

An Explanation of Corruption Cases in Indonesia from Al-Ghazali's Psychological Construct of *Nafsu*

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Abstract. The previous study of the psychological construct of *nafsu* by Fachrunisa and Chizanah (2020) had some empirical limitations, since it only focused on the theoretical field, without empirically-supported evidence. The current study aimed to find out the supporting empirical data by conducting research to figure out the psychological dynamics of corruption conducts by using case study method. This study involved three inmates of *Lembaga Pemasyarakatan* (Rehabilitation Centre) in Yogyakarta, Indonesia who were previously involved in corruption. The results were analysed to find out the congruence of the psychological construct of *nafsu* with the empirical evidence. This study showed that Al-Ghazali's psychological construct of *nafsu* could be used to explain the psychological dynamics of immoral behaviour, especially in corruption.

Keywords: corruption, immoral, *nafsu*, the psychological construct of *nafsu*

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Introduction

The previous study from Fachrunisa and Chizanah (2020) found out the relevance of Al Ghazali's psychological construct of *nafsu* in explaining immoral behaviour. *Nafsu* had been identified as the psychological state of human where its basic state tended to fulfil the serving God motive. Hence, the inappropriate mechanism of the *nafsu*, or the changing state from its original state, could trigger immoral behaviour on human being. The study also created a psychological model for explaining the mechanism of the changes. However, the previous study still showed some empirical limitations, since it only focused on the theoretical field, without empirically-supported evidence. It was necessary to look for the empirical evidence to enhance the construct validity of the model, so that the model will be theoretically and empirically established.

This study aimed at examining the relevance of Al-Ghazali's psychological dynamics of *nafsu* with the empirical study of immoral behavior. If the result of this empirical study was not suitable with the theoretical study, this meant that the model did not work and needed to be re-examined. But if the result resembled the model, so the empirical evidence from this study could be used to operationalize the theoretical model of *nafsu*. Yin (2014) stated that the great number of evidences would support the validity of a construct.

Corruption was chosen to be studied by the researcher as corruption is one of the socially-opposed immoral behavior in many countries. The researcher also viewed corruption as a complex behaviour due to its complexity in motives (Salama, 2014). Therefore, the complex behavioural mechanism of corruption would give rich understandings in immoral behaviour.

Besides that, the existence of corruption also indicates the presence of *syahwat*. The previous study showed that *syahwat* was the main cause of the change of the original state of *nafsu*. Some characteristics of *syahwat* were the 'pleasure' and 'satisfaction' principles which were manifested in the needs for owning things that are not necessary for the life in the hereafter. Those characteristics could be identified in corruption behaviour since it had been associated with the great amount of state losses (Corruption Eradication Commission [KPK], 2006).

Other than that, the study on corruption would also give practical benefits for the country by discovering the appropriate approach to eliminate the extent of corruptions, as corruption is still the most problematic issue in Indonesia. Indonesian Corruption Watch (2018) stated that there are 392 corruption cases in that year with total amount of losses as much as 4.17 billion rupiahs. Those financial losses were not only affecting economic sector, but also shows detrimental effects on social life, poverty, politic and

democracy, law, national security, environmental damage, and the good governance within the government (Kurniadi, 2011). The current theoretically and empirically-established psychological dynamics of *nafsu*, might explain and serve as one reference for developing preventive and curative action against corruption.

Methods

This study used qualitative approach to explore a phenomenon (Moleong, 2012), and used the case study method as explained by Yin (2014). The method was chosen to understand the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of corruption phenomenon in depth by considering the context and the phenomenon. This method also used multiple sources, those were interview transcripts, observation, and other supporting documents, to understand the cases so that the researcher could portray more precisely about the process of the corruption. Besides that, this method could also be used to explain about decision making process in human.

Three participants were involved in this study. They were prisoners of the rehabilitation center charged with corruption in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The criterias for participant inclusion were as follow: First, participant should be charged with corruption. Second, they were willing to participate in this study. With these criteria, the researcher did data collection for all of the 24 corruption prisoners at the center, including the types of cases. Lastly, the researcher chose the participants based on the period of detention. Since there were diverse types of corruption cases among the detainees, the researcher decided to choose the ones with the longest detention period for each type of the case to achieve the maximum variety of the case. The types of corruption case were categorized based on the type of institution from which the cases were reported, namely (1) private sector, (2) government sector, and (3) the third party with whom the government had a cooperation. Finally, the selection resulted in three participants who were chosen and gave their consent to participate in this study.

Findings

The result would explain the integrated analysis of the psychological dynamics of corruption and the psychological model of *nafsu*.

The psychological dynamics of participants

The researchers name the participants with X, Y and Z. Each participant did different types of corruption. X was charged as being involved in

corruption of airplanes procurement. Y was a public accountant who was involved in the manipulation of the final voters list by the General Election Commission (*Komisi Pemilihan Umum* or KPU). While Z was a broker for government projects in land acquisition. See table 1 below for their demographic information:

Table 1. The Demographics of the Research Participants

Name	Age	Job	Detention period	Loss
X	>50	Entrepreneur	16 years	±60 billion
Y	>50	Public accountant	9 years	±1 billion
Z	34	Broker	7 years	±5,1 billion

The integrated analysis of the psychological dynamics of X, Y, and Z, and Al-Ghazali's psychological dynamics of nafsu.

This integrative analysis aimed to discover the relevance of Al-Ghazali's concept on the psychological dynamics of *nafsu* with the empirically emerging psychological dynamics of a person who commit corruption. However, as each participant had different internal states, then those psychological dynamics were used to test different parts of the *nafsu* model (Figure 1).

a. Pre-corruption period

The results are described from the characteristic of each participant in pre-corruption period. They had some similarities in their way of life, which were oriented to collect maximum wealth, live in pleasure, and they saw religion as a formality. X and Y did not read the Quran, but still do pray sometime. while Z did not perform pray at all. They spent money for whatever they wanted. X and Y lived with their family before, while Z was divorced. The way they lived indicated that they were influenced by the great presence of *syahwat*. The influence of *syahwat* drove them to engage in unnecessary things for their life in the hereafter (*akhirat*), to seek constantly for pleasures, and to follow infinite desires. This showed that they had lived in the *hawaa* and did not perform strong *mujahadah*. *Mujahadah* in this regard is very important to control their *syahwat*.

b. Corruption period

Each participant had different experiences during corruption period. However, they had similar beginning during this period. Their involvement in corruption started with the goal to gain wealth by doing jobs with great profits. X was a businessman who expanded his career in airplane business, Y was a public accountant who worked with government in many big projects, and Z was a broker who helped government to get

maximum profits from their procurement projects. Those three participants had similar situation: their inability to oppose the *syahwat* within themselves. Their weak standing in front of their own *syahwat* might be explained from the following facts. They are professional in their work, find that all practices (although not necessarily in compliance with ethical standards) support their accomplishment in their work. To one extent, this is similar to the term that the end can justify the means. X started his charter plane business with some credits from a bank, so he did not have to invest too much of his own money. Y collaborated with his friends to take some projects, and Z did land acquisition according from the demand of the government. Further results would show their psychological dynamics. All participants were documented as committing fraud/ manipulation on their jobs. However, X and Y still did not truly admit it since they thought that they were just victims in this game. Nevertheless, the official documents showed that they did it intentionally. X manipulated some company documents to get loan from the bank, Y participated in a fictitious project by the government, and Z was a broker for the government.

However, since X and Y were still in the process of confession, this part would be focused on the psychological dynamics of Z when he did corruption. Z had received 5.1 billion rupiahs from the government to finish the land acquisition. However, the land lords suddenly changed their minds, so they did not want to sell their land. Z had thought that whether he returned the payment or not, he would still be arrested. Therefore, Z spent money for travelling to many countries. These kinds of thoughts could be categorized as the *false rationalization*. However, Z also had an internal conflict during this time because he realized that what he needed was not money anymore, but he needed freedom. Nevertheless, Z still treated money as his problem-solver.

c. Detention period

The detention was affecting the psychological condition of each participant. X suffered from anxiety, anger, depression, loss of concentration, psychosomatic symptoms such as intense sweating, and sleep problem. Y experienced panic, worries, anxiety, and felt loss (*limbung* - Indonesian word for *losing something that one can hold on to/ unstable*). While Z could not feel peace at all. This happened because they were not ready to live in the prison that exposed them with uncertainties. X and Y were worrying about their family since they already had lost their wealth, while Z could not live without money so that he still did business from the prison.

However, there were another kind of chaotic psychological states within the participants. As stated by all participants, they started to realize that their previous lives were not peaceful, especially for Y who tried to find something bigger than his wealth for his past five years. They had been in another kind of chaotic psychological state before, although they used to enjoy it. Al-Ghazali also stated that this kind of peaceful-like feeling was just another form of the influence of *syahwat*. The *syahwat* also made them think that they were happy before (*false peacefulness*).

According to Al-Ghazali, the peaceful self would only be achieved when there was undisrupted-functioning of all components of *nafsu* in actualizing the serving God motives. The overwhelming *syahwat* could take over the functioning of reason and self-control. Tranquil soul could only be achieved when each components of *nafsu* work in accordance of their functions.

Therefore, X and Y were looking for the peaceful source of reliance. Thus, they found God as the only one who they could rely on. X found a deeper peace from reciting and contemplating Quran as his guidance, and Y was more stable when he relied on God about his family. However, Z did not do any hard struggles to rely on God, but he also felt more comfortable when he thought positively about God. These dynamics on finding solace for their peace of self, according to Al-Ghazali, can also be explained from the dynamic of *nafsu*. Human has his freedom to choose and willingness to improve their psychological state. However, this intend would only possible by the support and direction of God (*taufiq*). When God opened up the person for His *taufiq*, then the alarm system of the intellect (*'aql*) would be reactivated. Thus, the person would be receptive for direction and guidance.

X and Y did some struggles (*mujahadah*) to improve themselves. X sought for medical treatment, psychological treatment, then did religious coping. Y became used to religious activities after he worked as a financial manager in the prison Mosque. They also tried to build the connection with God gradually and continuously. X started to read Quran and the *tafseer*, did prayer, learned Islamic teachings, and practice other good things, such as caring for plants, as the result of his contemplation from Quran. While Y learned to read Quran and some basic Islamic teachings, and rethought about his life goal and principles. These struggles were considered as some kinds of *mujahadah* that they were doing.

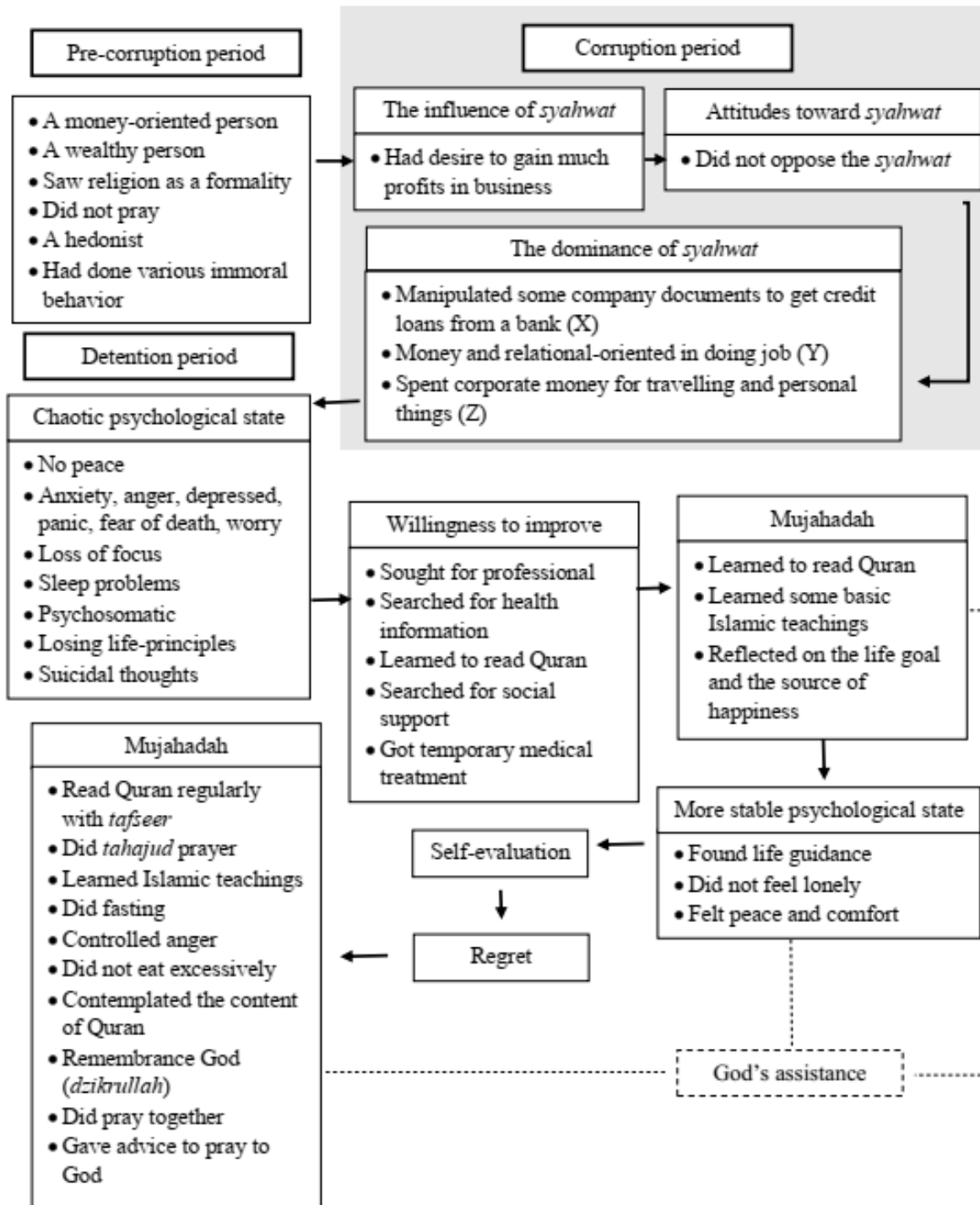


Figure 1. The Psychological Chaos and Change Experienced by Inmates X, Y, Z

After all, those results indicated a consistent model with Al-Ghazali's psychological dynamic of *nafsu*, as there were no contradicting evidences from this study with the previous study. Therefore, this study supported the *nafsu* model through giving some behavioral evidence. It also operationalized the model.

Discussion

This study aimed to find the empirical evidence from Al-Ghazali's psychological construct of *nafsu* in Fachrunisa and Chizanah (2020) by exploring the psychological dynamics of corruption. The results showed the congruence of the models with the current findings.

This study also discovered some forms of *syahwat* and *mujahadah*, and showed how the peaceful and peaceful-like feelings worked.

This study discussed some important issues. Firstly, corruption behavior is affected by the great presence of *syahwat*. The great *syahwat* could drive people to conduct corruption through the *false rationalization*. This happened where the intellect ('*aql*') could not perform its role while the *syahwat* took over the role of the '*aql*'. Secondly, when people were drown in performing corruption, they tended not to feel disturbed. They ignored the consideration from the '*aql*', and would think that there was nothing wrong with their behavior. This condition could be considered as the *false peacefulness* and it was caused by the great influence of *syahwat*. This discussion would explain the relationship of the *syahwat* and the *false peacefulness*.

The previous study in the peaceful self, according to Al-Ghazali, pointed out that people could think that they were in a peaceful internal state, so they enjoyed it, whereas actually they were not. This peaceful-like feeling was a form of *false rationalization* from *syahwat*. The *syahwat* caused people to think that nothing was wrong within themselves, and made them believe that they were happy and innocent in doing this kind of behavior. This *false peacefulness* could also be manifested in many conceptions of happiness, such as biological needs fulfillment (Veenhoven, 1991) (Veenhoven, 1991); sexual activity (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2004); satisfaction (Myers & Diener, 1995); wealth (North et al., 22 C.E.), etc. Those concepts could be misunderstood as the deepest happiness.

However, human beings needed to achieve the real peacefulness, not the false one, for the sake of their humanity. One important principle of peacefulness was that it would only be happened as the consequence of the remembrance to God and fulfillment of *serving God motive*. The accomplishment of serving God motive meant that each components of *nafsu* were performing optimally according to their initial functions. Riyono (2012) stated that the reliance to God could lead into a peaceful psychological state, where God was being the anchor and guidance to face the uncertainties, avoid the risks, and the source of hopes. Therefore, people needed to reflect on themselves to realize whether they had been in peacefulness or just in *false peacefulness*.

Human being also had freedom to choose and willingness to change from the previous psychological condition. When they decided to improve on themselves, they should do some struggles that were necessary for maintaining the role of each components of *nafsu*. However, as the *nafsu* was unstable, so those struggles should be cultivated continuously. These

long-term and God-oriented struggles were called as *mujahadah*. This study found some kinds of *mujahadah*, such as reading Quran, learning Islamic teachings, contemplating the goal of life based on Quran, caring for living beings, praying, etc. Those kinds of *mujahadah* had different levels of difficulty and persistency. Even just thinking positively to God could also bring a deeper peace, but it needed a continuous effort to keep that peacefulness by doing other forms of *mujahadah*. A long-term tranquil soul accomplish to *mujahadah* was an indicator of the *muthaminnah* state (a peaceful soul).

However, as Al-Ghazali stated that no one could judge the *muthmainnah* state, a person should perform *mujahadah* so that they could move in the direction of *muthmainnah* state. Besides that, this study was also not intended to judge the psychological state of someone's *nafsu*. This attempted to establish the ideal concept of human beings through explaining the mechanism to preserve their basic nature of self. The preserved basic nature of human beings were shown in the fulfillment of the *serving God motive*. The ideal state of the *nafsu* was called as *muthmainnah* and it represented the coherence in the proper functionings of all components of *nafsu*.

Other than that, this study explained the mechanism behind the chaotic psychological state. This condition was caused by the inappropriated functionings of the components of *nafsu*. The conflict between the *syahwat* and or the anger with the intellect ('*aql*') could cause this restless emotion. This could be appeared in the form of doubt, anxious, restlessness, negative thoughts, and disorientation. These conditions occurred during pre-corruption, corruption, and detention period, with diverse forms and situations. This chaos could only be decreased through performing continuous *mujahadah*.

Furthermore, this study also indicated the presence of anxiety, suicidal thoughts, and psychosomatic as the results of prolonged and intense chaotic psychological state within the participants. Some previous studies tried to find out about the relevance of spirituality and psychological disorder, such as the relevance of spirituality, religiosity, anxiety, and general psychological well-being (Glas, 2007); spirituality and psychiatry treatment (Fallot, 2001); and spirituality and mental health (Koenig, 2009; Bonelli and Koenig, 2013), etc. However, the existing studies on this issue still used various concepts of spirituality and religiosity and lacked for their precise definitions (Hadzic, 2011). This resulted some inconsistent findings (Rowell et al., 2020). The current study suggested another approach to explore the relationship of this chaotic psychological state and

psychological disorders that did not start from the concept of spirituality or religiosity found in the mainstreams. The similar technique could be found in Riyono (2012; 2020) who explained the relationship between human and God using anchor model.

After all, this study showed some important results. The most important result was that this study operationalized the model of *nafsu* from Al-Ghazali. The operationalized concept was shown from the evidences in corruption behavior. The great presence of *syahwat* drove the participants to gain maximum wealth by doing manipulation or corruption. The existence of *syahwat* was manifested in the form of *false rationalization*, where it influenced the way they think and act. They tended to ignore the warning from the '*aql* and did no *mujahadah*. They needed to deeply reflect on the way they behaved before and to have willingness to improve to recognize the influence of the '*aql*. By the direction of God, the function of the '*aql* could be performed. The dominance of the '*aql* was shown in the act of searching for closeness to God and the fulfillment of serving God motive. They did self-evaluation to admit their faults and seek for forgiveness from God, then doing many forms of *mujahadah* continuously.

This research also brought some implications in the study of corruption. Firstly, the preventive program could be conducted by optimizing the fulfillment of serving God motive and performing *mujahadah*. That program should be considered as the important approach to encounter corruption. This approach could be developed especially in education setting. Other than that, this study was also beneficial for the curative intervention. The aim of the program should focus on maximizing the functioning of the '*aql* through the enhancement of knowledge ('*ilm*) and wisdom (*hikmah*) that facilitated human to recognize God. The maximum-functioning of the '*aql* would be followed by the decreased influence of the *syahwat*.

Furthermore, future research could also enrich these empirical findings by giving more evidences from other studies on the psychological dynamics of immoral behaviors in various forms and contexts, such as in criminal behavior. Other than that, since this study also aimed to build the ideal concept of the psychologically healthy person or human being who had appropriate-functioning of components of *nafsu*, further study could be conducted to examine this concept not only related to immoral behavior, but also in moral behavior. This kind of study would deepen the findings of the form of *mujahadah* in various psychological state. Also, construct and measurement study could also be conducted to examine the functioning of the components of *nafsu*.

Conclusion

This study found supporting empirical evidences of Al-Ghazali's psychological dynamics of *nafsu*. This study also supported the construct validity of the *nafsu* model from Al-Ghazali. The *nafsu* model could be used in explaining the psychological dynamics of corruption behavior.

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