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Tax Avoidance: The Effect of Political Connection and Institutional Ownership

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to test the effect of institutional ownership and political connection on tax avoidance. This study comprises 836 observations of firms in the non-financial industries from 2015-2018 listed on the Indonesia Stock Exchange. Multiple linear regression analysis with STATA 14 software is used. The result shows that political connections can be a tool to reduce tax avoidance, while institutional ownership effect tax avoidance only in the non-mining industry. The mining industry need wider pressure to mitigate the non-compliance on tax. The research may provide a deep insight the role of political connection especially for fiscal authority. It is a strengthen factor in the relation of the ownership and tax compliance. Furthermore, the character of industry doesn't indicate that the certain industry has a higher potential to do incompliance.

INTRODUCTION

Tax avoidance is an interesting issue related to the emergence of several tax cases committed by companies and the expectation of fiscal authority to increase tax revenue. Although relatively recent, tax avoidance and tax aggressiveness have diversified and vast topic Martinez (2017). The success of tax collection is relied on the law enforcement by tax authority. The government certainly expects to carry out these tax obligations as much as possible. However, for taxpayers, the payment of tax is a burden for the company which results in the lower welfare of shareholders, and the profits earned cannot be maximum. The higher the profit, the higher the tax to be paid.

Tax avoidance is an effort of legal tax avoidance to minimize the tax burden by taking advantage of weaknesses in taxation provisions. It does not violate tax regulations. According to Zain (2008) tax avoidance is an example of tax planning that can be carried out through the process of managing earnings to reduce the imposition of undesirable taxes. Sometimes, a country can suffer losses if the company does tax avoidance because it reduces revenue, but the government cannot impose sanctions because there are no rules that have been violated legally. Prebble and Prebble (2009) stated that tax avoidance is the act of taking advantage of exploiting existing legal weaknesses to reduce taxes owed. Wang (2011) states that tax avoidance is a tool for reducing transfer of tax to the state.

Generally, the previous research state that institutional ownership which is included in good corporate governance as an effective tool in reducing tax avoidance (Ji et al., 2015). However, some

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research result state differently. New evidence relating to the increasing of institutional ownership is associate with an increase in tax avoidance (Khan et al., 2017). Institutional ownership is company shares owned by the government, investment companies, insurance companies, banks, trust funds, foreign institutions, and other institutions. In another sense, institutional ownership is shares owned by institutional investors. Institutional ownership functions as oversight of management in a company, therefore, institutional ownership can encourage a more optimal increase in supervision.

One thing to be concerned about is the existence of company relationships with politicians or experience in politics can be a significant challenge for tax compliance enforcement (Lin et al., 2018). Political connections and institutional ownership have two different views. Good corporate governance is important in a company to maintain the company's accountability. Furthermore, good corporate governance is important for a firms especially to meet stakeholder expectations. In this study, it will combine one of the component of good corporate governance, namely institutional ownership. It expected to mitigate the tax avoidance and existence of political connections that might be strengthen tax avoidance practice. In this study, those factor will be linked to the tax avoidance which is legal but less ethical. Institutional ownership which is included in good corporate governance has an important role in monitoring, disciplining, and influencing managers. The greater the institutional ownership of a company, the greater the pressure on the company to avoid tax non-compliance.

This study uses a sample of all industrial sectors except for the financial sector listed on the Indonesia Stock Exchange during the 2015-2018 period. It aims to provide a comprehensive picture of various industries in Indonesia. Further description about the industry characteristic that might affect the behavior of the firms in doing tax avoidance will be provided. In this study the difference effect of mining and non-mining companies will be explored due to current issues of tax avoidance relate to some tax avoidance case involve the firm in mining industry in Indonesia. The importance to analysis the characteristic of mining and non-mining is support by Ball and Brown (1980) who report that the firm characteristic of mining companies to be considerably riskier compared to non-mining companies. The different characteristics between both industries also support by research of Roberts and Zurawski (2016) and Li and Islam (2019).

This paper are organized as follow: in the second part of this research is a literature review which includes the formulation of a hypothesis. The third part is the research method, the fourth is the results and discussion, and followed by conclusions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The practice of tax avoidance in the view of agency theory is influenced by the conflict of interest between the principal and the agent that arises when each party tries to maintain or achieve the level of prosperity as the company wants. Firms that do tax avoidance certainly go through the policies taken by the leaders of those firms. In general, the leader has two characteristics, namely, risk-taker and risk-averse. MacCrimmon and Wehrung (1990) explain that risk-takers are executives who are more courageous in making business decisions and have a strong incentive to have higher income, position, welfare, and authority. Hanlon and Heitzman (2010) state that definition of tax avoidance cannot be accepted universally. Different countries have different meaning (Hasseldine and Morris, 2013).

Institutional ownership has an important meaning in monitoring management because institutional ownership will encourage a more optimal increase in supervision. Together with the relation of the connection with the government institution, it is expected the monitoring function can be maximize. According to the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), the political connection is a relationship that can facilitate all matters or activities. Politically connected companies are companies that in certain ways have political ties or seek closeness to politicians or the government. With this political connection, it is hoped that both parties will get the same benefits.

1. Institutional Ownership and Tax Avoidance

Institutional ownership has a very important role in supervising or monitoring management. Previous study testing the effect institutional ownership and tax avoidance provide inconsistent

result. Bird and Karolyi (2017) state that the greater the institutional ownership lead to increase in tax avoidance. Khan et al. (2017) who conduct the research in US using Russel index state that Increase in institutional ownership have positive effects on tax avoidance. But, with the same environment this result is different (Khurana et al., 2018). The strand of literature generally posit that firms which has strong governance will mitigate the aggressiveness of action that will ruin the firms' reputation (Alzoubi, 2016). However, the tax avoidance action will provide higher benefit for firm in terms of profit. But if it is too aggressive, it may lead to outweigh those benefit. Alkurdi and Mardini (2020) and Moore (2012) states that institutional ownership has negative effect on tax avoidance. In emerging market, Ying et al. (2017) state that institutional ownership has negative effect on tax avoidance for Chinese listed firms. Khurana et al. (2018) state that institutional investor pay higher concern on long term consequences of tax avoidance. Base on the theory and empirical evidence in emerging market, particularly, the hypothesis of this study is:

H1: Institutional ownership have negative effects on tax avoidance.

2. Political Connection and Tax Avoidance

Political connection in a unique environment such us emerging market countries, will give a different side compare with those developed market. The firms having a connection is generally given special treatment or privilege by government especially for unique environment, such as Indonesia. Firms is defined as having political connection when a top executive was a member of government board or associate with a top level of government official (Faccio, 2006). Lin et al. (2018) state that political connection can be a challenge to the effectiveness of tax enforcement. As Jiang et al. (2010) who conduct study in China, and Abdul Wahab et al. (2011) in Malaysia, state that different country have different circumstance. The criteria for political connection is that company owners are politicians affiliated with political parties or company owners are government officials. Chaney et al. (2011) explained that politically connected companies have many advantages, namely that they benefit from their political relations. Companies can be said to have links with political connections, when the top ranks of the company are currently or have had positions as head of state or head of government, ministers or equivalent positions, provincial heads, directors of State-Owned Enterprises, heads and executives of political parties, or have family ties to officials. This study, in assessing the presence or absence of political connections in a company, uses a proxy for the presence or absence of direct government ownership of the company. Hijriani et al. (2017) who conduct the researched of state-owned companies listed on the Indonesia Stock Exchange 2011-2013, found that political connections have a negative effect on tax avoidance with the proxy GAAP Effective Tax Rate (ETR) and current ETR. The similar results through research conducted by Wahab et al. (2011) which states that political connections have a negative effect on tax avoidance.. Base on this empirical research, the hypothesis of this study is:

H2: Political connection has negative effect on tax avoidance.

The research approach used is a quantitative approach using non-financial firms listed on the Indonesia Stock Exchange 2015-2018. The type of data used is unbalanced panel data collected from OSIRIS data provider. This study uses multiple linear regression analysis. The test used is the individual parameter significance test (t statistical test), and the coefficient of determination (r^2) test. The regression model used to test the hypothesis is as follows:

$$TA = \alpha + \beta_1 INST + \beta_2 PCON + \beta_3 ROA + \beta_4 LEV + \beta_5 SIZE + \delta Indummy + e \quad (1)$$

Notation:

TA : Tax Avoidance
 $\beta_1 - \beta_5$: Coefficient of regression direction
 PCON : Political Connection
 INST : Institutional Ownership

ROA : Return on Assets
 LEV : Leverage
 FSIZE : Company Size
 Indummy : Industry dummy/code

The dependent variable in this study is tax avoidance. Tax avoidance is an effort to minimize the tax burden that is often carried out by companies because it is still within the framework of the prevailing tax regulations. Tax avoidance in this study was measured using the Effective Tax Rate ratio (Jihene and Moez, 2019, Hanlon and Heitzman, 2010, Chen et al., 2010, Khan et al., 2017). ETR is the ratio between total tax expense and profit before tax. The total tax expense represents the current tax expense and deferred tax. ETR can use any form of tax deduction through tax shelters and legal loopholes (Dyreng et al., 2017). Furthermore, ETR can detect tax avoidance that comes from the impact of temporary differences (Hanlon and Heitzman, 2010). ETR is assessed based on financial information generated by the company. This calculation does not only come from income tax but other tax burdens that can be borne by the company. ETR is the inverse function of tax avoidance. However, the ETR value in this study is multiplied by -1 as Khan et al. (2017) so that when the ETR value is low, the company is less involved in tax avoidance practices. The political connection can be seen through whether the company has parties that are close to the government. It can be describes that the government has a connection to the company's organizational structure, whether it is a commissioner or a board of directors (Fisman, 2001). The political connection is measured by a dummy variable, dummy 1 for firms whose board of directors and/or board of commissioners are currently or used to be active in government positions or have served in government, and 0 if they do not have political connections (Cheng et al., 2017, Kim and Zhang, 2016). Institutional ownership is measured by comparing the shares owned by the institution with the number of shares outstanding (Desai and Dharmapala, 2009, Khan et al., 2017). The control variables in this study are ROA, leverage, and company size. The control variables used in this study refer to research conducted by Noor and Sabli (2012). Return on Assets is a ratio that serves to measure the company's ability to generate profits from the company's investment activities. Return on Assets can also describe how a company can manage its assets to generate income. The ROA calculation in this study which is calculated by dividing net profit after tax by total assets. Leverage is a comparison between total liabilities and total company assets which shows the number of assets owned by a business entity that is funded using debt. Company size is a measurement grouped based on the size of the company and can describe the company's operational activities and revenue earned by the company. It is measured by Ln total asset

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The total data of non-financial companies listed on the IDX for the 2015-2018 period is 1644 data. Of the total, 836 company data met the sample criteria. The remaining data is not used consist of 465 financial reports that show losses, 159 financial reports that do not provide complete data information, and 184 companies that have ETR values of more than 1 (one) during 2015-2018. This information is provided in Table 1. as below.

Table 1. Research Samples

Sample Criteria	Amount
Non-financial companies listed on the IDX in 2015-2018 and not excluded from the list during that period	1644
Companies that suffered losses in 2015-2018	(465)
Companies that do not have complete data	(159)
Companies that have an ETR value of more than 1 year 2015-2018	(184)
Total Sample used in this research	836

Table 2 describe descriptive statistic of each variable. Variable TA is tax avoidance show that the average of the tax payment compare to earnings before interest and tax is 0.25 shows the normal average of tax rate. The negative sign is used to make the interpretation of the degree of ETR as proxy of tax avoidance in line with the interpretation of the degree of tax avoidance. For variable INSTOWN show that the ownership of institutional is 0.66 in average. It indicates that a big part of the firms has quiet high portion of institutional ownership. Political connection (PCON) show that the result below 0.5 that indicate the number of company do not have political connection is higher than the firms have political connection.

Tabel 2. Descriptive Statistic

Variabel	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
TA	836	-0,248	0,140	-0,941	-0,000
INSTOWN	836	0,655	0,206	0	0,999
PCON	836	0,435	0,496	0	1
ROA	836	0,077	0,089	0,0005	0,745
LEV	836	0,444	0,196	0,0002	0,998
FIRMSIZE	836	28,958	1,585	23,557	33,473

The results of multiple linear regression to test the effect of the political connections and institutional ownership to tax avoidance presented in the Table 3.

Tabel 3. Multiple Regression Analysis Result

Variables	(1) All industry	(2) Mining	(3) Non- mining
PCON	-0.02* (0.009)	-0.064* (0.035)	-.0178* (0.010)
INSTOWN	-0.03 (0.022)	0.078 (0.078)	-.052** (0.241)
ROA	0.22*** (0.053)	0.278* (0.148)	.180*** (0.058)
LEV	-0.04 (0.024)	0.161* (0.084)	.057** (0.026)
SIZE	0.00 (0.003)	0.006 (0.011)	.003 (0.003)
Constant	-0.29* (0.10)	-0.627* (0.359)	-.627*** (0.097)
Observations	836	80	756
R-squared	0.09	0.106	0.03
Industry effect	Yes		

t statistics in parentheses

* $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 3. shows the result of the multiple regression analysis the effect of political connection and institutional ownership on tax avoidance. Table 3. column 1, is the test of observation for all industry except financial firms. The result shows that political connection has a negative effect on tax avoidance, as well as column 2 for mining and column 3 for non-mining industry. It means that the characteristic of industry has the same effect in the term of political connection. Institutional ownership shows the different result for mining and non-mining industry. In the mining industry, p-value show insignificance. In contrary, for the non-mining industry the coefficient is negative and significant. It shows that the higher the degree of institutional ownership, the lower the degree of tax avoidance.

The Effect of Political Connections on Tax Avoidance

The political connection in this study has a negative effect on tax avoidance. This means that even though there are political connections, companies can still work well and contribute to the country through tax payments according to the amount to be paid. Companies are not trying to take advantage of their political connections to reduce the tax burden. The negative sign indicate that the greater the political relationship the company has, the lower opportunity the firms to do tax avoidance. This research is in line with research conducted by Iswari et al. (2019) who found that political connections have a negative effect on tax avoidance. Companies can benefit from being close to the government, but companies must also think about the long-term impact this will have. The long-term impact of a bad corporate image will decline public trust and the company will suffer losses.

The results of this study has different sign from some researches (Ferdiawan and Firmansyah, 2017, Khlif and Amara, 2019, Adhikari et al., 2006, Ajili and Khlif, 2020, Zhao et al., 2020, Shen et al., 2019) and do not support Kim and Zhang (2016) that states political connections can be used to help reduce the possibility of tax audits or reduce tax sanctions by leveraging connections with the government. Furthermore it explain that the connected firms has lower cost of tax enforcement and lower pressure to have more public transparency. The result also has an opposite side of Lin et al. (2018) who state that connected firm with government can be a significant challenge for the effectiveness of tax enforcement. The results of the study are also different from research conducted by Abdul Wahab et al. (2011) in the Indonesian context during the observation period because there could be characters of political behavior that are different from other countries.

The power of tax office to investigate the compliance of the firms have a role of government monitoring (Xu et al., 2011). Thus, the enforcement will motivate the manager to comply with tax law. The offensive and detrimental issue to society will easily attract public attention. Antonetti and Anesa (2017) state that consumer will react negatively to tax avoidance rather than to reward conservative tax strategies. In addition, Barford and Holt (2013) state that tax avoidance can attract unfavorable attention from public or society in the case of tax shaming phenomenon.

The political connection variable which have a negative effect because the tax regulation regulates transactions with parties who have a special relationship, namely article 18 paragraph 3 of Law No. 36 of 2008 concerning Income Tax. The closeness that is owned by the company makes the company more careful in making any decisions to keep getting appreciation from the government as a compliant taxpayer. This also encourages companies to always follow various regulations issued by the government. Taking advantage of the proximity to political parties does provide several benefits for the company, but the company must think more about the long-term impact it will have. The bad company image will have a long-term impact so that public trust will decrease and cause losses. Companies will prioritize long-term benefits than profits that can only be enjoyed for a moment for the sake of business continuity.

Political connection can be both beneficial or adversely affect management decision based on or depend on legal, cultural, and characteristic in particular circumstance (Amara and Khlif, 2020). In addition, Francis et al. (2016) state that in general the result support that political connection are associated with more tax avoidance, but it highlight that the specific factor determine tax avoidance behavior.

The Effect of Institutional Ownership on Tax Avoidance

The results of this study shows that in general institutional ownership does not have effect on tax avoidance for mining industry. The results of this study are supported by previous research (Ying et al., 2017, Khurana et al., 2018) who indicate that there is bigger role of institutional to monitor the behavior of the companies. This research is also in line with research conducted by Merslythalia and Lasmana (2017). This research is not in line with research conducted by Maharani and Baroroh (2019) and Tiara Riza Falistiani and Trisni (2017) who found that institutional ownership does no effect on tax avoidance. The size of the proportion of institutional ownership does not make tax avoidance practices carried out by companies avoidable. This could happen because institutional ownership entrusts the supervision and management of the company to the board of commissioners. After all, it is their job so

that institutional ownership is still there, but tax avoidance occurs. Institutional ownership should be able to play an important role in supervising managers so that it can force management to avoid selfish behaviors.

Similar results are also obtained from research conducted by Lanis and Richardson (2011) and Lanis and Richardson (2013). Annisa and Kurniasih (2012) conduct research on manufacturing in Indonesia argue that institutional ownership has no significant effect on tax avoidance. Jensen and Meckling (1976) state that institutional ownership has an important role in minimizing agency conflicts that occur between shareholders and managers. Shleifer and Vishny (1986) add that institutional investors with large shareholdings and voting rights can force managers to focus on firm performance and avoid opportunities to prioritize their interests. The results of this study are different from Jamei (2017) who state that there is no effect of institutional ownership to tax avoidance. It also different from research conducted by Khurana et al. (2018) which concluded that the increasing number of institutional ownership will increase tax avoidance. In this research, higher institutional ownership structure indicates that there is pressure from the institution on the company management not to carry out an aggressive tax policy. The company has a responsibility to shareholders, so the institutional owner who is also responsible to the public ensures that the company's management makes decisions that do not harm the long-term survival of the company.

Institutional ownership is held as a GCG mechanism as an oversight organ. With supervision, aggressive tax avoidance practices that can threaten the company's survival can be minimized. When reconnected with agency theory, an institution that has invested in a company will certainly want the best for the company so that the investment will benefit from its investment.

Armstrong et al. (2019) state that companies in the same industry has a role in the strategy of tax avoidance. When it is examined separately, institutional ownership has no effect to tax avoidance in mining industry. In the mining industry, the ownership structure is not an effective tool to reduce tax avoidance practice. It might be due to inefficient monitoring and operation (Huang and Wright, 2015). Furthermore, in mining industry, it has to be more wider pressure to be effective such as environmental pressure (Bleischwitz, 2014). Tax avoidance has negative effect for non-mining industries. In non-mining industry, the higher the level of institutional ownership, the lower the tax avoidance actions taken by the company. It consistent with Peyer and Vermaelen (2016) that state when the higher share will directly affected by the tax change

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

Based on the result of the study, it have two main conclusions. The first, political connections have a negative effect on tax avoidance both for mining and non-mining companies. Firm try not to take advantage of their political connections to reduce the tax burden. Despite having political connections, companies can still do well and contribute to the country through appropriate tax payments. The long term perspective of the effect of the firm's strengthen the motive to comply with the tax regulation. The second conclusion, institutional ownership has a negative effect on tax avoidance only in the non-mining industry. This means that the greater the institutional ownership, the less tax avoidance efforts are carried out. The existence of supervision from the institution of aggressive tax avoidance practices that can threaten the company's survival can be minimized. In the mining companies, it needs huge wider pressure that might be more effective than institutional ownership.

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