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MORAL EMOTIONS, INCOME SUFFICIENCY, FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY, AND SELFLESSNESS

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ABSTRACT
Prevention and eradication of corruption which becomes increasingly complex requires a multidiscipline approach; one of which is a psychological approach. It is often debated whether salary and family situation, as well as the way individuals place themselves in the relational context between self and others, influence individuals’ moral emotions (corruption tendency). This research aimed to address that question by using a quantitative, predictive correlational design. Participants of this study were 308 civil servants and private employees (151 males, 158 females; \(M_{age} = 29.95\) years old; \(SD_{age} = 8.90\) years). Multiple linear regression analysis of survey questionnaire data showed that there are variations in the direction and predictive power in correlational relationship between predictors (income sufficiency, family self-sufficiency, and selflessness) and criteria (moral emotions) of individuals.

Keywords: moral psychology, emotion, corruption, sufficiency, selflessness

INTRODUCTION
Corruption has become a serious problem in a developing country such as Indonesia, due to its destructive effect in various aspects of life, i.e. in political, economic, social, and cultural life domains, even in defence and security aspects of the country. Psychology plays an important role in early detection of corruptive behavior through assessment on individuals’ moral emotions (shame and guilt). This is important because moral emotion has a relational dimension with the social environment, and its effects have recently been known to surpass moral reasoning [1, 2]. There are four dimensions of moral emotion, i.e. (1) Guilt-Negative-behavior-evaluation (Guilt-NBE; one’s bad feeling about how one acted); (2) Guilt-Repair (Guilt-REP; one’s action tendencies, i.e., one’s behavior or behavioral intentions, focused on correcting or compensating for the transgression); (3) Shame-Negative-self-evaluation (Shame-NSE; one’s bad feeling about oneself); and Shame-Withdrawal (Shame-WIT; one’s action tendencies focused on hiding or withdrawing from public) [2].

The rampant corruption in Indonesia is often linked to the problem of low salary of the employee. In other word, this view states that poverty is close to the act of corruption. This matter is supported by results of empirical research. Research by Fakinlede, for example, on 100 employees in Nigeria found that poverty weakened moral development [3]. However, in contrast to that matter, there is an argument that a high salary does not solve the problem of corruption (because it is assumed that the central issue is law enforcement), and it even exacerbate corrupt practices. The proposed argument is that a position with high salary actually invites people to perform corrupt practices to fight for the position (Badrun, as cited [4]). In line with the paradigm of moral consistency,
positions obtained through corrupt practices also lead the people who occupy the position feel “justified” to conduct the practice at a later time. In addition, provision of high salary that has the potential to correlate negatively with sincerity and enjoyment in performing a job is also supported by insufficient justification paradigm from social psychology, as follows:

“Employees are less likely to work hard and often less likely to enjoy their work if offered high external rewards. They are less obligated to internally justify their motives for working hard, because the external payoff is so great. More specifically, this theory can be applied to pay plans, benefit options, and promotions. Firms and corporations should be aware of how much they are giving to their employees, and executives especially, so that maximum productivity can be achieved.” [5].

In the mix of that debate, the researcher is going to investigate whether individuals’ salary/wage/income condition can predict their moral emotions. In this research, moral emotions are the proxies of the tendencies to corrupt [2]. Even so, what is measured in this research is not the objective level of salary, but rather the subjective perception of individuals regarding their income sufficiency. This is because perception largely determines one’s emotions and actions (Moskowitz, as cited in [6]). Garner and de Vos stated that the subjective measurement regarding income sufficiency can be based on individuals’ opinion toward their own situation related to the minimum income level required to fulfill their needs [7].

In addition to individual’s income sufficiency, family self-sufficiency is also a psychological variable which is assumed in this research as a predictor for individual’s moral emotion. Especially for Indonesian people who have high level of interdependence and collectivity, in which self-image is defined as “We” instead of “I”, family is an important dimension of the self which is also an object of loyalty [8]. Hence, perception regarding sufficiency of family life can play a crucial role in influencing an individual’s moral emotions.

Based on the above description, the following hypotheses were formulated: (1) The higher an individual’s income sufficiency, the higher the levels of Shame-Negative-self-evaluation, Guilt-Negative-behavior-evaluation, and Guilt-Repair of the individual; (2) The higher an individual’s self-sufficiency, the higher the levels of Shame-Negative-self-evaluation, Guilt-Negative-behavior-evaluation, and Guilt-Repair of the individual; (3) The higher an individual’s income sufficiency, the lower the Shame-Withdrawal level of the individual; (4) The higher an individual’s family self-sufficiency, the lower the Shame-Withdrawal level of the individual.

Selflessness is the third psychological variable that is presumed able to predict an individual’s moral emotions. Selflessness is characterized by “low levels of self-centeredness and a low degree of importance given to the self (i.e., not exaggerated)” [9] (p. 140), and the opposite is self-centeredness, which is a condition where “the increased degree with which the individual considers that his own condition is more important than that of others, and this takes unquestionable priority. Self-centered psychological functioning includes characteristics such as biased self-interest, egoism, ego-centrism, and egotism” [9] (p. 140). Although selflessness appears to be “kind”, it has a paradoxical side, because selflessness create a “good feeling” within an individual and it is essentially a motive to satisfy oneself, and, therefore, has selfish nature [10]. It is not surprising that Lengbeyer differentiated between deliberate/calculated
selflessness and unthinking/spontaneous selflessness [11]. Despite this, in the mix of the debate, selflessness is known to correlate with empathy, compassion, respect, altruism, and the search for harmony [9]. These characteristics are closely related with moral emotions (shame and guilt). For example, a review by Cohen, Wolf, Panter, and Insko found that shame subscales correlate negatively with self-compassion and that guilt and shame subscales correlate with empathy [2].

Based on the above arguments, the following hypotheses were formulated: (1) The higher an individual’s selflessness, the higher the levels of Shame-Negative-self-evaluation, Guilt-Negative-behavior-evaluation, and Guilt-Repair of the individual; (2) The higher an individual’s selflessness, the lower the Shame-Withdrawal level of the individual. By integrating all of the above hypotheses, the following hypothesis was drawn: Income sufficiency, family self-sufficiency, and selflessness are able to predict an individual’s moral emotions.

METHODS

This research used a predictive correlational quantitative design. The participants of this research were 308 civil servants and private employees (151 males, 158 females; $M_{age} = 29.95$ years old; $SD_{age} = 8.90$ years; 110 civil servants, 198 private employees) in Jakarta, capital of Indonesia, with a minimum of one-year work experience at their current place of work, and a minimum of high school education (The majority of participants are high school and college graduates). Research data were processed by using multiple linear regression analysis.

The moral emotions were measured using Guilt and Shame Proneness (GASP) Scale constructed by Cohen, Wolf, Panter, and Insko [2]. Participants were asked to imagine that they are in the middle of situations illustrated in the questionnaire, both in public (for eliciting shame proneness) or private situation (for eliciting guilt proneness). Participants were asked to provide responses on the likelihood of their reaction on each item of the questionnaire. This instrument originally consists of 16 items and consists of four dimensions, namely Guilt-Negative-behavior-evaluation (NBE), Guilt-Repair (REP), Shame-Negative-self-evaluation (NSE), and Shame-Withdrawal (WIT). The author added 21 items according to the job context in an organization.

Sample items of Guilt-NBE are as follows: “You lie to people, but they never find out about it. What is the likelihood that you would feel terrible about the lies you told?”; “After realizing you have received too much change at a store, you decide to keep it because the salesclerk does not notice. What is the likelihood that you would feel uncomfortable about keeping the money?”. Sample items of Guilt-REP are as follows: “You strongly defend a point of view in a discussion, and though nobody was aware of it, you realize that you were wrong. What is the likelihood that this would make you think more carefully before you speak?”; “You reveal a friend's secret, though your friend never finds out. What is the likelihood that your failure to keep the secret would lead you to exert extra effort to keep secrets in the future?”. Sample items of Shame-NSE are as follows: “You successfully exaggerate your damages in a lawsuit. Months later, your lies are discovered, and you are charged with perjury. What is the likelihood that you would think you are a despicable human being?”; “You rip an article out of a journal in the library and take it with you. Your teacher discovers what you did and tells the librarian and your entire class. What is the likelihood that this would make you
would feel like a bad person?”. Sample items of Shame-WIT are as follows: “You take office supplies home for personal use and are caught by your boss. What is the likelihood that this would lead you to quit your job?”; “Your home is very messy and unexpected guests knock on your door and invite themselves in. What is the likelihood that you would avoid the guests until they leave?”. The instrument response options range from Very Unlikely (score of 1) to Very Likely (score of 7).

Reliability and validity testing showed an internal consistency index (Cronbach’s Alpha) of NBE, REP, NSE, and WIT dimension consecutively 0.653; 0.678; 0.728; and 0.622. Corrected item-total correlations ($r_{it}$) of NBE, REP, NSE, and WIT consecutively ranging from 0.258 to 0.473; 0.275 to 0.442; 0.356 to 0.543; and 0.269 to 0.380. This indicates that instrument is reliable ($\alpha \geq 0.600$) and items from the instrument are valid ($r_{it} \geq 0.250$).

Income sufficiency was measured using an instrument constructed by the author. This instrument consists of 10 items. Participants were asked to determine how far they felt satisfied with the aspects of compensation that they received from their work, which include: basic salary, performance bonus, allowance, health benefits, holiday allowance, transportation allowance (fuels and vehicles), consumption, overtime payment, “the 13th month” salary, and incidental income (from project, etc.). The response options of this instrument range from Highly Insufficient (score of 1) to Highly Sufficient (score of 6). Reliability and validity testing showed an internal consistency index (Cronbach’s Alpha) of 0.922 with corrected item-total correlations ($r_{it}$) ranging from 0.551 to 0.797. This indicates that the instrument is reliable ($\alpha \geq 0.600$) and the items of the instrument are valid ($r_{it} \geq 0.250$).

Family self-sufficiency was measured using an instrument adapted from Missouri Family Self-Sufficiency Scale which was developed by Missouri Association for Community Action and Annette Backs [12]. This instrument measures family functioning in 12 domains of family life, which are educational attainment, academic skills, income, employment, health insurance, physical health, mental health & substance abuse, housing, food, child care, transportation, and psychosocial & environmental stressors. The response options of this instrument was adjusted with life domain and adapted by the author according to conditions in Indonesia. This research focused on family income sufficiency and family mental health sufficiency. Sample items of the measurement instrument of Family Mental Health Sufficiency are as follow: (1) Household needs for food and/or shelter (rent/mortgage, utilities) are UNMET due to substance abuse AND/OR mental illness; (2) Substance abuse and/or mental illness has SEVERE impact on household needs; (3) Substance abuse and/or mental illness has SERIOUS impact on household needs; (4) Substance abuse and/or mental illness has CONSIDERABLE impact on household needs; (5) Substance abuse and/or mental illness has MODERATE impact on household needs; (6) Substance abuse and/or mental illness has MILD impact on household needs; (7) Substance abuse and/or mental illness has OCCASIONAL impact on household needs; (8) Substance abuse and/or mental illness has MINIMAL impact on household needs; (9) Substance abuse and/or mental illness has SLIGHT impact on household needs; (10) No impact on household needs due to substance abuse or mental illness.
Participants were asked to assess the condition of adults in their family which are the backbone of the family. For each response option, participants were given a concise explanation in their questionnaire.

Selflessness is measured by using self-centeredness scale which was adapted from Caprariello [13]. This scale consists of 23 items which are categorized into four dimensions. The first dimension is self-enhancement, with sample items: “I want others to need me and like me” (unfavorable item; reversely scored), “I wanted others to recognize my positive qualities” (unfavorable item). The second dimension is others-support, with sample items: “Supporting other’s well-being is important to me”, “Other’s concern felt like part of my own, so I helped out”. The third dimension is obligation, with sample items: “I felt obligated to help others; it was expected of me”. The forth dimension is other-enhancement, with sample items: “I value other’s happiness greatly”, “I give other somethings that I thought s/he would appreciate”. The instrument response options range from Strongly Disagree (score of 1) to Strongly Agree (score of 6). Reliability and validity testing showed an internal consistency index (Cronbach’s Alpha) of 0.810 with corrected item-total correlations ($r_{it}$) ranging from 0.396 to 0.662. This indicates that the instrument is reliable ($\alpha \geq 0.600$) and the items of the instrument are valid ($r_{it} \geq 0.250$).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Multiple linear regression analyses showed the effect size of the overall contribution of the predictor variables toward NBE, is as follows: $R^2 = 0.106$; $F(4, 307) = 8.969$; $p < 0.01$. The effect size of the overall contribution of predictor variables toward REP, is as follows: $R^2 = 0.073$; $F(4, 307) = 5.938$; $p < 0.01$. The effect size of the overall contribution of the predictor variables toward NSE, is as follows: $R^2 = 0.063$; $F(4, 307) = 5.120$; $p < 0.01$. The effect size of the overall contribution of the predictor variables toward WIT, is as follows: $R^2 = 0.095$; $F(4, 307) = 7.934$; $p < 0.01$.

The results of this research showed that selflessness is able to predict NBE ($\beta = 0.210$, $p < 0.01$) and REP ($\beta = 0.202$, $p < 0.01$) in a positive direction (see Table 1). Johnson stated that one of the purposes of selfless act is to avoid guilty feeling [14]. In addition, selfless people are able to experience and see themselves from an outsider’s point of view (Cohen, Hoshino-Browne, and Leung, as cited in [9]). By using the perspective of “outsider phenomenologies”, it is unsurprising if selfless people will tend to evaluate and improve their behavior after performing an unethical act because we also want other people to perform both of those acts if we become a victim of an unethical behavior by others. Dambrun and Ricard also stated that one of the important differences between selfless and self-centered people is that selfless people believe on an impermanent self, whereas self-centered people believe on a permanent self [9]. Meaning, selfless people are more open to stream of experiences. In this context, improvement of behavior can be viewed as new experiences that lead to a more moral self.

Result of this research showed that selflessness is able to predict WIT ($\beta = 0.281$, $p < 0.01$) in a positive direction. This finding is interesting because it is different from the hypothesis of this research in which selflessness negatively correlates with WIT, because WIT is associated with “hiding themselves, avoiding of or negotiating responsibilities”. However, withdrawal may have to be reinterpreted. Resignation from a position, as a form of withdrawal behavior, according to Latif, is an effort to prevent further evils, shows that a person does not insist on claiming “the truth”, and can even
maintain public trust [15]. In Indonesian culture, and Eastern culture generally (for example, seppuku or ritualistic suicide; see Young, as cited in [16]), withdrawal is viewed as an unselfish behavior that even contains a moral virtue. Hence, it is not surprising that selflessness widen the probability for people to experience WIT after performing unethical behavior. Further research is recommended to explore the forms and the essence of WIT behavior of Indonesian people.

Table 1. Multiple linear regression analyses (n = 308)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor variables</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prediction of NBE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family income sufficiency</td>
<td>1.099</td>
<td>0.311</td>
<td>0.192</td>
<td>3.537</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family mental health sufficiency</td>
<td>-1.439</td>
<td>0.411</td>
<td>-0.196</td>
<td>-3.498</td>
<td>0.001**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income sufficiency</td>
<td>-0.005</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
<td>-0.131</td>
<td>0.896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selflessness</td>
<td>0.186</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>0.210</td>
<td>3.760</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prediction of REP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family income sufficiency</td>
<td>0.947</td>
<td>0.368</td>
<td>0.142</td>
<td>2.571</td>
<td>0.011*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family mental health sufficiency</td>
<td>-1.283</td>
<td>0.488</td>
<td>-0.150</td>
<td>-2.629</td>
<td>0.009**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income sufficiency</td>
<td>-0.029</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>-0.040</td>
<td>-0.713</td>
<td>0.477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selflessness</td>
<td>0.209</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td>0.202</td>
<td>3.565</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prediction of NSE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family income sufficiency</td>
<td>0.855</td>
<td>0.312</td>
<td>0.152</td>
<td>2.738</td>
<td>0.007**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family mental health sufficiency</td>
<td>-1.461</td>
<td>0.414</td>
<td>-0.202</td>
<td>-3.532</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income sufficiency</td>
<td>-0.041</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>-0.067</td>
<td>-1.174</td>
<td>0.241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selflessness</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>0.050</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.386</td>
<td>0.700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prediction of WIT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family income sufficiency</td>
<td>0.226</td>
<td>0.242</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>0.933</td>
<td>0.351</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family mental health sufficiency</td>
<td>0.350</td>
<td>0.320</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>1.094</td>
<td>0.275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income sufficiency</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>0.609</td>
<td>0.543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selflessness</td>
<td>0.192</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>0.281</td>
<td>4.999</td>
<td>0.000**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01

Results of this research showed that individual’s income sufficiency is not able to predict NBE ($\beta = 0.007, p > 0.05$), REP ($\beta = 0.040, p > 0.05$), NSE ($\beta = 0.067, p > 0.05$), and WIT ($\beta = 0.034, p > 0.05$). However, family income sufficiency is able to predict NBE ($\beta = 0.192, p < 0.01$), REP ($\beta = 0.142, p < 0.05$), and NSE ($\beta = 0.152, p < 0.01$) in a positive direction. This confirmed that individuals’ perception regarding their income does not affect the individuals’ moral emotions. This finding provides empirical support that the amount or sufficiency of the salary/income, perceptually, does not correlate with an individual’s morality. There is an opinion which states that a low salary make “moral cost” for performing unethical acts (such as corruption) appears less; and that the higher a person’s salary, the bigger the loss that he/she experienced when caught performing corruption [17]. However, the empirical research by Abbink—which is in line with the findings of this research—showed that increasing the salary of the employee is not the solution to decrease the level of corruption [17]. In his research, Abbink concluded that there is a more important factor, namely distributive justice.

What is interesting of this present research is that although individual’s income sufficiency does not correlate with moral emotions and corrupt tendencies, but family income sufficiency is able to predict the majority (3 out of 4) of moral emotions. This shows that an explanation regarding corruption is insufficient if we use merely a level of explanation on the individual level. Instead we need to use a level of explanation at the social network level, and in this case the family. This provides
empirical support toward an analysis that family is one of the risk factors, even elements, involved in the corruption process [18]. In a collectivist culture in Indonesia, an individual has a “moral obligation” to continuously provide benefits to the family, especially families that are not yet prosperous in their perception. This research showed that the dynamics of an individual’s moral emotion can be influenced by the situation of his/her family.

Results of this research also showed that family mental health sufficiency is able to predict NBE ($\beta = -0.196, p < 0.01$), REP ($\beta = -0.150, p < 0.01$), and NSE ($\beta = -0.202, p < 0.01$) in a negative direction. This finding is quite surprising because the more mentally healthy an individual’s family, the lower the feelings of guilt and the harder an individual in evaluating him/herself after performing unethical behavior. This may be due to the lack of sensitivity of the measuring instrument in capturing the “mental health” construct. In terms of the content of the measuring instrument, mental health is viewed as the absence of mental illness and/or substance abuse. However, nowadays, mental health is understood not just as the absence of disease/infirmity/dysfunction, but more than that, mental health includes a complex combination of physical health, mental/emotional, and social well-being, even spiritual well-being. In other word, the content of the measuring instrument of family’s mental health sufficiency is not in accordance with the latest development of mental health definition. In addition, there is another explanation. Today there have been efforts to integrate morality in a conceptual model regarding health [19]. One of the empirical research results related with this model is that guilt and shame associated with maladjustment but through fantasy proneness mediation and fear of invalidity, as well as personal distress [20]. Thus, if we relate it with the findings of this research, people with mentally healthy family tend to avoid or lower their feelings of guilt (NBE, REP) and shame (NSE) in order to maintain their health because those feelings at a certain level and context of situations have the potential to cause poor psychological wellbeing.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that (1) income sufficiency is not able to predict the overall moral emotions; and (2) family’s income sufficiency, family’s mental health sufficiency, and selflessness are able to predict 3 out of 4 moral emotions.

Further research is recommended to refine the measurement of selflessness by differentiating between deliberate selflessness and spontaneous selflessness. In addition, measurement of withdrawal dimension (WIT) has to be refined by considering the context of Indonesia culture. The relationship between family mental health and moral emotions has to be investigated further by including mediating variables, such as fantasy proneness.

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