muncul sebagai bentuk pemerintahan itu sendiri.

Kata kunci: Administrasi Jokowi, Reformasi Anti-Korupsi, Kemunduran Demokrasi Indonesia, Korupsi Politik

INTRODUCTION

Corruption undermines democracy, distorts economic growth, and erodes public trust while extending beyond government into business and broader society. While scholarship defines corruption as the misuse of power for personal gain (Heywood & Rose, 2015), some have seen it as an informal pathway through structural inequities where formal institutions fail (Khan, 2018; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2020). Corruption may benefit certain actors in the short term, yet its lasting effects weaken governance, hinder economic efficiency, widen social divides, and undermine development goals (Stephenson, 2020). As corruption intensifies within a country, it creates ripple effects of unethical behavior across sectors while gradually eroding institutional integrity and social cohesion (Chapman & Lindner, 2016; Okiri et al., 2019).

Indonesia's struggle with systemic corruption has created significant barriers to good governance and development, with Transparency International's data showing troubling regression. Indonesia's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) fell to 34 in 2023, ranking it 115th globally—a notable decline from its score of 40 in 2019, suggesting corruption has returned to levels not seen in a decade (Transparency International, 2024). Now ranking below regional neighbors including Vietnam (41), Malaysia (50), and Singapore (83), Indonesia's backsliding raises serious questions about the effectiveness of anti-corruption policies during President Joko Widodo's (Jokowi) tenure (2014-2024).

Several interrelated factors fuel Indonesia's deteriorating corruption landscape, with economic implications including distorted resource allocation, higher transaction costs, and reduced investment appeal (Cruz et al., 2023). Corrupt networks thrive where officials wield influence over resources with minimal accountability (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016), a problem especially common in developing economies where public funds meant for essential services flow instead to private interests (Harish & Kachhi, 2024). Indonesia Corruption Watch observed this widespread challenge, documenting that 2023 alone saw 441 corruption cases involving private sector officials, 419 implicating local government employees, 204

entangling village heads, and over 150 cases penetrating ministries and state enterprises (Indonesian Corruption Watch, 2023). What manifests through these findings is a corruption ecosystem across multiple sectors and administrative levels, widening socioeconomic gaps and undermining service delivery while creating systemic obstacles to development priorities. Political dynamics have clearly affected Indonesia's corruption trajectory, especially through the controversial 2019 revision of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) Law that reduced the autonomy of the country's leading anti-corruption institution. This legislative change led to widespread civil protests under the *"Reformasi Dikorupsi"* (Corrupted Reform) movement across urban areas (Kompas.com, 2021), as citizens saw it as a deliberate attempt to weaken anti-corruption progress. Throughout Jokowi's administration, international monitoring organizations have repeatedly expressed concern over Indonesia's declining CPI score, which fell from 40 in 2019 to 34 in 2023—drawing global attention. The strong public response showed that many Indonesians understood the serious harm caused by weakening the KPK's powers, contradicting official statements that downplayed the impact.

Though corruption in Indonesia has been widely studied by academics, most research takes compartmentalized approaches—viewing corruption through separate legal, political, or economic lenses—instead of pursuing a complete understanding. For example, Putra and Linda (2022) studied socio-economic factors and how citizens can help prevent corruption, while Syarif and Faisal (2019) focused on political corruption, showing how hidden financing and control by elites makes the problem worse. Other researchers have examined corruption in specific areas including education (Marlina et al., 2024) or improving governance through better controls (Prakasa et al., 2022; Putri et al., 2024). These studies are helpful but they do not provide the big-picture framework needed to understand corruption's full complexity in Indonesia's governance system, leaving significant gaps in how systemic corruption becomes embedded within institutional structures and resistant to reform efforts.

This article addresses the analytical gap by combining literature review and focus group findings to study corruption during Jokowi's presidency, unfolding root

causes, connections, and how well reforms worked. By looking at corruption through a wider lens that includes governance systems, political economy, and institutions—not just legal issues—the research helps guide the development of better anti-corruption measures. As Indonesia moves into a new political phase after 2024, understanding what allows corruption to persist is crucial for creating better governance and improving both theory and practice in addressing Indonesian corruption.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs systematic mixed studies reviews (SMSR) with a *Parallel-Results Convergent Synthesis Design* approach (adapted from Hong et al., 2017) to investigate corruption dynamics during Joko Widodo's administration. This methodological framework combines quantitative and qualitative evidence to understand how corruption evolved into a systematized governance mechanism rather than isolated incidents of malfeasance. The approach provides a comprehensive analytical framework for examining three interconnected dimensions of Indonesia's governance system: formal institutional structures (laws, regulations, oversight mechanisms), informal institutional practices (cultural norms, patronage networks, institutional relationships), and power dynamics (authority distribution, resource allocation).

The design presents findings from two different data collection methods independently—*systematic literature review* (SLR) and qualitative *focus group discussions* (FGDs)—enabling rigorous cross-validation while maintaining analytical transparency. Both data sources undergo independent analysis through distinct coding frameworks before integration during the discussion phase, where findings are systematically compared, contrasted, and collectively interpreted. This triangulation approach strengthens the study's validity by corroborating key findings through multiple evidence sources, thereby mapping the manifold terrains of corruption that single-method approaches might overlook. The methodology specifically tracks how theoretical predictions of institutional reengineering manifest across both academic documentation and lived experiences of intersectional stakeholders.

**Figure 1.** *Parallel-Results Convergent Synthesis Design.*
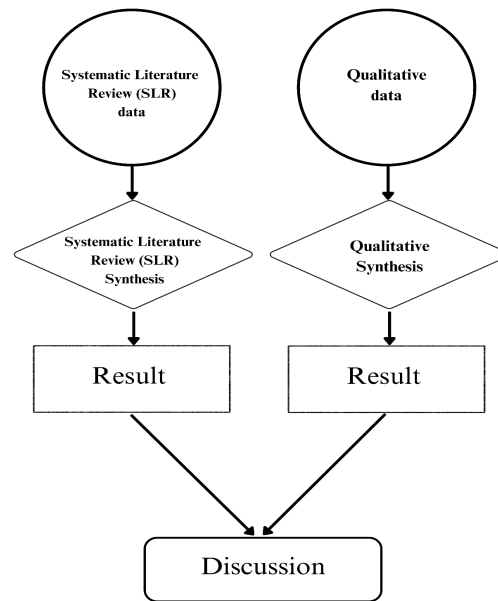
Source: Authors' analysis adapted from Hong et al. (2017).

The SLR was conducted to systematically identify, categorize and analyze relevant academic literatures on corruption in Indonesia during the Jokowi administration (2014-2024), following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines to enhance methodological rigor and transparency. The research team used the *Publish or Perish* (PoP) application to obtain quality and influential research articles, selecting the *Scopus* database for its credibility in providing internationally reputable academic literature with rigorous peer review processes and its inclusion of articles from various disciplines with journal rankings, citation data, and impact factors. Article searches were conducted using the English keywords *"corruption"* and *"Indonesia"* in the search engine keyword feature, with publication dates limited to 2014-2024 to cover both terms of Jokowi's administration. This specific timeframe afforded focused analysis of corruption dynamics during his leadership while ensuring alignment with the study's objective of examining corruption practices and anti-corruption policy challenges, with the initial search producing 200 research results.

The next sorting step limited the research results to only peer-reviewed journal articles to ensure academic validity, reducing the database to 174 articles. These were further filtered for titles relevant to corruption in Indonesia during Jokowi's decade in office, yielding 96 articles. After individually reading the abstracts, 71 articles were excluded because: (1) The article discusses corruption in the private sector; (2) The study only examines one particular sector or institution, without providing a broader picture of corruption trends in Indonesia; (3) Inconsistency with the time focus (a decade of Jokowi's administration); (4) Using perspectives that are not relevant to the focus of the research, such as historical studies that are not related to the policies of the Jokowi administration era. This multi-stage filtering process ultimately yielded 25 articles discussing various dimensions of corruption in Indonesia during the Jokowi administration, with the complete process illustrated in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2. PRISMA systematic literature diagram.
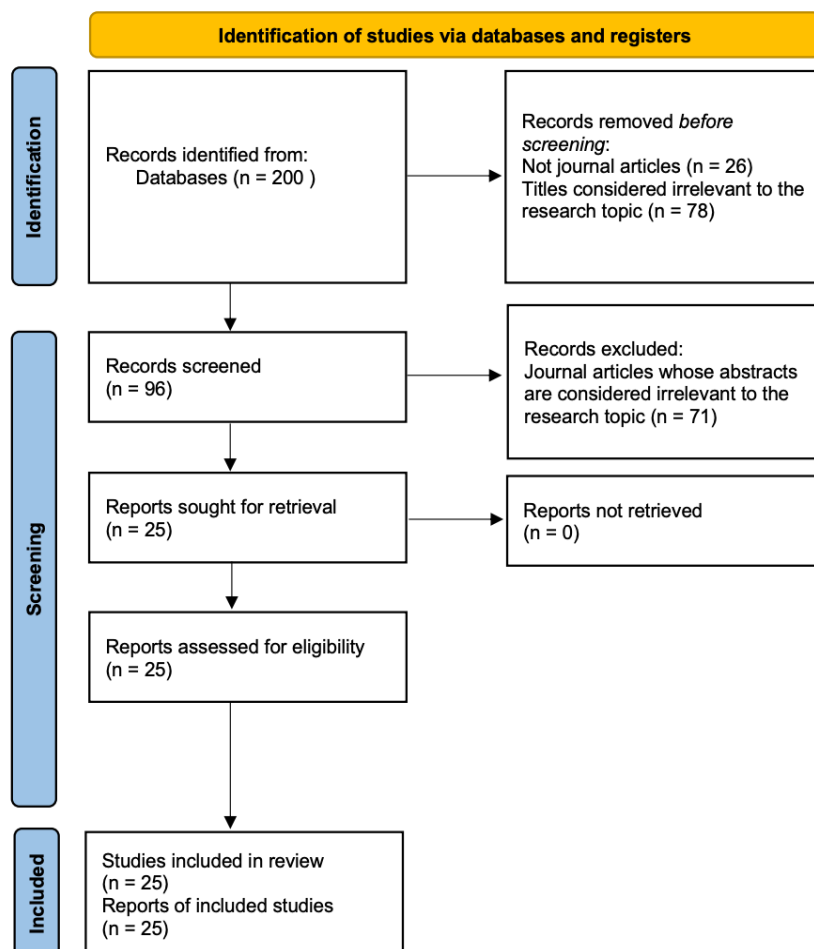
Source: Authors' own analysis.

To thoroughly examine the selected literature, the research team implemented a structured analytical framework. Following a complete examination of all 25 articles by multiple researchers, the development of a content extraction protocol was guided by six essential inquiries:

1) *"What are the main causes of corruption in Indonesia?"*
2) *"How do political and bureaucratic structures enable the persistence of systemic corruption?"*
3) *"How did the policies, governance strategies, and institutional actions of the last presidency contribute to the maintenance of corruption?"*
4) *"Is there any connection between Jokowi's administration and corruption?"*
5) *"Are there any successful anti-corruption methods and efforts?"*
6) *"What are the challenges to anti-corruption methods and efforts?"*

To facilitate document review, thorough text analysis was conducted through careful reading and annotation of the selected articles. Each researcher independently examined the articles to identify content relevant to the research questions. The findings were then aggregated through a collaborative process, where team members cross-verified each other's analyses to ensure accuracy and comprehensiveness. The final analysis incorporated only findings with direct textual evidence in the original articles. Throughout this process, detailed documentation of analytical decisions was maintained, with regular team consultations held to address interpretive differences and build consensus on emerging themes and patterns in the literature.

The SLR findings were triangulated with qualitative data from FGDs conducted through a collaborative initiative between Universitas Airlangga and the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) related to the Integrity Assessment Survey (SPI) discourse. This partnership combined the university's research expertise with KPK's extensive institutional networks, providing comprehensive access to

hierarchical stakeholder perspectives. The FGDs employed purposive sampling across three participant categories: (1) internal government officials from oversight bodies including Inspectorates and Regional Personnel Agencies within the Government Internal Supervisory Apparatus (APIP); (2) external stakeholders including government procurement vendors and service users; and (3) anti-corruption specialists comprising journalists, academics, and NGO representatives—ensuring panoramic coverage from multiple organizational perspectives.

Sessions were organized across three cities—Surabaya, Malang, and Madiun—over two days each, methodically bifurcating internal government informants (day one) from external stakeholders and experts (day two), capturing regional complexities and promoting unfiltered discourse through deliberate group differentiation. Given the sensitive nature surrounding the issue of corruption and its derivatives, stringent confidentiality protocols protected the 107 participants representing 28 administrative areas through pseudonyms, anonymized transcripts, and secure meeting locations.

Table 1. Distribution of FGD Participants.

Location	Day Type	Participant Category	Specific Role	Count	Key Function
Surabaya	Day 1 (Internal)	Government Oversight	Inspectorate	16	Program monitoring & evaluation
		Personnel Management	Human Resources Agency	2	Staff integrity training
	Day 2 (External)	Private Sector	Procurement Vendors	19	Government contract services
		Civil Society	Academic Researchers	1	Governance analysis

		Civil Society	NGO Representatives	1	Corruption monitoring
	Surabaya Total			**39**	
Malang	Day 1 (Internal)	Government Oversight	Inspectorate	13	Program monitoring & evaluation
		Personnel Management	Human Resources Agency	3	Staff integrity training
	Day 2 (External)	Private Sector	Procurement Vendors	15	Government contract services
		Media	Journalists	1	Expenditure investigation
		Civil Society	NGO Representatives	1	Corruption monitoring
	Malang Total			**33**	
Madiun	Day 1 (Internal)	Government Oversight	Inspectorate	13	Program monitoring & evaluation
		Personnel Management	Human Resources Agency	5	Staff integrity training
	Day 2 (External)	Private Sector	Procurement Vendors	15	Government contract services

		Media	Journalists	1	Expenditure in-vestigation
		Civil Soci-ety	Academic Re-searchers	1	Governance analysis
	Madiun Total			**35**	

Source: Authors' own analysis.

The qualitative data from the FGDs went through an analysis using Atlas.ti software, employing a systematic coding framework developed through both de-ductive and inductive approaches. The initial coding scheme was established based on the theoretical constructs identified in the literature review, including categories for corruption typologies, systemic enablers, and institutional factors, then further refined through open coding of the first three transcripts to incorporate emergent themes. After obtaining results from the SLR and FGD synthesis, the knowledge gained from both data collection models was compared and combined as described in the *Parallel-Results Convergent Synthesis Design*. The research findings are dis-cussed by identifying similarities between data sources, with consistent SLR and FGD results providing stronger evidence, while discrepancies are addressed through further analysis examining contextual variations, respondents' perspec-tives, or literature limitations.

RESULTS

Indonesia's corruption landscape constitutes a multidimensional ecosystem that permeates various levels of governance and society. Our analysis of this gov-ernance system examines three interconnected dimensions: formal institutional structures (laws, regulations, oversight mechanisms), informal institutional prac-tices (cultural norms, patronage networks, institutional relationships), and power dynamics (authority distribution, resource allocation). Through this framework, the systematic literature review (SLR) identifies five key factors that have maintained

corrupt practices during Jokowi's administration: (1) weakened accountability systems that protect powerful figures from oversight; (2) misuse of public positions for personal gain; (3) unbalanced law enforcement that targets opponents while shielding allies; (4) deliberate weakening of democratic institutions, especially anti-corruption bodies; and (5) high political campaign costs that turn elected offices into investments requiring illegal returns. Focus group discussions (FGDs) with participants across Indonesia support these findings while pointing to additional issues: intentional bureaucratic loopholes, patronage networks in political financing, and cultural practices that normalize corrupt exchanges. These interconnected elements, documented through both research approaches, point to a governance setting where corruption serves not as an exception but as standard practice—a regular way of distributing resources and maintaining political relationships, spanning all three dimensions of the governance system.

Institutional and Systemic Weaknesses

Both the SLR and FGDs identify weak accountability and ineffective enforcement mechanisms as primary enablers of corruption in Indonesia (Alfada, 2019b; Andiri, 2023, Isra et al., 2017; Muhtar et al., 2018; Prabowo et al., 2018; Purwaningsih & Widodo, 2020; Suwana, 2020; Wahyudi, 2019). The literature indicates how limited leadership commitment to anti-corruption initiatives compounds accountability failures across governance structures (Buttle et al., 2016; Rosser & Kartika, 2020; Wahyudi, 2019). Integrity within the system deteriorates further through selective application of laws and protection of elite interests, creating environments where high-ranking officials operate with effective impunity despite involvement in corrupt activities (Power, 2018; Riyadi & Mustofa, 2020; Tegnan et al., 2021). Focus group participants echoed these findings, with systemic loopholes emerging as a dominant theme (referenced 70 times across discussions). A participant from Blitar highlighted uneven enforcement: *"So far, corruption prevention and eradication focuses more on the executive only, not the legislature and judiciary"*. This selective application extended beyond branches of government, as a watchdog organization representative from Surabaya observed: *"Bureaucrats are easy to fight. But*

Law Enforcement Apparatus is a different story. Corruption eradication becomes more difficult after the KPK Law revision".

Table 2. Causes of corruption in Indonesia during 2014-2024's administration period.

Causes	Focus	Number of Papers	References
Low accountability	Lack of leadership commitment to anti-corruption, lack of transparency	12	02, 06, 07, 08, 09, 11, 12, 13, 15, 21, 22, 25
Misuse of authority	Conflict of interest among public officials	12	02, 03, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 20, 23, 24, 25
Weakened law enforcement	Selective law enforcement, code of silence, overlapping regulations	9	01, 02, 05, 09, 13, 15, 21, 22, 24
Weakened democratic institutions	Interference of anticorruption body's authority, limited resources, ineffective institutional reform	8	01, 05, 08, 15, 16, 17, 22, 23
Political cost	Cost of election, sale of public offices	8	01, 03, 06, 14, 15, 17, 18, 25
Culture	Normalization of corruption, passed-down corrupt practices	5	10, 13, 19, 21, 24
Oligarchy	Dominating political elites	5	06, 14, 16, 22, 25
Low public participation	Weak public oversight	4	11, 12, 19, 21

Decentralization	Insufficient oversight in local governments, the establishment of local political dynasties	3	08, 12, 14
Inadequate salary	Motivational drivers of corruption	3	20, 21, 22

Source: Authors' own analysis.

Perhaps the most concerning pattern is the systematic weakening of democratic institutions and oversight bodies by political actors, which has undermined Indonesia's anti-corruption efforts during Jokowi's administration (Rosser & Kartika, 2020). The KPK, once an effective anti-corruption agency, has been constrained by legislative amendments that limited its investigative authority and operational independence (Isra et al., 2017; Suwana, 2020). The FGD participants confirmed these findings, with respondents across multiple regions articulating how political elites have deliberately diminished the effectiveness of anti-corruption bodies through both formal policy modifications and informal pressure, enabling corrupt networks to remain entrenched within governance structures.

Table 3. Co-occurrence tables on causes of corruption in indonesia based on FGD transcripts.

Causes of Corruption Codes	Quotes
Systemic loopholes	70
Abuse of authority	45
Cultural factors	32
Collusion	25
Friendship/connections	17
Gratification	15
Nepotism	15
Weak law enforcement	12
Inconsistency	11

Fear/reluctance to report	10
Rebate/cashback incentives	9
Functional factors	9
Conflict of interest	9
Inadequate oversight	7
Lack of awareness	3

Source: Authors' own analysis.

Political Cost and Patronage Networks

The financial burden of electoral competition constitutes another principal driver of corruption in Indonesia's governance system. The SLR findings indicate that substantial campaign expenditures compel political actors to pursue rent-seeking strategies, including monetizing public appointments and exchanging government contracts for financial support (Muhtadi, 2015; Lewis & Hendrawan, 2019). FGD findings substantiate this analysis, documenting how political candidates perceive an obligation to recover their electoral investments following successful campaigns, thereby institutionalizing corrupt practices in procurement systems and budget allocation processes. This pattern creates a self-perpetuating cycle of corruption as expressed by one expert participant from East Java:

> *"The risk of becoming a regent (or regional head) is the cost of politics and maintaining constituencies. Finally, corruption is considered as 'something that must be done' to survive".*

This candid observation is emblematic of the structural predicament confronting public officials, where political viability becomes directly linked to participation in corrupt activities, thus reinforcing entrenched patronage networks throughout the governance system. The financial imperatives of electoral politics transform corruption from a matter of individual moral failure into a systematic requirement for political participation and survival within Indonesia's democratic framework.

Systemic Persistence of Corruption During Jokowi's Administration

Corruption during Jokowi's administration persists not simply as a consequence of inadequate law enforcement but as a phenomenon deeply embedded within political and bureaucratic structures. The SLR identifies multiple mechanisms that sustain corrupt practices throughout the governance system, including the deliberate weakening of anti-corruption institutions (7 references), the maintenance of political relationships through patronage arrangements (6 references), deficiencies in transparency frameworks (5 references), the consolidation of political power within family networks (4 references), and the appropriation of regulatory processes by private interests (3 references).

Table 4. Systemic corruption in Indonesia during 2014-2024's administration period.

Systemic Corruption	Number of Papers	References
Undermining the independence of the anti-corruption agency	7	01, 03, 05, 06, 07, 16
Preserving coalition ties with patronage politics	6	06, 12, 16, 18, 24, 25
Lack of proper mechanisms for transparency and accountability	5	08, 09, 17, 21, 23
The establishment of political dynasties	4	11, 12, 13, 14
Regulatory capture	3	02, 04, 15
Red tape and bureaucratic inefficiency	3	07, 14, 19
Political-military nexus	2	02, 17
Law enforcement misalignment	2	05, 20
Selective law enforcement	2	10, 21
Large-scale political party financing system	1	01

Source: Authors' own analysis.

The revision of the KPK Law in 2019 is widely regarded as a strategic move to weaken the anti-corruption commission's authority by restricting its wiretapping, investigative, and prosecutorial powers, effectively curtailing its ability to hold high-ranking officials accountable (Prakasa et al., 2022; Riyadi, 2022a; Riyadi, 2022b). The establishment of a Supervisory Board introduced additional bureaucratic procedures that enabled political figures to exert considerable influence over ongoing corruption investigations. FGD participants articulated this deterioration directly, with one from Nganjuk district stating: *"KPK should return to its original form, not be part of the executive, and truly become an independent institution (after the KPK Law revision). But lately, KPK has become a tool for hostage-taking interests because it has become part of the executive, its prestige has decreased".* Another participant from Magetan noted: *"There has been a change within KPK that has caused a shift in KPK policy. The existence of KPK institutions is needed, but the policy is still selective. Several cases of KPK's selectivity at the national level affect local government perceptions of KPK".*

Another key enabler of systemic corruption is the preservation of coalition ties through patronage politics, wherein political appointments within Jokowi's administration have often prioritized personal loyalty over professional competence (Hadiz, 2017; Aspinall, 2015; Mietzner, 2025). A case in point is the appointment of Terawan Putranto as Minister of Health, which Mietzner (2020) and Ismail (2020) notes was largely influenced by personal ties rather than meritocratic considerations—these practices not only undermine bureaucratic efficiency but also solidify networks that facilitate corrupt behavior.

Regulatory capture further entrenches corruption by allowing oligarchic interests to dominate policymaking, with public projects and state resources often allocated to political allies, ensuring financial and electoral support for incumbents (Lewis & Hendrawan, 2019; Paranata, 2022). The FGD findings corroborate this, with participants highlighting the direct involvement of law enforcement officials (APH), NGOs, and the media in facilitating corrupt practices, as one participant stated:

"In some areas, the State Attorney's Office (Kejari) and the Police control almost all projects, so service providers must register through them. The head of the Regional Apparatus Organization (OPD) only functions as a figure who is crushed and forced to follow the will".

This systemic entrenchment makes anti-corruption efforts exceedingly difficult as those responsible for enforcing the law are often complicit in corrupt schemes, while the establishment of political dynasties (cited in 4 references) has further contributed to corruption's persistence through familial networks controlling public offices and passing key government positions within the same elite circles (Alfada, 2019a). The lack of transparency and oversight mechanisms (5 references) exacerbates the problem, as accountability measures are often circumvented by those in power, further evidenced by the role of law enforcement and oversight institutions that fail to act independently.

The FGD data indicate that law enforcement officers, who should function as neutral arbitrators, are often co-opted into corrupt schemes, with participants noting that even institutions responsible for internal oversight, such as the Government Internal Supervisory Apparatus (APIP), are rendered ineffective due to overlapping jurisdictions and intervention by higher authorities. Perhaps more concerning, the media and NGOs, which are expected to function as external watchdogs, are often compromised, with FGD participants reporting that certain news outlets and journalists receive financial incentives to suppress negative reporting, while some NGOs engage in extortionist tactics rather than genuine advocacy, as illustrated in this testimony:

"It should (media work) be transparent, accountable, but the fact is that it always (utilizes) insiders. Even the media will also get 'news fees' if there are insiders. The media is also in a dilemma; even in the office, there are 2 groups, journalists with integrity and journalists in the management who have different interests because of the business realm".

Cultural acceptance of corruption further entrenches its persistence in Indonesian society, with SLR data indicating that corruption is often rationalized as an adaptive mechanism to a flawed system (Heywood & Rose, 2015) and FGD findings supporting this perspective through 32 instances citing cultural factors as a root cause of corruption. A watchdog organization representative from Surabaya captured this systematic undermining: *"The Geneva convention isn't fully implemented. The existence of supplier associations serves to serve the interests of the association".* This observation reflects how formal anti-corruption frameworks are undermined by informal networks that normalize corrupt practices within governance structures. Nepotism, collusion, and the expectation of reciprocal favors in public administration contribute to normalizing corrupt behaviors, while gratification and kickbacks remain prevalent in bureaucratic transactions, with the FGD identifying rebate/cashback incentives (9 references) as a common mechanism used to sustain corrupt arrangements between public officials and private sector actors.

This mirrors previous literature stating that private sector actors serve as catalysts in perpetuating corruption by offering bribes to expedite bureaucratic processes (Prabowo et al., 2018), with the interweaving of systemic, institutional, and cultural factors suggesting that corruption is deeply embedded within Indonesian governance, requiring multi-pronged reforms at both the political and societal levels to address its root causes effectively.

DISCUSSION

This research makes a contribution to academic understanding of corruption dynamics in Indonesia during the presidency of Jokowi (2014-2024) by examining how anti-corruption mechanisms underwent institutional reengineering to become governance tools serving corrupt networks. The convergence between SLR and FGD findings substantiates corruption's transformation into an institutional governance mechanism under Jokowi's administration. Where academic literature identifies structural mechanisms of entrenchment—the systematic weakening of KPK, proliferation of patronage networks, and regulatory capture—FGD testimonies map how these play out in practice. Participants articulated experiences where

"KPK became a tool for hostage-taking interests" and where enforcement became "selective", validating theoretical predictions of institutional reengineering. Together, qualitative evidence and academic documentation unfold the trajectories that anti-corruption reforms operated as successful governance recalibrations rather than failed accountability measures, evidencing how corruption evolved from isolated incidents into the operating system through which political and economic power functions.

Anti-corruption efforts during Jokowi's administration were not simply failed reforms—they were strategic deception. These initiatives served as corruption theater—performances to impress international observers while actually strengthening corrupt networks (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016). When reforms did not work, it was not because of poor execution but by design—creating systems that gave lip service to accountability while making sure corruption continued. The 2019 KPK Law amendments are emblematic of how legal frameworks themselves become tools for protecting corrupt interests while keeping up democratic appearances (Power, 2018). By weakening anti-corruption bodies from within, these reforms turned watchdogs from potential constraints into shields for corrupt networks (Isra et al., 2017; Suwana, 2020).

This weakening of anti-corruption institutions ties directly to the political economy of corruption that thrived under Jokowi, turning random acts of corruption into an organized system where corruption is simply part of doing government business. Indonesia's expensive elections created dependencies between politicians and their funders, making corruption the operating system for political financing rather than a deviation from normal practice (Muhtadi, 2015; Lewis & Hendrawan, 2019). A shadow system runs alongside official government—with fixed percentages taken from projects, networks for sharing the money, and methods to hide the transfers (Prabowo et al., 2018). Law enforcement agencies did not fight corruption—they managed it, creating protected markets where connections mattered more than laws (Hadiz, 2017; Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016) and formal regulations served as bargaining chips rather than boundaries, with key positions filled by allies who would protect corrupt networks (Riyadi & Mustofa, 2020).

Beyond these systemic mechanisms, cultural explanations of corruption distract from the extraction systems deliberately created by political and economic elites (Buttle et al., 2016; Heywood & Rose, 2015). When contextualized in history, this points to disturbing continuities in Indonesia's governance: that despite cycles of reform and transition to democracy, corruption systems have been found to be extremely resilient. The persistence of patronage networks, regulatory capture, and elite impunity suggests that corruption is not a failure in governance but a form of governance—a mechanism by which political and economic power is exercised and reproduced through electoral cycles. The Jokowi period represents not an aberration but an intensification of these patterns, with anti-corruption institutions themselves becoming targets of capture (Power, 2018; Hadiz, 2017).

Here, it points to a troubling conclusion about Indonesia's anti-corruption efforts: technical solutions have not just failed—they have been turned into shields for the very networks they were meant to dismantle. In fact, corruption in Indonesia continues not because reforms have not been ambitious enough, but because they have been carefully designed to create an impression of progress while actually protecting the system (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2015). Looking at the patterns during Jokowi's decade in office, this suggests a need to rethink what corruption actually is in Indonesia—not a breakdown of good governance but governance itself, the operating system through which political and economic power functions.

This means real reform must now confront a darker reality: corruption is not just tolerated in Indonesia's political landscape—it is essential for survival. The system does not merely permit corruption; it demands it as part of the price of doing politics. When corruption is this deeply woven into the fabric of governance, what begins as anti-corruption reform naturally becomes a sophisticated shield for corrupt networks. Ironically, the more visible anti-corruption efforts become, the more effectively they protect the corrupt systems they claim to fight—a strange twist where the loudest reformers often hide the deepest corruption (see, in particular, Fisman & Golden, 2017). Indeed, the more impressive reforms look on paper, the better they mask what is really happening—creating a show of progress while corruption quietly grows stronger and puts down deeper roots (Stephenson, 2020).

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to corruption theory by documenting institutional reengineering—the deliberate transformation of anti-corruption mechanisms into corruption-enabling systems. Moving beyond corruption as governance failure, our findings pinpoint how Jokowi's administration has come to systematize corruption as governance itself. Through theoretical examination and empirical validation, we document how formal reforms created informal advantages, turning anti-corruption infrastructure into protection for corrupt networks. Corruption during this period persisted not simply as inadequate law enforcement but as a phenomenon systematically embedded within political and bureaucratic structures that made it essential for political survival. The systematic weakening of anti-corruption institutions, the influence of elite interests over regulatory processes, and the calculated use of political coalitions in concert hinder substantial reform efforts.

Despite the introduction of various formal anti-corruption measures, genuine reform remains distant in a governance context marked by enduring oligarchic control and enforcement agencies lacking true independence. These findings indicate that truly addressing corruption requires both strong institutional frameworks and significant changes in political and societal norms. Advancing toward corruption reduction is much more contingent upon comprehensive strategies including better electoral transparency systems, independent oversight bodies, and robust legal protections for whistleblowers—approaches that address both the structural facilitators and cultural foundations of corrupt practices in Indonesia's governance system.

Theoretical Implications and Research Directions

This research advances corruption theory by introducing the concept of corruption as institutional reengineering rather than institutional failure, suggesting the need to reconceptualize anti-corruption reforms in contexts where power holders

control reform processes. The framework of governance dimensions—formal structures, informal practices, and power dynamics—provides analytical tools for examining how corruption becomes systematized within democratic institutions.

This study contains notable methodological shortcomings that require attention in subsequent research. The emphasis on qualitative methods and secondary sources provides limited insight into the economic dimensions of corruption, leaving a considerable knowledge gap regarding its precise costs to Indonesia's development trajectory. Future research would benefit from incorporating quantitative economic analyses that measure corruption's concrete effects on public resource allocation, service delivery effectiveness, and the broader investment environment.

The concentration on national governance overlooks essential regional variations in corruption practices across Indonesia's decentralized system. As administrative authorities have dispersed to numerous local governments, corruption mechanisms have likely evolved into diverse regional forms inadequately captured in this analysis. Subsequent studies should investigate how decentralization has transformed rather than eliminated corruption opportunities, with particular attention to how entrenched local power structures maintain and adapt corrupt practices to changing conditions.

Perhaps most consequentially, future studies must examine whether Jokowi's governance approach has fundamentally altered Indonesia's anti-corruption landscape in ways designed to persist beyond his presidency. Research should determine if the institutional changes identified represent a temporary regression or a strategic reconfiguration of accountability systems. This investigation should examine whether these patterns reflect a deliberate strategy to institutionalize corruption as a governance mechanism rather than mere policy failures.

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Appendix Table 1. SLR Data

Code	Authors	Paper Title	Journal Title	Year	Volume	Issue
01	Mietzner, M.	Populist Anti-Scientism, Religious Polarisation, and Institutionalised Corruption: How Indonesia's Democratic Decline Shaped Its COVID-19 Response	Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs	2020	39	2
02	Riyadi, B. S.	Culture of abuse of power due to conflict of interest to corruption for too long on the management form resources of oil and gas in Indonesia	International Journal of Criminology and Sociology	2020	9	NA
03	Alfada, A.	The destructive effect of corruption on economic growth in Indonesia: A threshold model	Heliyon	2019	5	10
04	Lewis, B. D., & Hendrawan, A.	The impact of majority coalitions on local government spending, service delivery, and corruption in Indonesia	European Journal of Political Economy	2019	58	NA
05	Isra, S., Yuliandri, Amsari, F., & Tegnan, H.	Obstruction of justice in the effort to eradicate corruption in Indonesia	International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice	2017	51	NA
06	Muhtadi, B.	Jokowi's First Year: A Weak President Caught between Reform and Oligarchic Politics	Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies	2015	51	3
07	Suwana, F.	What motivates digital activism? The case of the Save KPK movement in Indonesia	Information Communication and Society	2020	23	9
08	Alfada, A.	Does Fiscal Decentralization Encourage Corruption in Local Governments? Evidence from Indonesia	Journal of Risk and Financial Management	2019	12	3

09	Prakasa, S. U. W., Asis, & Sahid, M. M.	Reduce Corruption in Public Procurement: The Effort Towards Good Governance	Bestuur	2022	10	1
10	Prabowo, H., Hamdani, R., & Sanusi, Z.	The new face of people power: An exploratory study on the potential of social media for combating corruption in Indonesia	Australasian Accounting, Business and Finance Journal	2018	12	3
11	Riyadi, B.S.	Culture of abuse of power in indonesia from the perspective of criminology and law	International Journal of Criminology and Sociology	2020	9	NA
12	Rosser, A., & Kartika, W.	Conflict, contestation, and corruption reform: the political dynamics of the EITI in Indonesia	Contemporary Politics	2020	26	2
13	Buttle, J. W., Graham Davies, S., & Meliala, A. E.	A cultural constraints theory of police corruption: Understanding the persistence of police corruption in contemporary Indonesia	Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology	2016	49	3
14	Paranata, A.	The miracle of anti-corruption efforts and regional fiscal independence in plugging budget leakage: evidence from western and eastern Indonesia	Heliyon	2022	8	10
15	Tegnan, H., Karjoko, L., Barkhuizen, J., & Bajrektarevic, A. H.	Mining Corruption and Environmental Degradation in Indonesia: Critical Legal Issues	Bestuur	2021	9	2
16	Power, T. P.	Jokowi's authoritarian turn and Indonesia's democratic decline	Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies	2018	54	3
17	Aspinall, E.	Oligarchic populism: Prabowo subianto's	Indonesia	2015	99	1

		challenge to Indonesian democracy				
18	Mietzner, M.	Flirting with Autocracy in Indonesia: Jokowi's Majoritarianism and its Democratic Legacy	Journal of Financial Crime	2025	NA	NA
19	Ismail, I., Fathonih, A., Prabowo, H., Hartati, S., & Redjeki, F.	Transparency and corruption: Does E-government effective to combat corruption?	International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation	2020	24	4
20	Andini, O. G., Nilasari, N., & Eurian, A. A.	Restorative Justice in Indonesia Corruption Crime: a Utopia	Legality: Jurnal Ilmiah Hukum	2023	31	1
21	Wahyudi, S.	Penal Policy on Assets Recovery on Corruption Cases in Indonesia	Journal of Indonesian Legal Studies	2019	4	1
22	Muhtar, Sutaryo, & Sriyanto.	Corruption in Indonesian local government: Study on triangle fraud theory	International Journal of Business and Society	2018	19	2
23	Hadiz, V. R.	Indonesia's year of democratic setbacks: towards a new phase of deepening illiberalism?	Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies	2017	53	3
24	Riyadi, B. S., & Mustofa, M.	Corruption culture on managing natural resources: The case political crime "papa asking stock of PT. Freeport Indonesia"	International Journal of Criminology and Sociology	2020	9	NA
25	Purwaningsih, T., & Widodo, B. E. C.	The interplay of incumbency, political dinasty and corruption in indonesia: Are political dynasties the cause of corruption in Indonesia?	Revista UNISCI Journal	2020	53	18