



# Ethical Behaviour of Malaysia University Students: A Proposed Model

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**Abstract.** In Malaysia society, ethical behaviour is parallel with the Government policy to cultivate a community of culture and high ethical values. This is important because a community with first class mentality is being characterised by knowledgeable, superior performance culture, competitive and have high integrity and impressive ethical values. Scholars have identified some factors that relevant for occurrence of corruption and the main approach to combat corruption is authentic behaviour. Authentic behaviour is important to enhance ethical behaviour Malaysian students. Hence the purpose of this study is to propose authentic behaviour model among students in Malaysia universities.

**Keywords:** Authentic behaviour · ethical behavior · Public universities

## 1 Introduction

The five-year economic development policies practiced since independence reflected the Malaysia development philosophy that market forces should not be allowed to regulate the country economic growth [1]. In 1960s and 1970s, Malaysian Government emphasized on the rural area development mainly to reduce unemployment, increase household income, and heightens education opportunities to the people.

Subsequently in 1980s and 1990s the Government had placed great initiatives on the development of industrial, manufacturing, and service sectors [2]. Later for the next decade, the government has given greater focus to produce knowledge manpower, developing and promoting the utilization of information technology in the country [3].

In Malaysia context, beside the economic development, ethical behavior is always observed as corresponding to the Government policy under the second thrust of the Ninth Malaysia Plan, to be precise is to nurture a community of noble culture and strong moral values [3]. This is perceived as essential because a community with first class mentality is being knowledgeable, a high performance culture, competitive and should have integrity and noble moral values. On top of that, it is also a community of educated citizen who value culture, arts and heritage, as well as the national history, race and religion.

Corruption for example is not a new issue and always perceived as one of critical threats in every society and occurs in both public and private sectors. The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) report indicated Malaysia CPI score for the past three years (2019–2021) were declining. This exacerbate CPI score has triggered public disappointment over the unethical issues in this country.

Several ethical scandals such as corruption and financial collapse have amplified the authentic behavior important especially in higher institution [4]. Mandela used to mention that education is the most powerful weapon which can be used to change the world. Universities are responsible to foster students' personality and intensify their personal and behavior development. Thus, higher institution has the duty to nurture young people towards the noble life [5].

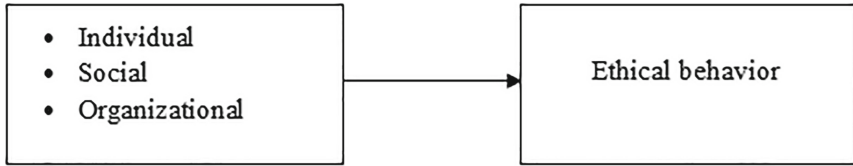
However, some ethical issues such as corruption in Malaysia recently have raised the public attention for a more transparent and accountable government sector. In the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) report Malaysia CPI score for the past three years (2019–2021) were 51, 57, and 62 respectively [6]. This exacerbate CPI score has caused public dissatisfaction over the ethical and misconduct issues in this country. As an example the protest over the IMDB financial scandal have reverberated several governments around the world [7]. It was reported billions of dollars of tax-payer money supposed to assist the people disappeared into the unknown financial system. Obviously, the issue is very crucial and necessary step must be taken in order to restore our national reputation.

## 2 Literature Review

Styles Corruption is not a new phenomenon and seen as one of critical threats in every society as it influences almost every segments of society and occurs in both public and private sectors. Scholars identified several factors that relevant for occurrence of corruption. According to Agbenorku, desire for unfair advantage, dearth of punitive measures, lack of transparency, unattractive incentive, flawed systems, uncontrolled and overregulated government are some of the factors why corruption occur [8]. The practice negatively impacts development process at various levels namely administrative, economic, political, and social segments.

In Philippine, findings asserted immoral leader are the key offender of corruption culprit and they are very good in making an environment condition of tolerance from the public with the use of violence and other unethical practices [9]. In other study, authors had listed the main causes for corruption are the size and governments structure, the national political system, the quality of institutions, economic freedom, civil service salary scale, press freedom and judiciary, cultural factors, percentage of women in the labor force and in parliament, historical factor, and finally the endowment of natural resources [10].

Although some perspectives regards ethical issues can be attributed to the individual, institution or organization as well, apparently it is human who perform the institution or organization's actions. Based on the argument, human is responsible for what they do and institution or organization only responsible in a derivative sense [11]. Hence, what can be concluded it is clear that all is about human behavior and still lacking of authentic ethical behavior awareness.



**Fig. 1.** Proposed framework.

While in the organizational context, apparently authentic behavior is crucial as organization that seen to encourage and uphold respectable practices can realise positive organizational outcomes [11]. Hence, numerous business organizations have drawn up code of conduct or ethical codes as guideline in their business operation and decision making. These ethical codes may foster certain standards of professionalism, responsibility and accountability in organizational daily operation. Many support the view that by adapting to these guidelines, organizations may obtain several benefits that can improve their rapport with all stakeholders. As such it is naïve to ignore the practice of authentic and ethical principles in any organizational practices.

Many previous findings have identified several factors that may influence authentic and ethical behavior. The factors are ethical infrastructures, interpersonal influences, individual differences, cognitive and affective processes, peer ethical behavior, religion, professional education on ethical behavior, and gender [12–14]. As a result, individual, social and organizational are the three major factors that can influence individual authentic ethical behavior. Figure 1 depicted a schematic diagram the proposed framework.

Looking at the 2019 statistic, young people (aged 15–24) were accounted approximately 1.3 billion of the total global population [15]. Many have supported the view that young people have had an imperative role to play and they are the invaluable asset of any country. Hence, good curriculum at the higher institution may equips and foster positive moral values to enable them to encounter the ethical challenges in the future [16].

### 3 A Proposed Framework

Based on the above discussion and proposed framework, several hypotheses have been developed as follows:

- H<sub>1</sub> Individual factors have a significant relationship with ethical behavior
- H<sub>2</sub> Social factors have a significant relationship with ethical behavior
- H<sub>3</sub> Organizational factors have a significant relationship with ethical behavior

### 4 Conclusion

For the past decade, the recent scandals all over the globe have caused the collapse of several well-known figures and organizations. Subsequently, ethical issue has in business management has raised tremendous interest from the community. This is the strong

evidence implied the need to foster ethical behaviour among student before they graduate and enter into the job market. As such, the objective of this article is to propose a research framework of Malaysia university students' ethical behaviour. We hope the proposed framework necessary guidance to empirically examine the relationships illustrated.

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