

Corruption in Batak Na Raja Perspective

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Abstract. *This article describes the results of anti-corruption legal counseling in Lumban Dolok Village, Silaen District, Toba Regency, North Sumatra. This counseling aims to raise public awareness about the dangers of corruption and the importance of integrity, by adopting Batak Na Raja cultural values that emphasize anti-corruption attitudes. Corruption is viewed from the perspective of Batak Na Raja as behavior that not only violates the law, but also the customs and morality of the Batak community. A person's motive for committing corruption is often related to economic needs, existing opportunities, and weak supervision. GONE (Greed, Opportunity, Need, and Exposure) and Fraud Triangle (pressure, opportunity, and rationalization) theories are used to analyze the motives and driving factors of corruption. This counseling emphasized that, in accordance with the values of Batak Na Raja, the Toba people are expected to uphold honesty, responsibility, and transparency. By understanding and internalizing these values, society is expected not only to reject corruption but also actively prevent it. This counseling succeeded in instilling an understanding that corruption damages social and economic order, and is contrary to the Batak philosophy of life that upholds honesty and honor. It is hoped that, through a cultural approach and intensive legal education, the Toba people can become the frontline in eradicating corruption, strengthening good governance, and realizing sustainable welfare in their region.*

Keywords: *Corruption, Batak Na Raja, Motive, Anti-Corruption, Counseling*

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INTRODUCTION

Anti-corruption legal counseling in Lumban Dolok Village, Silaen District, Toba Regency, is very important considering that corruption is one of the main problems that hinder development in Indonesia, including in rural areas (Hermawan et al., 2024; Hasudungan Sianturi, et al., 2023). From the perspective of Batak Na Raja culture, corruption not only damages the economic structure, but also injures the noble values upheld by the Batak community (Sinaga & Gulo, 2023), such as honesty, justice, and mutual assistance. Batak society has the concept of "Dalihan Na Tolu" which prioritizes respect and social responsibility (Hamid, Ritonga). Corruption is considered contrary to this principle as it creates injustice and mistrust among citizens.

The main purpose of the Community Service Program (PKM) in anti-corruption legal counseling is to increase legal awareness of the people of Lumban Dolok village, especially about the motives for committing corruption. Lumban Dolok Village is one of the pilot villages in Toba Regency, especially in the Law Aware Society (interview with the Head of Lumban Dolok Village, 2024). However, it is difficult for Lumban Dolok village officials to obtain budgets, especially to implement Official Travel Orders (SPPD) such as attending *Paralegal Justice training* in Jakarta,

resulting in some activities and rights of law-aware communities in Lumban Dolok village not being fulfilled (Head of Lumban Dolok Village, 2024).

In the 2023 fiscal year, Toba Regency allocates village funds of Rp. 177,074,852,000. However, the realization of the absorption of these funds showed a lower figure, only reaching Rp. 138,300,430,000.00, or equivalent to 78% of the total funds allocated (Anggaran Pendapatan pada APBD Kabupaten Toba, 2023). This phenomenon reflects the gap between budget allocation and the effectiveness of implementation of development programs at the village level. This analysis is one of the reasons for the anti-corruption law counseling to understand the causes of the low absorption rate of village funds, as well as to formulate appropriate strategies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the use of village funds in Toba Regency, especially for Lumban Dolok Village.

So to build high social awareness (Muhtar, 2023), based on strong local values (Putri et al., 2023), so that the community can play an active role in preventing corruption. Community empowerment and participatory legal education support this approach (Suteki et al., 2024), where the community is not only a recipient of information, but also an agent of change who can monitor and report acts of corruption (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi, 2022). This legal literacy will improve the community's ability to understand their rights and obligations and encourage the creation of more transparent and accountable village governance.

Anti-corruption legal counseling in Lumban Dolok Village, Silaen District, Toba Regency, has significant benefits and potential in eradicating corruption from the perspective of Batak Na Raja (Marugamo / care, Maradat / courtesy, Marparbinotoan / smart wise, and Maruhum / obey rules and laws (SumutCyber, 2024). The Batak Na Raja tradition that prioritizes honesty, responsibility, and clean leadership (Siagian, 2022), is considered to be a strong foundation in this effort. This counseling aims to raise public awareness about the dangers of corruption and equip them with the necessary legal knowledge to prevent and fight corruptive practices.

By using the theory of GONE (Greed, Opportunity, Need, and Exposure) (Bologna, Lindquist & Wells, 1992) and Fraud Triangle (Pressure, Opportunity, and Rationalization) as quoted by Van Akkeren (2018) and connected with the concept of Batak Na Raja, this counseling can reduce the potential for corruption by educating the public about the negative impacts of corruption, building a system that reduces opportunities for corruption, and creating a culture that rejects rationalization of corrupt acts. With a good understanding of the factors that drive corruption, people can be more vigilant and proactive in maintaining integrity in their environment. In addition, local perspectives such as Batak Na Raja provide a more cultural and relevant approach, which can increase the effectiveness of this legal extension program. The integration between local values and modern anti-corruption theory is expected to create significant changes in corruption prevention efforts in Lumban Dolok Village.

Target

The sophistication and creativity in anti-corruption law counseling in Lumban Dolok Village, Silaen District, Toba Regency, shows a step forward in efforts to eradicate corruption in the village. The event, which was attended by 75 participants, including the Law Aware Community Group, Toba Regency Regent office employees, teachers, village officials, and the general public, became an important forum to discuss corruption from the perspective of Batak Na Raja. In Batak culture, the concept of Batak Na Raja emphasizes the values of honesty, integrity, and strong social responsibility. This counseling utilizes a local cultural approach (Meyer, 2022), to teach that acts of corruption not only violate the law, but also contradict the noble values upheld by the Batak community (Simangunsong, 2018). By using innovative and relevant methods (Subramani & Iyappan, 2018), such as interactive discussions and real case studies, this counseling has succeeded in bridging the gap between formal legal understanding and local cultural values. This outreach not only raises public awareness of the dangers of corruption, but also inspires participants to act as agents of change in their communities, creating a more transparent and responsible environment.

METHODS

On May 20, 2024, in Lumban Dolok Village, Silaen District, Toba Regency, an anti-corruption legal counseling was initiated by the request of the local Law Aware Community. This counseling aims to provide briefing on the dangers and prevention of corruption with interactive methods. The event began with the presentation of a paper entitled "Corruption from the Perspective of Batak Na Raja," which examines the problem of corruption from the perspective of Batak culture, especially the Batak Na Raja philosophy which emphasizes the values of honesty, justice, and responsibility. The Counseling Team from the Postgraduate Program of Universitas Kristen Indonesia explained how Batak customary principles can be applied to prevent corrupt practices in daily life, as well as the importance of integrity at all levels of society. After the presentation of the material, the session continued with an interactive question and answer (Paoki & Leorina, 2022), where participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the corruption issues they faced, as well as find joint solutions that were in accordance with local cultural values. This is in accordance with the concept of eradicating corruption through local values is a relevant approach in the context of anti-corruption struggles in many societies (Ditlev-Simonsen, 2022; Hallatu, 2023). This concept emphasizes the importance of reinforcing and promoting the values of ethics, integrity, and honesty that have been embedded in local cultures. By utilizing local wisdom, it is hoped that efforts to eradicate corruption can be more effective and sustainable, because it involves active community participation in maintaining morality and accountability in all aspects of life.

This method is effective in increasing participants' understanding of the importance of anti-corruption and integrating local cultural values in efforts to eradicate corruption. The active involvement of the community in this discussion shows enthusiasm and high awareness of the importance of maintaining integrity and preventing corruption, making this counseling an important step in empowering rural communities to fight corruption. The concept of eradicating corruption through a *bottom-up* approach refers to a strategy that emphasizes active community participation in monitoring and reporting corrupt practices (Tampubolon & Rianto, 2022). This approach prioritizes measures that start at the local or individual level, then gradually expand to the national or institutional level. Thus, the eradication of corruption becomes a shared responsibility between the government, anti-corruption agencies, and society as a whole. Implementation of counseling according to figures 1 and 2:



Figure 1. The Extension Team from the Indonesian Christian University and the Institute of Internal Government (IPDN) delivering a paper entitled: "Corruption from the Perspective of Batak Na Raja".



Figure 2. Q&A session with counseling participants

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to Transparency International Indonesia (2023), Indonesia occupies the position as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Corruption is rampant in various institutions, including within the scope of the Executive, Police, and local government. In fact, village heads are also involved in corrupt practices (Transparency International Indonesia, 2024). According to Indonesia Corruption Watch (2023), "Corruption at the village level consistently occupies the first position as the sector most acted upon for corruption cases". In the release, ICW said there were "592 cases of corruption in villages with a state loss value of Rp 433.8 billion. The implications for people's development and welfare are so serious that serious efforts and strong commitment from various parties, including the government, society, and anti-corruption institutions, are needed to fight this corruption effectively. Improving transparency, accountability, and strong law enforcement are steps that must be taken to address the deep-rooted corruption problem at various levels of government in Indonesia.

Corruption involving Batak perpetrators has also permeated various institutions, including judges, prosecutors, businessmen, civil servants, police, lawyers, and regional heads (Medistiara, 2020; Indonesia Corruption Watch, 2010; Indonesia Corruption Watch, 2014; Kumparan News, 2018). This phenomenon is no exception for the former Regional Head in Toba Regency, who was also entangled in corrupt practices (Saputra, 2022). Those who are supposed to be role models and responsible leaders are engaged in actions that harm society and the country. This corruption has undermined the foundation of public trust in state institutions and has had a detrimental impact on regional development and progress.

The corruption case involving Gayus Tambunan called the tax mafia case (Hukum Online, 2012), is a phenomenon that illustrates the lack of integrity and awareness of ethical values in action. In the context of Batak Naraja, who is known for his courage, honesty, and loyalty to cultural values, Gaius Tambunan's behavior caused disappointment. His actions that are far from moral and ethical principles show his inability to uphold the integrity that characterizes Batak Naraja culture. By attaching importance to self-interest and undermining the principles upheld by his community, Gaius Tambunan illustrates a paradox that tarnishes the image of traditional values believed by the Batak people.

A similar action was also taken by Juliari Batubara (Sjafrina, 2020), who showed a high level of selfishness by taking advantage of the opportunity for corruption of funds that should be

used for the benefit of the people during the pandemic. The act also tarnishes the character of Batak society which has been upheld because of the values of honesty and *dalihan na tole*, which underlines the importance of respecting the rights of every individual who should not be deprived or abused. Partisanship of self-interest over common interest not only tarnishes personal image, but also violates moral and ethical principles that should be upheld by every Batak person.

Three women in charge at SMK Trisurya 2 Porsea, Toba Regency, were involved in a case of misappropriation of BOS funds for two fiscal years, 2019 and 2020 (Antara, 2023). Based on expert calculations, it was found that state losses amounted to IDR 286 million in 2019 and IDR 167 million in 2020. With a total loss of Rp. 454 million, this action not only violates the Corruption Eradication Law, but also injures the religious values of the Batak People.

Village fund corruption cases in several villages in Toba Regency, including Sibuea Village, Patane I Village in Porsea, and Hutagaol Sihujur Village (Sitohang, 2022; Batak Pos, 2022), is an act that harms the village community and betrays the principles upheld by the Batak people. The loss of Unsim Village Fund (Rahyuni, 2023), as one example, not only worsens the economic condition of rural communities, but also undermines trust in village government and weakens local governance systems. This corruption is contrary to the values of Batak Na Raja which emphasize honesty, honor, and responsibility to the community. Therefore, it is very important to conduct counseling to the village community to improve understanding and application of Batak Na Raja principles. This counseling can include education on the importance of transparency and accountability in village fund management, as well as reaffirmation of Batak cultural values that uphold integrity and justice. Thus, it is hoped that villagers can be more critical and active in monitoring the use of village funds, as well as being involved in maintaining the sustainability and welfare of their communities. This step is also expected to restore community trust in village government and strengthen social order based on strong traditional values.

Batak Na Raja is indeed known as a cultural heritage that respects the values of honesty and justice. However, the reality shows that although the culture emphasizes integrity, there are still incidents of corruption that occur among Batak. This suggests that although anti-corruption values are widely applied, challenges against honesty remain. Factors such as economic pressure, lack of education about ethics (Amoah & Steyn, 2023), and weaknesses of the legal system can be causes of corruption persisting (Ditlev-Simonsen, 2022). Therefore, it is important to continue educating the public about the importance of integrity and accountability, as well as strengthening the supervision and law enforcement system to reduce cases of corruption among the Batak people.

The concept of Batak Na Raja is not just tied to *Dalihan Na Tolu* (Furnace Nan Tiga), but includes various positive qualities possessed by a leader (Jordan, 2016). Although *Dalihan Na Tolu* is a cultural heritage of Batak kinship, the same applies in the context of corruption. Just as the principles of justice, honesty, and trust are a strong foothold for a king in the Batak tradition, corruption also collides with universal moral and ethical boundaries. Therefore, the concept of Batak Na Raja affirms that corruption is not merely a violation of the law, but also a betrayal of the values upheld in Batak society.

Jack Bologne's GONE theory linking gluttony, opportunity, need, and exposure to corrupt behavior in Batak culture highlights the complex dynamics behind such acts. However, the Batak Na Raja cultural perspective offers an alternative view. This culture teaches values such as honesty, fairness, and social responsibility that can suppress the urge to commit corruption. Understanding the concept of Batak Na Raja allows individuals to internalize these principles in life. Thus, although external pressures such as opportunities and needs still exist, understanding and practicing traditional Batak cultural values can be an effective fence against the temptation of corruption. In this context, the emphasis on maintaining and spreading Batak Na Raja cultural values becomes important in fighting corruption and building a more just and moral society.

The concept of "Batak Na Raja" is a strong ethical principle in Batak culture that emphasizes honesty, courage, and responsibility. When this principle is combined with the Triangle Fraud Theory which mentions the motives of perpetrators of corruption such as opportunity, pressure, and rationalization, an interesting paradox occurs. A person who upholds the attitude of "Batak Na Raja" tends to have moral strength that is able to resist the temptation of corruption. They have a strong sense of responsibility and integrity, so are relatively unaffected by factors such as opportunities for corruption, pressure from the surrounding environment, or rationalization for unethical actions. Thus, the principle of "Batak Na Raja" may be an effective bulwark against corruption, as it affirms high moral values (Phillips, & Harding, 1985) and religion (marugamo) so as to have unshakable integrity (Tambunan, 2022).

After the material presentation event was carried out, participants showed high interest in corruption prevention efforts among them. A vivid example occurred when one of the participants asked a question about strategies to avoid corrupt practices that were not in line with the anti-corruption stance of the Batak Na Raja community. The question highlights their desire to understand and address issues that harm society as a whole. The enthusiasm and positive response of participants indicate the importance of counseling in efforts to prevent corruption that they do not yet know (Serow, 1991; Purwanto & Rostiani, 2023). Active involvement in these kinds of discussions is a very important first step in the effort to create a strong and sustainable anti-corruption culture in society.

The speaker firmly answered the participants' questions by conveying that anti-corruption is not only a characteristic of the Batak Na Raja people, but also a principle adopted by a good King. The speaker emphasized that the goodness of a leader lies not only in his ability to rule justly, but also in upholding justice and honesty. Highlighting that economic reasons cannot be used as a justification for committing acts of corruption, the speaker invited participants not to rationalize behavior that harms society.

The speaker further explained that in Batak culture, the concept of anti-corruption is reflected through the philosophy of Dalihan Na Tolu. This philosophy teaches about the importance of justice and equality in the distribution of resources, be it *Jambar Hata* (an opportunity given to someone at a Batak feast) or *Jambar Juhut* (parts of meat from the livestock received at a traditional Batak feast), (Kamus Bahasa Batak Online, 2016). With these principles, Batak society views corruption as a violation of noble values and social harmony. They believe that maintaining integrity and honesty in all aspects of life is the key to achieving shared prosperity. Therefore, anti-corruption is not only a moral demand, but also an inseparable part of Batak cultural identity and tradition.

Anti-Corruption legal counseling is an important step in building public understanding, especially Law-aware Community Groups, about the importance of avoiding corrupt motives and behaviors. Through this counseling, participants are invited to understand deeply how corruption can harm society at large and damage the foundation of social justice. One of the concepts that is firmly held in this counseling is the Batak Na Raja attitude principle, which underlines the importance of integrity and honesty in action. By understanding this principle, participants are directed to internalize the values of honesty and justice in everyday life, so as to be able to become agents of change who contribute to fighting corruption. Thus, Anti-Corruption legal counseling is not only about providing information, but also a vehicle for building collective awareness (Scholarly Community Encyclopedia, n.d), of the dangers of corruption and the importance of maintaining integrity in various aspects of the lives of the people of Lumban Dolok Village. With strong awareness and understanding, it is hoped that the people of Lumban Dolok village can jointly maintain honor and justice, and transform a disturbing culture into a strong culture of integrity.

CONCLUSION

Legal counseling on the Batak Na Raja perspective highlights the strong anti-corruption stance in the culture. Batak Na Raja marked himself with moral firmness that refused to be influenced by

temptations and corrupt schemes. The attitude of Batak Na Raja confirms that corruption is not in accordance with their traditional values. In their view, integrity and honesty are unshakable foundations. The concepts of "GONE" and "Triangle Fraud" which are often triggers corruption in the eyes of many individuals, are faced with a firm attitude and moral firmness. This perspective shows that the values of honesty and integrity are not just slogans, but norms that are firmly held in every aspect of life. This conclusion invites to reflect that the rejection of corruption is not solely due to the threat of punishment, but rather because of awareness of the higher values espoused and upheld in Batak Na Raja culture.

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