

## UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ACCEPTANCE OF INTEGRITY AND ANTI-CORRUPTION TOPICS INCORPORATED WITHIN LANGUAGES AND HUMANITIES COURSES VIA CONTENT BASED INSTRUCTION APPROACH

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### ABSTRACT

*The objective of the study is to measure the university student; acceptance of the Content based instruction (CBI) approach for The Integrity and Anti-Corruption (IAC) and their understanding on corruption and integrity issues in Malaysia as a whole. This is important as the battle against corruption must be carried out via all means. Thus the CBI approach enables lecturers to emphasize IAC within their existing languages and humanities courses. Data was elicited via survey questionnaires and selective interviews on 90 students who enrolled in the various courses for February semester. The findings show that majority of the respondents were very receptive to the integration of IAC topics via CBI in the languages and humanities courses and they have good understanding on the main aspects of integrity and corruption. However some of the students' perception on a few micro practices relating to corruption shows somewhat worrying results. Suggestions are put forth to improve the content integration in the courses so that the learning outcomes will be better achieved as the understanding of IAC reach a better level.*

### INTRODUCTION

The National Integrity and Anti-Corruption Plan 2019 - 2023 was launched by the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamed on January 29, 2019 to realize the government's vision of developing a corruption-free country with integrity (Azura, et al., 2019). The plan was made based on 22 strategies that contain 115 anti-corruption initiatives covering six sectors namely politics, public procurement, law enforcement, public sector administration, legislation and judiciary as well as corporate governance. The Integrity and Anti-Corruption (IAC) initiative is important as an effort to give understanding to the community to fight corruption and spread the value of integrity among its members which include students at higher education institutions. The main focus of the educational activities is to continuously convey anti-corruption information to every level of society, to further increase the public's awareness and to gain confidence from the public in the efforts to prevent corruption in Malaysia. Educational programs and activities are carried out throughout the country and the target group for the implementation of educational activities is Universities and Higher Education Institutions through anti-corruption programs involving students, mainly coordinated by the Community Education Division of Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) (MACC, 2021). The IAC topics are adapted from a module developed by the MACC in terms of the appropriate teaching and learning methods. The effort to provide understanding to the public about corruption and integrity crimes is a continuous effort.

This study reports on the effort to take-up the IAC initiative further by integrating the topics and points via a Content-Based Instruction (CBI) approach in languages and

humanities courses at a technical engineering university in Malaysia. CBI refers to an approach to language teaching in which teaching is organized around the content or information that students will acquire, rather than around a linguistic or other type of syllabus (Richards & Rodgers, 2010). Vanichvasin (2019) from a study on university undergraduates from both English and non-English speaking courses found that CBI produced positive results and could be used as an effective methodology and essential aid in generating opportunities to use English, which resulted in increased English language performance. Ahmad, Ab Rahim and Salawati (2021) found that a multi-dimensional approach to planning of teaching and assessment is important for courses at technical engineering institutions. This is essential as there are certain programme outcomes that require integrated and concerted efforts from a number of courses from different semesters within an academic programme (Ahmad et. al., 2019). Furthermore, it was found that integration of soft skills and hard skills via combined synergy of courses within technical engineering university is feasible with careful planning and induction of the lecturers into the CBI approach (Ahmad & Mohd Said, 2012).

Corruption will not be eradicated as long as there are givers and receivers of bribes in the society. For Muslim citizens it is most important to instill faith in their hearts to ensure that they always adhere to the true teachings of Islam. In life, we are not alone as all our deeds are watched and recorded by two angels on the left and the right. The words of God Almighty Allah SWT referring to this can be referred to Surah al-Infithar, 83, verses 10 to 12 which are as follows,

*" And verily for you there are (angels) watching over (your work). The honorable (on the side of Allah SWT) and record your deeds. They know what you do*

Wahbah Mustafa (2001), when explaining the verse above warns that not fearing God almighty Allah SWT and committing immorality arise because people deny retribution and reckoning on the Day of Judgment. They will be held accountable for all of their actions done on the face of the earth. The issue of corruption is one of the branches of integrity, where it includes a code of conduct that involves issues of values, ethics and a person's religious beliefs. Practicing good values in life has actually made individuals to become a person of integrity. Faith and piety in observing the teachings and principles of the religion become a fortress and a person who possess it will have a strong will power to avoid doing something that is against integrity. Every religion in the world never allows its followers to do things that are against the norms of life or against the principles of civilized humans (Mohamed, 2014)

Studies related to the understanding and perception of corruption and integrity are important because some people still do not understand the definition, the criteria and the act or practice that is considered as corruption. A study on students' perceptions of corruption in Malaysia by the Malaysian Integrity Institute (Yusoff & Amin, 2017) shows that there are respondents who think that receiving gifts in the form of money, goods or services in return for services provided as not a form of corruption.

A study conducted by Chandran and Hussin (2021) on the application of integrity values among high school students through history subjects found that the factors of application of integrity values are through teachers, schools, friends and subjects. Teachers as guides, motivators and guardians to students are able to lead them towards better direction without symptoms of malpractice, abuse of power, corruption and things that can bring down the name and dignity of the family, community and country.

Meanwhile, a study on a group of civil servants of a Local Authority show that the propagation and implementation of Islamic Work Ethics (EKI) will produce civil servants who always act based on the goal of gaining God's pleasure, comply with all the rules and responsibilities entrusted, create a high level of commitment in work and are confident that Allah SWT always watch their every action. With that, the intention to commit corruption can be controlled and corrupt behavior can be avoided (Daud, 2019). In addition, a study by Yusoff (2019) on 200 students of a public university in Malaysia show that certain percentages of respondents still do not have a clear view on the lack of integrity and corruption practices such as cheating within academic context, imitating or copying friends' work, signing attendance on behalf of an absent friend, hiring other people to complete academic assignments, offering services to do assignments, scholarly writing, theses completion and carrying notes during the examination. . Whether one is aware of it or not, the actions of our daily activities begin with intention. Religion has repeatedly stated that practice must have faith, and that is for each person what he means. The need to emphasize the dangers of corruption should be fostered by parents. Here the role of parents is very important to create a culture of "Say No to Corruption". The responsibility of parents is very important to educate children (Mohamed, 2014).

Studies on integrity issues in organizations (Ishar et al., 2021) show that most of the integrity problems raised refer to trivial matters that are often related to their respective fields, however, they are still wrong and need to be corrected. Therefore, there is a need to identify the causes of weaknesses in the culture and enforcement of integrity in an organization, especially in the community. The highlight of the study found that knowledge and culture about integrity issues is seen as a significant weakness in the failure to apply integrity in work. Therefore, an understanding of the concept of an employee's integrity is necessary to show harmony between words and actions. Likewise, a study on the understanding of the concept of integrity among the staff of the Malaysian Immigration Department in the state of Kedah found that immigration officers have a high understanding of the concept of integrity. Based on the results of the study, various efforts should be made by all segments of society, educational institutions, religious institutions and the government to ensure that values and personal values in work continue to be instilled among civil servants in Malaysia to achieve the objective of integrity. Integrity is closely related to the efficiency and effectiveness of a work or task performed so that it has a positive impact on improving quality and productivity (Don, et.al, 2021).

There three objectives of the study, namely to measure students' receptiveness of specific content integration in languages and humanities, to assess their understanding of a particular practice, whether it is a form of corruption or not and to see their perception of corruption in Malaysia. This kind of study is important to obtain primary data and information from members of the community, especially tertiary students regarding their perception and understanding of corruption. The specific research questions are as follows,

- i. Are the students receptive to the languages and humanities courses being incorporated with IAC topics and points?
- ii. Is there a difference in perception and understanding about corruption and integrity after following courses incorporated with IAC topics and points?
- iii. What will the undergraduates perception and mind-set on corruption practices be after being exposed to the IAC topics within the courses?

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted via survey questionnaires through Google Form involving 90 respondents who were selected using non-probability sampling methods called convenience sampling as they are enrolled in a number of languages and humanities courses namely English Malay Language Religious Practices in Malaysia, Islamic Practices and Islamic Civilization taught by the authors as lecturers. The survey questions are adapted based on questionnaires utilized by researchers at Malaysian Institute of Integrity (Yusoff & Amin, 2017). Their responses were elicited via the questionnaires and structured interviews of class representatives. This group of students have followed the courses for one semester where IAC topics were incorporated as part of the content, points and example by the respective lecturers. The survey questionnaires are divided into three sections namely A, B and C. Section A is for demographic information, section B is about the understanding of corrupt practices and section C is about the perception of corruption in Malaysia. A simple 3-point Likert scale was used in the study as such odd-numbered scale contains a midpoint which allows respondents to choose a neutral option. The neutral option helps respondents who do not want to be biased towards any answer. The responses the students gave in the questionnaire and selected interviews will provide a clear indication, whether the content of IAC was successful in providing understanding and improving their perception of corruption or vice versa.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

English language and humanities courses registered high rating given by the course participants at the end of the semester online course evaluation as part of the university knowledge management system, All the courses received ratings over 4.00 (excellent) out of a maximum 5.00. Similarly, responses from the selected structured interviews were favourable to the CBI integration of the IAC topics in the courses. All these show that the students were receptive to the delivery of the courses which were directly integrated with points from IAC topics based on CBI approach. This finding supports the theory that CBI in language teaching and in humanities courses is feasible, well accepted by students and could be well implemented with systematic planning.

Table 1. Receptiveness towards Content Integration in Languages and Humanities Courses

Courses		English, Malay Language, Religious Practices, Malaysian Studies, Islamic Practices, Culture and Lifestyle, Islamic & Asian Civilization
No	Item	Rating
1	I am able to understand and follow the lesson content	>4.00
2	Explanation provided in the lesson is clear	>4.00
3	Examples given in lesson are clear	>4.00
4	I am able to carry out tasks well in this course	>4.00

### Section A: Demographic Information

The results from the demographic section of the questionnaire show that 86.5% of the respondents are from Malay ethnicity followed by 9% are from East Malaysia Ethnicities and 4.5% Indian ethnicity. The majority of respondents are male with a total of 74% compared to only 15% of female students. 80% of the respondents were from semester two and three and 93.2% percent were between 19 and 24 years old. Complete information about the background of the respondents can be seen in table 2 below.

Table 2. Demographic information of respondents.

No.	Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
1	Malay	78	86.9
2	East Malaysia Ethnicities	8	8.98
3	Indian	4	4.49
<b>Gender</b>			
1	Men	75	83.14
2	Women	15	16.85
<b>Age</b>			
1	19 – 21	41	44.9
2	22 – 24	43	48.3
3	25 and above	6	6.7

The ethnic breakdown shows that the majority of respondents are Malays, amounting to 87 %. Muslims' understanding of the prohibition of corruption should in general influence the respondents' answers to the survey questions. Muslims have been taught about the evils of corruption as explained in the Qur'an and the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad SAW.

### Part B: Understanding corruption.

In the questionnaire part B, there are ten questions that test the respondent's understanding of acts or practices that are considered corruption or not. Respondents were asked to choose an answer based on their understanding, which is either Yes, No or Uncertain.

Table 3. Understanding of Corruption

Bil.	Pernyataan/Statement	(%) Yes	(%) No	(%) Uncertain
1	Penerimaan hadiah dalam bentuk wang, barangan atau perkhidmatan sebagai balasan atas perkhidmatan yang diberikan. <i>Accepting gifts in the form of money, goods or services as a reward for services given</i>	76.40	19.11	4.48
2	Menggunakan wang pejabat untuk kepentingan diri sendiri. <i>Using cash money from the office for personal use</i>	56.19	29.21	14.60
3	Mendapatkan wang atau habuan secara paksaan daripada pelanggan. <i>Obtaining cash money or rewards by force from clients</i>	83.25	14.56	2.20

4	Terlibat secara langsung dalam proses pemberian kontrak kepada ahli keluarga. <i>Being directly involved in the process of awarding contracts to family members</i>	73.05	12.53	14.60
5	Terlibat secara langsung dalam proses pelantikan ahli keluarga untuk mengisi jawatan kosong di jabatan. <i>Being directly involved in the process of appointing family members to fill up vacant posts at the department</i>	62.92	24.73	12.35
6	Mengemukakan tuntutan penginapan bagi tugas luar di mana penginapan telah disediakan oleh penganjur. <i>Submitting accommodation claim for outstation task where accommodation is already provided by organizers</i>	46.07	33.72	20.21
7	Mengambil harta/ barangan pejabat (contoh: thumb drive, toner, kertas dan lain-lain) untuk kegunaan peribadi. <i>Taking office properties like thumb drive, stationaries for personal use</i>	40.46	39.3	20.24
8	Perbuatan Pegawai Penguatkuasa menakut-nakutkan / menggentarkan ( <i>intimidating</i> ) pelanggan bagi tujuan mendapatkan wang. <i>The behaviours of enforcement officers in scaring and intimidating clients in order to get money</i>	89.76	3.48	7.75
9	Menggunakan kuasa/ pangkat untuk mendapatkan sesuatu faedah. <i>Using power/position to obtain certain benefits</i>	89.88	6.75	3.37
10	Politik wang (contoh: memberi sogokan untuk membeli/ meraih undi). <i>Money politics (giving out money to get votes)</i>	92.24	3.48	4.28

The findings show that out of 10 behavior items shown in the survey, there are 6 statements showing that respondents have a high level of understanding of these as a corrupt behavior based on a high percentage rate of more than 70%. One of the examples is the statement related to money politics, where 92% of respondents understand that the practice or behavior of money politics is corruption. 90% of respondents agreed that using power or rank for personal gain is corruption. 89% agreed that using power to gain rank or benefits is corruption. Similarly, the act of an enforcement officer intimidating a customer to get money is corruption. The complete information on the 6 behaviors that are considered corruption with the highest percentage between 73 to 92% can be referred to in table 3 above.

### **Six behaviors or corrupt practices with high percentage (more than 70%).**

Basically, it could be seen from the responses that there are six actions or behaviors that are considered acts of corruption with a high percentage of over 70%. Corruption in the form of money politics is in the highest position in corruption with the highest percentage (92.24%), followed by misuse of power or using power or rank to obtain a benefit (89.88%), threatening subordinates to obtain money (89.76%) and so on.

### Four behaviours or corrupt practices with moderate percentage (less than 70%)

It is quite worrying is that there are four behaviours that are considered as corruption but with a moderate percentage. 62.92% agreed that officials or staff who are directly involved in the process of appointing family members to fill vacant positions in the department are corrupt. 56.19% of respondents agreed that taking or using office property for personal use is corruption. 46.7% agreed that making a claim for accommodation while working outside the area is corruption in a situation where the organizers have already provided free accommodation. 40.46% feel that taking office property or goods for personal use is corruption. However, quite worrying is the fact that only 40.46 to 46.7 % understood that making false claims and using office items for personal use are corruption. This seems to illustrate that, almost 60% considered these two acts are not corrupt offenses and wrong.

### Section C: Perceptions of corruption.

There are twelve questions in section C which are related to the respondents' perception of corruption in Malaysia. Most of the respondents' answers to the survey were found to show a moderate perception on corruption. Only one item shows a high percentage from respondents, namely the statement that the safety of witnesses and whistleblowers on corruption is guaranteed. 79.82% agreed that witness safety is guaranteed. Apart from the items, they all show a moderate percentage of 68.52% who believe that the MACC is effective in fighting corruption, followed by 67.44% who think that the mass media is effective in raising awareness about the dangers of corruption. 59.57 % respondents agree that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are effective in efforts to raise awareness about the dangers of corruption. Complete information about the findings can be seen in table 4 below.

Table 4. Perception on Corrupt Practices

Bil.	Pernyataan/Statement	(%) Ya <i>Yes</i>	(%) Tidak <i>No</i>	(%) Tidak Pasti <i>Uncertain</i>
1	Suruhanjaya Pencegahan Rasuah Malaysia (SPRM) berkesan dalam membanteras rasuah. <i>MACC is effective in eradicating corruption</i>	68.52	21.35	10.13
2	Keselamatan saksi dan pemberi maklumat mengenai rasuah adalah terjamin. <i>Safety of witness and whistleblower is quaranteed</i>	79.82	6.67	13.52
3	Tahap pengambilan rasuah di negara ini adalah rendah. <i>The rate of taking bribes in this country is low</i>	25.89	66.29	7.83
4	Rasuah dalam sektor politik dan kerajaan masa kini adalah terkawal. <i>Corruption in the political and government sectors is under control</i>	26.92	61.82	11.26
5	Badan bukan kerajaan (NGO) berkesan dalam usaha meningkatkan kesedaran mengenai bahaya gejala rasuah. <i>NGOs are effective in increasing awareness on the dangers of corruption</i>	59.57	17.97	22.46
6	Media massa (cth: surat khabar, tv, radio,dll) berkesan dalam usaha meningkatkan kesedaran masyarakat mengenai bahaya gejala rasuah.	67.44	14.59	17.97

	<i>The mass media is effective in increasing society's awareness on the dangers of corruption</i>			
7	SPRM (Suruhanjaya Pencegahan Rasuah Malaysia) adalah sebuah badan bebas. <i>MACC is an independent body</i>	40.45	40.45	19.09
8	Usaha pencegahan rasuah oleh kerajaan semakin berjaya. <i>The effort to fight corruption by the government is becoming more successful</i>	35.94	43.84	20.23
9	Jenayah rasuah dalam sektor swasta adalah rendah. <i>The crime of corruption in the private sector is low</i>	31.90	49.43	19.07
10	Jenayah rasuah dalam kalangan orang awam adalah rendah. <i>The crime of corruption among the public is low</i>	40.34	43.92	15.75
11	Permit/ lesen perniagaan diperolehi tanpa memberi rasuah. <i>The permit or license to operate for business is obtained without giving bribes</i>	56.20	29.21	14.59
12	Projek kerajaan ditawarkan melalui tender terbuka. <i>Government projects are awarded through open tenders</i>	55.06	28.09	16.85

There are four items that show a very worrying perception about corruption in our country, where only 25.89 % agree that the level of corruption in this country is low. Indirectly, this means that 66.29% agree that the rate of bribery in this country is high. 26.92 % agreed that corruption in the political sector is under control. If the percentage of respondents who disagree and are unsure with the item is combined, this means that 73.08 % hold the perception that corruption in the political sector is uncontrolled. Respondents also gave the perception that the level of bribery in this country is high, where only 25.89% agreed that bribery is low and only 35.94% believe that the government's efforts to prevent corruption are becoming more successful. Only one item that shows a high percentage of the perception of corruption in our country is the statement that the safety of witnesses and whistle-blowers regarding corruption is guaranteed with a total percentage of 79.82%. Apart from this item, everything shows moderate and low percentages.

The findings of the perception of corruption in this study seem to be in line with Malaysia's position in the Corruption Perceptions Index issued by Transparency International in the past five years. Malaysia's position in 2021 is 62nd in 2021, 57th in 2020, 51st in 2019, 61st in 2018 and 62nd in 2017 (Transparency International, 2021). Transparency International, Malaysia announced the CPI score for the year 2021 for Malaysia and many were shocked by the result of a lower score compared to the score achieved in the previous year. Malaysia has scored 48 and is currently ranked 62 out of 180 countries involved. In 2020, Malaysia has received a score of 51 points with a ranking of 57. This decline has troubled many parties especially when compared to Malaysia's achievements in 2019 where Malaysia has achieved the highest CPI score increase of 53 points while gaining position at number 51. It is very disappointing to see Malaysia experiencing a downward trend in scores for two years in a row (Integriti Malaysia, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

The study's main conclusion positively reaffirms the reality that the majority of undergraduates have good understanding on the conduct or practice of corruption, while a small part of findings on the perception of corruption shows a somewhat worrying result.



IAC content and topics could be incorporated into language and humanities courses with systematic planning via CBI approach and the students are receptive towards this. The study recommends the IAC is introduced as a compulsory subject for all students in higher education institutes so that the emphasis and impact will be greater. Higher education institutions need to provide more support and promote programs by MACC in the effort to provide awareness about integrity and corruption to all members of the university community in particular and the general public.

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