

## Honesty in Indonesian Literature

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### Abstract

As a reflection of human experience (Meyer, 1997; Dubey, 2013), literature reflects the values which a society holds. Indonesian literature, therefore, may also reflect honesty, an important value in a society, in the literature of Indonesian people. This research is a corpus study on honesty in Indonesian literature. This study aims at knowing the meaning of honesty in Indonesia as it is reflected in its literature and identifying the motivations which drive Indonesian people to be honest. The data are sentences which use the word *jujur* 'honest', *kejujuran* 'honesty', and *sejujurnya* 'honestly'. The analysis reveals that honesty falls into two types, namely verbal honesty and behavioral honesty. The analysis also reveals the motivations that drive Indonesian people to talk and behave honestly.

**Key words:** Honesty, verbal honesty, behavioral honesty, motivations, Indonesian literature.

### Introduction

Honesty is one of the most important characteristics which people need to have (Van Lange & Kullman, 1994; Shanks, 2005). Frankel (2006, p. iii) states that honesty is important in "both in personal and business relationships" besides trust. People need to have honesty to gain trust from other people. Darminta (2007) states that honesty is essential for a mutual trust in human relation, and without truth and honesty life and personal relation will be ruined.

As a reflection of human experience (Meyer, 1997; Dubey, 2013), literature reflects the values which a society holds. Indonesian literature, therefore, may also reflect the concepts of honesty which Indonesian people believe and practice in their life.

This paper reports a study of honesty in Indonesian literary works. This study hopefully can reveal the meanings of honesty for Indonesian people and the motivations which drive Indonesian people to be honest or dishonest. The study is important in that its result may help people understand each other better, and it can be used as a reference for developing honesty.

### Research Method

This paper is a corpus study using the corpus website [www.corci.org](http://www.corci.org). It used a large number of works stored in the site (47 Indonesian novels and 323 legends and folktales). Despite the number of literary works, a search in the site using the key words *jujur* 'honest', *kejujuran* 'honesty', and *sejujurnya* 'honestly' only yielded 235 sentences which used the key words. All the sentences were, then, analyzed to achieve the research goals.

Using the principles of the grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Gray, 2004; Neuman, 2007), the research proceeded in three stages. In the first stage (open coding), the characteristics of honesty which appeared with the key words were studied and identified. This stage resulted in meanings of honesty. In the second stage (axial coding), the contexts of the meanings were identified. This stage produced the classification of the meanings of honesty and the features which differentiated one meaning from another. In the third or last stage (selective coding), the meanings were validated against more data and were organized to formulate the types of honesty. The three stages were also taken to identify the motivations that drove the speakers or characters in the literary works studied to be studied.

## Results and Discussion

The study of honesty in Indonesian literature reveals two major types of honesty and nine motivations that drive people to be honest. This section is going to discuss the two types of honesty and the motivations.

### Types of Honesty

Honesty in the culture of Indonesia as reflected in its literature can be differentiated into two major categories, namely verbal honesty and behavioral honesty. Verbal honesty can be differentiated further into four sub-types which show the meaning of honesty. Table 1 displays the types of honesty.

**Table 1.** Types of honesty

NO	Types	Meaning	Key Words			Total
			<i>Honest</i>	<i>Honesty</i>	<i>Honestly</i>	
1.	Verbal honesty	Factual	59	28	19	106
		Emotional	32	4	2	38
		Perceptual	25	2		27
		Sincere	14	1		15
2.	Behavioral honesty	Social norm	30	19		49
		Total	160	54	21	
		Total				235

In the data, verbal honesty occurs in 186 sentences, and behavioral honesty occurs in 49 sentences. Verbal honesty can be differentiated into four sub-types, namely factual, emotional, perceptual, and sincere honesty.

In *factual honesty* (106 sentences), a speaker is honest if the talk agrees with a condition which underlies the talk. The talk also presents a marker of the presence of factual honesty like in text (1).

- (1) "Probably more," he answered with a low voice. "I don't know exactly"  
"Kugy Karmachameleon, you have to be honest now. *What is the problem?*"

The speaker in the second line demands that Kugy be honest. He thinks that Kugy knows more about the problem, and he asks him to tell the truth. The sentence *What is the problem?* in the second line is also the marker of the factual honesty.

*Emotional honesty* (38 sentences) occurs if the speaker is honest with his or her feeling. The talk matches the feeling which the speaker has. Emotional honesty is marked with the use of words such as *hati* 'heart', *suka* 'like', *kangen* 'miss (you)', and *cinta* 'love' like in the following text.

- (2) If I *like* Lasi, first of all, I have to be **honest** with myself. Then, go to hell with all the gossips.

The speaker is honest with his feeling. *I like Lasi* is marker of the presence of emotional honesty.

*Perceptual honesty* (27 sentences) occurs if the speaker is honest with what he thinks or has in his mind. Perceptual honesty is also accompanied with a marker which shows that the speaker is honest with his thought like *opini* 'opinion', *pikiran* 'opinion', *pendapat* 'opinion', *tanggapan* 'response', *merenungi* 'contemplating', and *memahami* 'understanding'.

- (3) "Sorry, Gy. If you really want me to talk **honestly**, that is my *opinion*. Nothing more, nothing less."

The word *opinion* is marker of perceptual honesty.

*Sincere honesty*, or just sincerity, occurs if the speaker does not have any personal interest. He only says or does something without hoping anything in return. Sincere honesty appears in the following text.

- (4) Deep in my heart, I have to say: Wiwik, you consider the man *honest*. That he is not the same as other men.

The man in (4) does not have any ill plan for Wiwik. He may approach Wiwik with a good intention or does not have the intention to make use of her.

The second major type of honesty is *behavioral honesty*. Behavioral honesty is the honesty which a person has in doing an action or activity. The following texts show behavioral honesty.

- (5) The night was the last time I saw her. The *gentle* and **honest** girl disappeared in the following day. She did her new tasks in farming fields far away from the capital.
- (6) All his older brothers are busy working to earn money for their living. Their father was a retired military personnel who was **honest** and *stuck to the principles* so that after the revolution he did not get anything.

The girl in (5) was an honest girl in her behavior so that when she suddenly disappeared, the narrator missed her. In (6), the father worked honestly so that after the revolution he did not have anything. Had he worked dishonestly such as receiving bribes or did some corruption, he would have got a lot money or wealth after the revolution.

Behavioral honesty occurs with another good trait presented explicitly or implicitly. In (5), the other good trait is her gentleness, and in (6) the other trait is his observance to the principles. The presence of the other trait confirms that the honesty performed has a wider scope that the agreement of a talk with some condition.

### **Motivations for Honesty**

Nine (9) different motivations can be identified from the honesty which the characters in Indonesian literary works exhibit. Table 2 displays the nine motivations and distribution.

**Table 2.** Motivations for honesty

<b>NO</b>	<b>Motivation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
1.	Observing social norms	56
2.	Creating a better judgment	50
3.	Creating a mutual understanding	39
4.	Emphasizing characteristic	32
5.	Maintaining relationship and image	22
6.	Fear to other people	12
7.	Having a better life understanding	10
8.	Gaining trust	9
9.	Desire for a better life	5
Total		235

Each of the motivations occurs in a certain context which helps differentiate one motivation from another.

The first motivation, observing social norms, is the motivation which drives a person to behave honestly. The person behaves honestly because he is a good person who has a good personality and observes social norms. Text (7) clarifies the motivation.

- (7) She has to get a punishment for her cruel allegation. I don't know what evils have changed Noura, who used to be **honest** and *kind* but now has changed into a slanderous heartless person.

Noura's honesty in (7) is part of her characteristics, and she is honest because that is the way of her life. She observes the norms of her society in her life.

The second motivation, *creating a better decision*, underlies the statement which a speaker says to the second person. He says the statement because he wants the second person to make a better judgment.

- (8) "... I want to hear the reason which comes from your heart, the **honest** and real reason, because you have sacrificed," Krining stared at the eyes of Aji in the bright light of the lamp. She loved the man who had shared his life with her for fifteen years and given her two children.

The woman in (8) wanted an honest reason because she was going to make her decision.

The third motivation, *creating a mutual understanding*, drives a speaker or character to talk honestly.

(9) "... You talk *honestly* to Mom," I said. "If you have a mistake, ask for an apology."

As can be seen in (9), this reason appears when there is a problem in communication or there is a problem between the speaker and the second person. In (9) the speaker had a mistake so that he does not feel comfortable to talk to his mother.

The fourth motivation, emphasizing a characteristic, emphasizes the characteristic which a speaker or character has. The characteristic can be presented explicitly or implicitly like in (10).

(10) Time went slowly as I was opening the e-mails in my husband's inbox one by one. **Honestly**, I do not feel comfortable doing that.

The use of *honestly* in (11) emphasizes the woman's honest characteristic. She is an honest person and does not want to sneak into someone else's mails although the person is her husband.

The fifth motivation, maintaining relationship and self-image, drives a speaker or character to talk *dishonestly*. He talks dishonestly because he does not want to ruin his relationship with the second person or because he wants to maintain his self-image like in texts (11) and (12).

(11) The man asked to himself. If I talk **honestly**, won't she break her heart?

(12) At that time, I could not tell **honestly** what happened to me in Fahri's room. I could not tell my own disgrace.

In (11) the narrator did not talk to the woman honestly because he did not want to break her heart, and in (12) the narrator talked dishonestly because she did not want to tell her own disgrace. Maintaining relationship and self-image only occurs in dishonesty.

The sixth motivation, fear to other people, drives a person to talk honestly because he is afraid to the person he is talking to like in (13).

(13) Ra Tanca answered the question with his hands closed to each other. Sri Jayanegara shivered when he heard the **honest** answer of Tanca, who did not have any dignity at all to him. Ra Tanca, however, was surprised when Jayanegara spit rudely to his face.

Ra Tanca answered Jayanegara's question honestly because he was afraid of Jayanegara. Jayanegara was a prince who could treat him as he liked, and it turned out that he spit on his face.

The seventh motivation, having a better life understand, drives a speaker or character to be honest in revealing nature and human condition. Text (14) exemplifies the motivation.

(14) When I entered the kitchen, I remember Sobar, my fellow journalist in Jakarta. He was a bright, **honest**, and brave journalist. He wrote critically and accurately.

Sobar wrote his report honestly because he wanted to present life as it was. His report could help other people understand life better.

The eighth motivation, gaining trust, drives a person to be honest because he wants other people to trust him. The motivation appears in (15).

(15) Sandy knew that the man was really serious. ... "I will be honest to you. When we left, I felt really messy for some days."

The woman said that she wanted to be honest because she wanted to gain attention. She wanted Sandy to believe her that she really missed him when he left.

The last motivation, desire for a better life, shows the drive a speaker or character has for a better life like in (16).

(16) But I do not need to hide it. Sometimes, honesty is still better than hypocrisy. Although not all people agree with me.

The desire for a better life occurs in a general statement like in (17). It does not refer to a specific context, and it shows that honesty is needed to have a better life.

The motivations to be honest can in general be differentiated into two classes. In the first class are the motivations which drive a person to be a better member of society, and in the second class are the motivations which drive a person for personal purposes. Observing social norms, creating a better judgment, creating mutual understanding, and having a better life understanding belong to the first class, and emphasizing characteristic, maintaining relationship and self-image, gaining trust, and desire for a better life belong to the second class.

### Conclusions

Honesty or dishonesty in Indonesia as reflected in its literary works can be differentiated into two major types, namely verbal honesty and behavioral honesty, and verbal honesty can be differentiated further into four sub-types, namely factual, emotional, perceptual, and sincere honesty. Both verbal and honesty, and its sub-categories, and behavioral honesty can be identified clearly, and it shows that the different types of honesty are important concepts which Indonesian people share well in their life.

The different positive motivations which drive Indonesian people to be honest shows that honesty is important for a better personality, better life understanding, better mutual understanding, and better society if its norms are well observed. The two negative motivations (maintaining relationship and self-image and fear to other people) indicates that honesty is still a problem for many people, but the hope for more-practiced honesty is still bigger as the number of occurrences of the two motivation is relatively low (13.6%).

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