



International Islamic Multidisciplinary Conference

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Analysis of the Influence of Religion on Corruption Behavior and Giving in ASEAN Member Countries with Muslim Majority and Non-Muslim Majority

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to compare corruption behavior and giving in ASEAN member countries with a Muslim majority and a non-Muslim majority from 2018 to 2022. Sample selection was done using purposive sampling with criteria aligned to the research objectives. The population in this study consists of 6 countries, with a sample of 4 countries. The method of data analysis utilized was the independent samples t-test. The outcomes of the comparative analysis suggest a notable distinction in corruption behavior between nations predominantly Muslim and those predominantly Buddhist. Additionally, the study found a significant difference in generous behavior between countries with a Muslim majority and those with a Buddhist majority.

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Corruption Behavior, Giving Behavior, Islam, Buddhism

INTRODUCTION

ASEAN is a regional organization in Southeast Asia. Since its establishment, ASEAN has been motivated by common experiences, circumstances, and aspirations following colonialism. Currently, ASEAN comprises 11 countries with relatively similar social and economic conditions. According to ASEAN Indonesia (2023), only two of the 11 ASEAN member countries are classified as developed nations. This means that, according to the World Bank's standards for developed countries, most ASEAN member states have a per capita income below US\$13,845. Low levels of income result in high poverty rates, as poverty denotes a situation in which individuals do not have sufficient income to fulfill their basic needs (Thesia & Karmini, 2022).

Low income is also attributed to low productivity. Productivity refers to an individual's choice to participate in activities that generate output or not. Many social factors influence this decision. Religion is one such factor, as a person's decision to undertake certain actions is influenced by their religion (Slamet Rusydiana & Pamuncak, 2018).

The religion held by ASEAN member countries vary. According to a report by Royal Al-Bayt For Islamic Thought (2023), Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, and Malaysia predominantly follow Islam. In contrast, the Philippines and Timor-Leste mainly adhere to Catholicism. Thailand, Myanmar, Singapore, Cambodia, and Laos have a majority Buddhist population. Vietnam is the only ASEAN member country where the majority of the population does not adhere to any religion or is atheist. The religious religion of these countries will inevitably influence the behavior of their governments and societies, which, in turn, will have an impact on poverty.

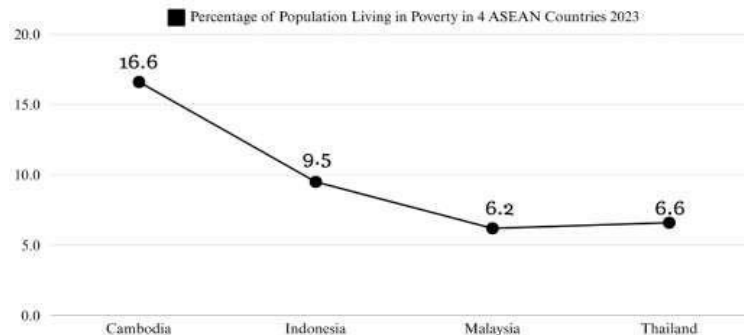


Figure 1 Percentage of Poor Population in 4 ASEAN Countries in 2023

Source : Goodstats (2023)

Based on the data, these four countries still face poverty issues. In 2023, among these countries, Cambodia had the highest poverty rate at 16.6%. Indonesia followed with a rate of 9.5%, Thailand was next with 6.6%, and Malaysia had the lowest rate at 6.2%. Addressing poverty is crucial as it impacts many other social aspects. To tackle poverty, it is essential to understand its causes. Poverty is influenced by several factors, including inflation, the quality of human development, patterns of corruption, and population size Samputra & Munandar (2019). Research by Gumala & Anis (2019), Yolanda & Satrianto (2019), and Heryadi et al. (2022) shows that corruption behavior exacerbates poverty. Corruption diverts funds intended for the public, preventing them from reaching those in need (Abram & Yewiwati, 2021). The conduct of officials involved in corruption is also impacted by the degree of trust they possess. All religions advocate against infringing upon the rights of others.

Based on corruption levels measured by the Corruption Perception Index (CPI), these four ASEAN countries still have high corruption rates. According to Transparency International's 2021 annual report, Indonesia had the highest corruption level among the four, with a CPI score of 34. Thailand followed with a score of 36, then Cambodia with 39. Malaysia had the highest CPI score of 47, indicating the lowest corruption level among the four. Despite the majority of the populations in these countries adhering to Islam and Buddhism, which both prohibit corruption, high corruption rates persist. This suggests that the quality of religious adherence among the populace influences their behavior.

Poverty is also influenced by income inequality Nisa et al. (2020), which occurs when wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few. Addressing inequality involves income redistribution from the wealthy to the needy, which helps reduce poverty (Sa'adah, 2023). A person's level of giving in sharing is also influenced by their beliefs, as religions teach the value of helping others.

Data on giving levels, measured by the Charities Aid Foundation's 2022 World Giving Index, shows that some of these countries are quite generous. Indonesia had the highest giving score globally, with an index score of 68. Malaysia was second among the four countries with a



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score of 46, followed by Thailand with 45. Cambodia had the lowest giving score among all ASEAN countries, with an index score of only 23. Islam promotes sharing through Islamic philanthropy, and Buddhism also teaches generosity. This giving can help address inequality and reduce poverty.

Drawing from this overview, the objective of this study is to examine and contrast the conduct of governments and societies in ASEAN nations with predominant Muslim and Buddhist populations. The four selected countries are Indonesia and Malaysia (Muslim majority) and Thailand and Cambodia (Buddhist majority). The focus of this research is to compare the influence of Islamic and Buddhist teachings on the behavior of governments and societies, impacting poverty levels. This will be measured using the Corruption Perception Index to represent the behavior of those in power and the World Giving Index to represent societal contributions in alleviating poverty.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Slamet Rusydiana & Pamuncak (2018), Max Weber in his book "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" revealed that society's behavior in economic, social, political, and other aspects is also influenced by religion. In the past, people separated religious activities from economic activities, spending more time on religious practices. A person's behavior is based on the values they believe in, which introduces a rationality that influences their actions.

Based on research by Dhamasanti & Sudaryati (2021), religious values influence professionalism and decision-making. The rules within a religion affect whether a person engages in or avoids certain actions. For instance, Islam prohibits usury, gambling, and fraud in economic activities, so Muslims are likely to avoid these practices.

Muslims, in their actions, seek rewards from Allah. Islam provides detailed rules on prohibitions and rewards for those who adhere to its values. The Islamic economic system aims for the welfare of the world and the hereafter. Therefore, Muslims consider whether their economic behavior will impact their afterlife welfare.

Acts of charity and good deeds, if done with the intention of pleasing Allah, will be rewarded in the afterlife. Muslims do not feel a loss in sharing because they believe Allah will reward their good deeds. This value is expressed in the Quran, Surah Ar-Rahman, verse 60: "Is there any reward for good other than good?" The concept of doing good in Islam is structured within Islamic economic philanthropy. Muslims have several social acts they can perform.

Zakat is an obligatory act in Islam where Muslims must donate a portion of their wealth if it exceeds a certain threshold. This wealth is then distributed to eight categories of recipients. According to Aziz (2022), zakat significantly reduces poverty. Additionally, Islam encourages sadaqah (charity) and infaq (voluntary contributions), where Muslims are advised to help those in need voluntarily. This ensures more equitable wealth distribution, as the affluent give to the less fortunate.

Islam also emphasizes the concept of taqwa, which means being conscious of Allah and obedient to Him. This consciousness keeps Muslims from engaging in prohibited actions

(Kazemi, 2010). Consequently, it affects their behavior, including their conduct in public office. Allah commands in the Quran, Surah AlAnfal, verse 27: "O you who have believed, do not betray Allah and the Messenger or betray your trusts while you know [the consequence]." Taqwa should prevent a Muslim from committing corruption, as corruption is a betrayal of trust.

Citing Kazemi (2010), Buddhism also has significant values known as the Four Noble Truths. The first truth is that life involves suffering. The second is that desire leads to suffering. This means Buddhists believe following desires causes suffering. The third truth is the cessation of suffering, where controlling desires ends suffering. The fourth truth is the path to ending suffering, where controlling desires leads to a path towards the Ultimate Reality.

To control desires, one must understand that the world is not eternal. Recognizing that life is not everlasting discourages harmful actions. This teaching also encourages sharing with others since material wealth is not permanent. It also discourages corruption, as corruption stems from following harmful desires and harming others.

Based on the above theories and explanations, it is evident that religious religion indirectly influence behavior, which in turn affects poverty. The poor face limitations in accessing resources, leading to low productivity and income, thus trapping them in poverty (Susanto & Pangesti, 2019). The poor need external help to escape poverty.

The government, holding power, can implement policies to improve societal welfare and reduce poverty. Such policies must be accompanied by anti-corruption measures, as corruption diverts necessary funds, hindering societal prosperity and reducing poverty (Yolanda & Satrianto, 2019). Society can also help reduce poverty by being generous. The affluent should willingly share and assist those in need, ensuring equitable income distribution, which indirectly reduces poverty (Rizal & Mukaromah, 2020).

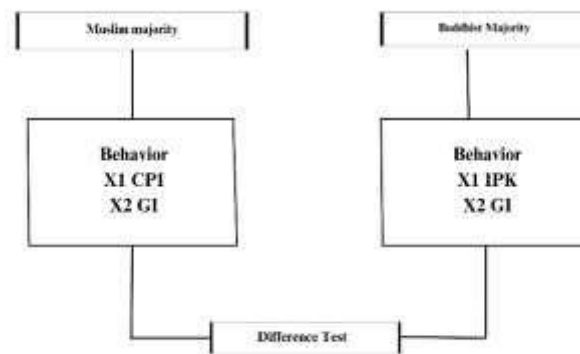


Figure 2 Research Model

Source : Processed by Researchers (2024)

H0: There is no difference in behavior between countries with majority Islamic and Buddhist beliefs in ASEAN member states.

H1: There is a difference in behavior between countries with majority Islamic and Buddhist beliefs in ASEAN member states.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a quantitative method, which involves numerical measurements supported by theory to formulate research hypotheses. These hypotheses are then statistically tested to obtain the research results. The study uses a comparative independent sample t-test for its analysis. Comparative analysis is used to compare specific conditions between groups over a particular period.

This study utilizes secondary data from relevant sources regarding the Corruption Perception Index and the World Giving Index in ASEAN member countries with majority Muslim and Buddhist populations. The data were obtained from the annual reports of Transparency International and the Charities Aid Foundation for the period 2018-2022, sourced from their official websites.

The population of this study includes six ASEAN member countries where the majority of the population practices Islam or Buddhism. A purposive sampling method was employed to select a sample of four countries, based on the objectives and needs of the research.

The analysis technique employed is the Independent Samples t-test, which assesses and compares two groups across a defined time frame. The t-test is performed to ascertain whether the means of two unpaired groups exhibit significant differences. For the Independent Samples t-Test, it's necessary that the data follows a normal distribution. The analysis incorporates Levene's Test to assess homogeneity and the t-test for comparing two independent samples. According to the criteria for Levene's Test: if the significance value is greater than 0.05, the t-test is interpreted as Equal Variances Assumed, if the significance value is less than 0.05, the t-test is interpreted as Equal Variances Not Assumed. Decision making is based on the following: if the significance (sig. 2-tailed) $> \alpha$ (with $\alpha = 0.05$), H_0 is accepted; if the significance (sig. 2-tailed) $< \alpha$, H_0 is rejected. Data analysis was facilitated using IBM SPSS Statistics 26 software.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Normality Test

The normality test in this study determines whether the data is normally distributed. The data is considered to be normally distributed if the significance value (sig.) is greater than 0.05. Conversely, the data is not normally distributed if the significance value (sig.) is less than 0.05. Based on the data processing results in this study, the normality test results are as follows:

Tests of Normality

Table 1. Normality Test Results for Corruption and Giving Variables

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Corruption	.190	20	.057	.912	20	.071
Giving	.143	20	.200	.928	20	.143

This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Based on the results, the significance values of the Shapiro-Wilk test for the corruption

variable are 0.071 and for the giving variable are 0.143. This indicates that the corruption and giving variables have significance values less than 0.05, meaning the data is normally distributed.

Homogeneity Test

The homogeneity test assesses whether the variances of the groups being compared are equal. The data is considered homogeneous if the significance value (sig.) is greater than 0.05. Conversely, if the significance value (sig.) is less than 0.05, the data is considered non-homogeneous. Based on the data processing results in this study, the homogeneity test results are as follows:

Table 2. Homogeneity Test Results for Corruption Variable

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	
		F	Sig.
Corruption	Equal variances assumed	2.233	.152
	Equal variances not assumed		

Based on the test results, it is observed that the significance value of the corruption variable is 0.152, which is greater than 0.05. This implies that the data for the corruption variable is considered homogeneous.

It can be concluded that the data used in this study meets the requirements for comparative analysis as it is free from normality and homogeneity issues. Subsequently, an Independent Sample t-test analysis was conducted to determine whether there are significant differences in behavior between majority Muslim and majority Buddhist countries. Below are the results of the data analysis and processing:

Comparative Analysis of Corruption Behavior in ASEAN Member States with Majority Muslim and Buddhist Populations

Table 3. Homogeneity and Independent Samples t-test Results for Corruption Variable

			Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
			F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2tailed)
Corruption	Equal variances assumed		2.233	.152	3.979	18	.001

Equal variances not assumed			3.979	17.385	.001
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Based on the data processing results through SPSS, it is found that there is a significant difference in corruption behavior between majority Muslim and majority Buddhist countries. The significance value (Sig. 2) obtained using the Equal Variances Assumed method is 0.001, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted.

Comparative Analysis of Giving Behavior in ASEAN Member States with Majority Muslim and Buddhist Populations

Table 4. Homogeneity and Independent Samples t-test Results for Giving Variable

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2tailed)
Kedermawana n	Equal variances assumed	.016	.901	3.384	18	.003
	Equal variances not assumed			3.384	17.983	.003

Based on the data processing results through SPSS, it is found that there is a significant difference in giving behavior between majority Muslim and majority Buddhist countries. The significance value (Sig. 2) obtained using the Equal Variances Assumed method is 0.003, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted.

Discussion

Based on the results of the independent t-test analysis, there is a significant difference in corruption behavior between majority Muslim and majority Buddhist populations. This implies that communities with majority Islamic and Buddhist religion exhibit different attitudes towards corruption. The magnitude of this difference can be observed from the Mean Difference value of 13.1. This indicates that the influence of Islamic and Buddhist religion on the corruption behavior of their respective communities is 13 points on the corruption perception index. Furthermore, based on the average values, it is evident that majority Islamic populations have a stronger anti-corruption behavior influence compared to majority Buddhist populations. This is evidenced by the average corruption perception index of majority Muslim countries being 43.30, while majority Buddhist countries have an index of 30.20. In essence, ASEAN countries with majority Buddhist populations are more corrupt compared to those with majority Islamic populations.

Similarly, the analysis reveals a significant difference in giving behavior between majority Muslim and majority Buddhist populations. This indicates that communities with majority Islamic and Buddhist religion exhibit different behaviors towards helping others. The magnitude of this difference can be observed from the Mean Difference value of 18.5. This suggests that the influence of Islamic and Buddhist religion on the giving behavior of their respective communities is 18 points on the giving index. Additionally, based on the average values, it is evident that majority Islamic populations exhibit a stronger giving behavior influence compared to majority Buddhist populations. This is evidenced by the average giving index of majority Muslim countries being 52.40, while majority Buddhist countries have an index of 33.90. Essentially, ASEAN countries with majority Islamic populations are more generous compared to those with majority Buddhist populations.

These findings undoubtedly have implications for the poverty level in these countries. Addressing poverty requires not only economic policies but also the involvement of both governmental and societal behaviors. Corruption has been shown to have a significant positive impact on poverty based on studies by Gumala & Anis (2019), Samputra & Munandar (2019), Yolanda & Satrianto (2019), and Abram & Yewiwati (2021). Additionally, society also plays a role in reducing poverty. The willingness of individuals to donate, assist, and engage in social activities for those in need will help them overcome poverty. Giving has been shown to have a significant negative impact on poverty based on studies by Rizal & Mukaromah (2020) and Sa'adah (2023).

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that there are differences in corruption and giving behavior between communities with majority Islamic and majority Buddhist beliefs. Furthermore, it is evident that Islam has a greater influence on anti-corruption behavior and giving compared to Buddhism.

The researchers recommend that all members of society, regardless of their Islamic or Buddhist faith, strive to enhance the quality of their beliefs, as both religions fundamentally teach similar values. Additionally, due to the limited number of studies examining the influence of religion on behavior, it is hoped that this research can serve as a reference for future researchers.

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