

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INTEGRITY AND ANTI-CORRUPTION COURSE (KIAR) IN MALAYSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

In an earnest bid to combat corruption, Malaysia has developed a mitigation plan to enrol youth in national corrective workshops featuring a compulsory course on integrity and anti-corruption for all students entering Malaysian universities beginning in October 2023. This paper, therefore, aims to explore the effectiveness of the Integrity and Anti-Corruption (KIAR) compulsory course in all Malaysian universities. Due to the nature of the new implementation, this study utilises a qualitative approach by interviewing faculty academics involved in developing and delivering the course, university management personnel, and an officer from the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC). In addition, a content analysis of relevant documents is conducted to gain further insights into the course. Despite initial resistance from faculty academics, KIAR has been successfully implemented as a mandatory course through collaboration between the Ministry of Higher Education and the MACC. Each university is granted autonomy in managing the course to fall under the ambit of formal education, while at the same time allowing the integration of elements of informal and non-formal education. The course is classified as General Studies, with the choice of 1 to 3 credit hours for universities to conduct. As the course is newly introduced in the Malaysian environment, the findings provide valuable knowledge on a new approach to fighting corruption. Therefore, this study offers insights into curriculum development and pedagogical approaches. Additionally, it extends social cognitive and constructivist theories in the area of anti-corruption.

Keywords: Anti-corruption, Anti-corruption education, Higher education, Integrity, Malaysia

1.0 INTRODUCTION

It is widely known that eradicating corruption is a priority in many countries, as it is considered a major social problem. Corruption has been defined by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as the misuse of public power for private gain through various forms such as bribery, extortion, influence-peddling, nepotism, fraud, speed money, or embezzlement (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 1999). In Malaysia, the Malaysian Anti-

Corruption Commission (MACC) acts as an entity to investigate and prevent any form of corruption and abuse of power under the jurisdiction of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2009 (MACC Act 2009). Corruption is defined as “the act of giving or receiving any gratification or reward in the form of cash or in-kind of high value for performing a task in relation to his or her job description” (Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission [MACC], 2024).

In line with the MACC Act 2009, MACC has adopted three main strategies to combat corruption under Section 7 of the Act, which include enforcement, prevention, and education. The enforcement strategy includes investigative procedures, collecting evidence and information, forensic services, data handling, and case prosecution. This prevention strategy, on the other hand, focuses on recognising corruption risks in practices, systems, and procedures, as well as providing advice on potential corruption. Meanwhile, the education strategy aims to raise public awareness regarding corruption and foster detection and scrutiny of corrupt practices among the public (MACC, 2024).

One of the five strategies for the National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2024-2028 (NACS) includes education as an initiative to drive Malaysia towards becoming a corrupt-free nation. The NACS was launched on 7th May 2024 by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim, as a continuation of the National Anti-Corruption Plan 2019-2023 (NACP). Over five years, from 2024 to 2028, the new anti-corruption strategy, NACS, aims to provide clear and feasible targets to tackle the issues of integrity, corruption, and governance in Malaysia. Education serves as the first strategy for the NACS, which contains thirteen sub-strategies expected to be completed within 1 to 3 years. To educate various segments of society, the educational programme's target audiences include students from early education institutions to higher education institutions. It requires collaboration with civil society organisations to develop various programmes that aim to raise and foster ethical behaviour.

Having adequate legislation is vital to combat corruption. However, education is also among the ideal measures that can be taken alongside legislation. Furthermore, the efficiency of legislation in reducing corruption remains insufficient (Mohammed et al., 2023). Education in fighting corruption, also known as anti-corruption education, aims to raise public awareness against corruption through various educational settings. Through anti-corruption education, moral values can be instilled and may help steer individuals away from corrupt behaviour. According to MACC statistics, a total of 2,332 youths aged 16 to 40 were detained for various corruption offences within the five years from 2019 to 2023 (Bernama, 2024). Meanwhile, a study by Universiti Putra Malaysia in 2021 found that 13.3% of respondents, including students from higher education institutions, admitted to having been offered a bribe (Bernama, 2022). Of these, 2.5% claimed that accepting the bribe was a deliberate decision made by them. Hence, as suggested by prior studies, preventive measures through anti-corruption education are crucial to combat the pervasive issue of corruption in the country.

The study intends to examine one particular anti-corruption education initiative known as the Integrity and Anti-Corruption course (KIAR), which was implemented as a compulsory subject for students enrolled in higher education institutions in Malaysia starting in October 2023. The acronym KIAR stems from the Malay name *Kursus Integriti dan Anti-Rasuah*. In the following sections, Section 2 reviews the literature, followed by a description of the methodology used for the study in Section 3. Section 4 explains the findings, and the final section, Section 5, concludes the study.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Ethics, Integrity and Anti-Corruption Education

Integrity is a fundamental value that nurtures the trust and confidence that society places in institutions and personnel. According to the Malaysian Institute of Integrity, integrity refers

to the characteristics of individuals and organisations that are based on moral values such as honesty, truthfulness, trustworthiness, accountability, transparency, efficiency, and wisdom. The book produced on KIAR, as a result of the collaboration between MOHE and MACC, defines integrity from various perspectives and stresses that the definition provided by the Malaysian Institute of Integrity is the most detailed and comprehensive compared to the definitions provided by the Kamus Dewan (2005) and the National Integrity Plan (2004) (Manaf et al., 2020). Additionally, the book highlights that integrity does not solely refer to corruption. However, the absence of integrity is the main cause of corruption (Manaf et al., 2020).

In Indonesia, integrity learning, as one of the anti-corruption education methods, was implemented through entrepreneurship activities. It is one of the initiatives taken by the government to eradicate corruption through formal education in higher education institutions (Hayati & Mayasari, 2019). The theoretical approach to learning is categorised in formal education. In addition to formal education, two more categories of education have come to the foreground of educational settings: non-formal and informal education (Läänemets et al., 2018). The difference between each setting lies in the structure of the education. For instance, structured education provided by institutions is considered formal education. Meanwhile, organised educational activities outside the formal structure refer to non-formal and informal education, often without a structured curriculum. These diverse educational approaches are essential in cultivating a culture that is resilient to corruption through anti-corruption education.

A prior study found that ethics education has a significant impact on the ethical judgment of accountants in Malaysia because it instills values early in the young generation (Mohd Ghazali & Ismail, 2013). Introducing ethical matters through real-life experiences from company scenarios in anti-corruption education helps students gain a better understanding of the challenges in maintaining integrity in the workforce environment. This not only enhances comprehension but also fosters essential skills, such as formulating strategic responses to corrupt practices, ultimately preparing students to be ethical and proactive. Ethics in higher education institutions involves academic integrity, research, leadership, social responsibility, inclusivity, and sustainable education (Sharma et al., 2023). Higher education institutions play a vital role as knowledge-intensive organisations, offering a broad spectrum of ethical education to impart values and skills that contribute to knowledge and social progress. A previous study asserts that there is a growing demand for students in higher education institutions to be knowledgeable about ethical issues in order to address social challenges (Hesselbarth et al., 2015). The study anticipates that students' moral awareness, ability to identify ethical issues, and moral reasoning skills can be enhanced through educational interventions. The main objective of implementing ethics education in higher education institutions should be to guide the development of students' ethical dispositions and behaviours. It encompasses more than simply learning ethics because it is an essential course in the journey toward a profession. Education is one of the strategic efforts to eradicate corruption because it helps to build an anti-corruption stance among the younger generation (Fajar & Muriman, 2018).

2.2 The Integrity and Anti-Corruption Course (KIAR)

On 19 April 2021, the Special Cabinet Committee on Anti-Corruption (JKKMAR) agreed that all higher learning institutions in Malaysia would offer the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Course (KIAR) as an elective course, effective from 2021, and as a compulsory course in 2023. The Integrity and Anti-Corruption Course (KIAR) was first executed to follow the National Anti-Corruption Plan (NACP). The strategy is to apprehend the country's vision to become a high integrity country and free from corruption. The course is mandated as a course under the general education subject category (MPU). The acronym MPU refers to *Mata Pelajaran Umum*. The MPU subjects are divided into four categories: U1, U2, U3 and U4. "U1 aims for the appreciation of philosophy, values, and history; U2 aims for mastery of soft skills; U3 is an

expansion of knowledge about Malaysia; and U4 aims for community practical management skills such as community service and co-curriculum” (Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia [MOHE], 2016, p. 3) It is made compulsory for both public and private higher education institutions (MOHE, 2023). As stipulated in Section 555 of the Private Higher Education Institutions Act 1996, MPU is compulsory and set as a graduation requirement for both Malaysian and non-Malaysian students at the undergraduate level (Soh and Ismail, 2021).

Prior to the year 2023, many studies emphasised the implementation of anti-corruption education as a necessity for students, with the objective of fostering a more comprehensive understanding of integrity and the fact that corruption is a crime that needs to be eradicated (Zin et al., 2023a; Mohammed et al., 2023; Manaf et al., 2023). Hence, MOHE, in collaboration with MACC, has taken an important step by offering KIAR as a compulsory course for higher education institutions in order to foster students to become agents of integrity and anti-corruption starting in 2023. The learning objectives of KIAR comprise the ability for students to understand the value and practice of integrity in daily life, concepts of corruption and anti-corruption, abuse of power, prevention of corruption in society and organisations, and the ability to demonstrate the value of integrity and anti-corruption through community activities.

Even though KIAR was initiated in 2021, there are only a few studies on the implementation of KIAR in Malaysian higher educational institutions. For example, Zin et al. (2023a) report on the effort to integrate KIAR with a content-based instruction approach at a technical engineering university in Malaysia. The prior study found that the students responded well to the integrated approach in delivering the course, and it produced undergraduates with good awareness and understanding of corrupt acts. On the other hand, Zin et al. (2023b) measured the understanding of students in higher education who enrolled in KIAR and found that the students have a good general comprehension of corruption through the course, but they still perceive some corrupt practices as acceptable, and that is worrying as our nation aims to be corruption-free. It is expected that the course, made mandatory by the government, will allow students to be well equipped with the necessary exposure to corruption and its impact—not only on themselves but also on their contribution to the country in eradicating corruption.

2.3 Underpinning Theories

2.3.1 Social Cognitive Theory

The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) was developed by Albert Bandura in 1986 as an evolution of the prior theory, the Social Learning Theory (SLT). Bandura proposed SLT in the 1960s, emphasising that individuals learn behaviours, values, and norms through three stages: observing, imitating others, and modelling. Generally, the theory posits that an individual may develop similar behaviour through assimilated perceptions and imitate the behaviour after observing the actions of others, particularly if the observational experiences have favourable results. Nonetheless, the theory contends that learning can still take place even without the presence of behavioural changes, and the learning outcomes may not always be reflected in performance (Bandura, 1965).

Self-efficacy was incorporated into SCT as an additional cognitive construct. Bandura (1991) defines self-efficacy as an individual’s belief in one’s ability to control, plan, and perform a necessary action to accomplish a particular goal. Basically, self-efficacy is the basis of human performance. In an educational setting, self-efficacy profoundly impacts the students’ aims, efforts, and achievements (Kundu, 2020). Past studies in the educational context examined the importance of students’ self-efficacy in relation to their use of online education, suggesting that online platforms for education make sense in this era and that students are well adept with technology (Corry and Stella, 2018; Kundu, 2020). This suggests that students with high self-efficacy, who are digital natives, strongly influence academic performance.

Furthermore, according to Bandura (1991), cognitive capabilities are developed through the interrelation of behaviour and environmental contexts, and in turn, direct the individual's sense of right and wrong. These interactions across the human-environment interface are relevant to integrity and anti-corruption education. The curriculum must include real or hypothetical problem-solving, together with tailored support from professionals and peers, with the intention of achieving constructive outcomes in helping students to create self-efficacy (Sibbel, 2009). This type of direction may be offered through mentoring relationships with teachers who use a project-based learning approach, which tends to cultivate more independence and risk-taking. One of the oldest and most popular ways of conceptualising learning and development is Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). It was developed to understand, predict, and change human behaviour by emphasising that social learning occurs through observation. The idea of the theory is that an individual learns from interactions with others in a social environment. Hence, SCT could suggest that students of higher education institutions learn about integrity and anti-corruption from their surroundings, such as friends, family, educators, and society. The course is expected to provide positive role models for ethical behaviour and reinforce integrity as the outcome.

2.3.2 Constructivist Theory

Constructivist theory is the work of Jean Piaget in 1952, which combines active knowledge construction with an acceptance of environmental influences that impact learners, rather than passively absorbing information (Etsula, 2024). The theory emphasises that the centre of attention is the learner's activity and development. Traditionally, educators or teachers were the central figures in the education process. Meanwhile, the learners refer to the students, who were viewed as the objects of education taught (Juvova et al., 2015). Constructivist theory changes the traditional paradigm of the educator and learner relationship. As the theory suggests, students are the educational subjects to some extent, and they manage their education actively through self-regulated learning and independently. The real understanding of knowledge is only constructed based on the learner's experience and background knowledge. This demonstrates that individuals create their new knowledge through the interaction of their beliefs and ideas, and the events and activities with which they come into contact. The educator acts as a guide or facilitator, encouraging learners to question, challenge, and develop their ideas, opinions, and conclusions (Ültanır, 2012). Despite the arguments, the role of educators should not be ignored for the ethical development of students. The process of learning, focusing on the active knowledge construction by the learners, should still be under the responsibility of educators to assist in monitoring the learners' progress (Azim & Shamim, 2020).

Basically, Piaget's theory of constructivism focuses on the development of an individual's knowledge. Even though there is a paucity of implementation of the theory in anti-corruption education, there is still a study that supports the execution of the theory in ethics education (Martin et al., 2018). The prior study states that the fundamentals of constructivist theory in teaching engineering ethics to students in higher education through case studies help to correct the understanding of social deficiencies in the engineering profession and shape the decision-making process in the future workplace. Furthermore, the previous study highlighted that the duration of ethics education is insufficient and should be prominently featured in the curriculum based on constructivist learning theory (Azim & Shamim, 2020). The synergy of SCT and constructivist theory equips students with theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and a strong moral foundation. Both theories highlight the concept of adaptation as the process of assimilation. Upon receiving information as a new input, the students undergo an adjustment process whereby they modify their cognitive schemas to integrate the new information that aligns with the existing information stored in their memory. These educational theories prepare students to confront corruption challenges in the real world, especially in their future careers once they enter the workforce.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The research uses a qualitative approach via two data collection techniques: first, interviews; and second, content analysis, which analyses publications related to KIAR to support the study. Qualitative research is well-suited for the study as it provides an understanding of the issues through an in-depth exploration of respondents' perceptions and experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interviews were conducted, audio-recorded, transcribed, and then subjected to a thematic analysis. The research data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide through recorded interviews with a total of five individuals: four from higher education institutions and one from the government agency that investigates corruption, MACC.

Data were collected primarily through interviews, followed by content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is conducted to analyse large amounts of text data and categorise them subjectively. The objective is to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon, given the limited systematic research available in the literature (Krippendorff, 2013). The study's content analysis includes English-language articles on integrity and anti-corruption education for students, published in scientific journals. In addition to published articles, curriculum guidelines and reports that discuss the objectives and pedagogical approaches taken for integrity and anti-corruption courses are also included.

To comprehensively explore the issue, the study targeted individuals from higher management in academic divisions, such as the Technical Committee, which also includes the faculty academics who deliver the KIAR, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor from higher education institutions, and the Director of the MACC. The profiles of the respondents are shown in Table 1. All respondents were targeted for their valuable insights into the prior and current status of KIAR. The study used purposive sampling to ensure respondents were familiar with KIAR. They were selected based on work experience and relevant knowledge of the subject.

Table 1. Profiles of Respondents

Respondent ID	Gender	Organisation	Work Type
R1	Male	University	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
R2	Female	University	Technical Committee/ Faculty Academic
R3	Female	University	Technical Committee/ Faculty Academic
R4	Female	University	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
R5	Male	Government Agency	Director

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews to allow an in-depth exploration of participant's perspectives on KIAR in Malaysian higher education institutions. For comprehensive data collection, interviews were conducted in person while strictly adhering to the established interview protocol. With the consent of each respondent, interviews were audio-recorded and carefully transcribed and translated to facilitate thorough analysis. Following Braun and Clarke (2020), thematic analysis was used in the study because it is more flexible in analysing qualitative data. Ethical guidelines were strictly adhered to throughout the study process to ensure the ethical foundation of the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. The data analysis started with reading all data repeatedly to achieve immersion and obtain a sense of the whole.

4.0 FINDINGS

The result of a thorough literature analysis from prior studies, based on a search using the keywords '*Kursus Integriti dan Anti-Rasuah*' and 'Integrity and Anti-Corruption Course', found

that there is still an inadequate number of studies in the current literature. The study aims to explain the current situation of KIAR implementation in higher education institutions in Malaysia. The study presents some research findings related to KIAR through four identified themes: perception and acceptance, implementation and challenges.

4.1 Perception and Acceptance

The introduction of KIAR in Malaysian higher education institutions started at the public university Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) as a pilot project in 2018. After the pilot project's success, in 2021, KIAR was offered in all higher education institutions as an elective course before it became compulsory in 2023 (Manaf et al., 2023). Even though the course attracted students' interest and was tested before becoming mandatory, according to the respondents, some lecturers believe KIAR should be integrated into existing courses rather than offered as a separate course. This is because the elements of education can be found in three settings: formal, non-formal, and informal, and there is no necessity to develop it as a separate course based on the following quotations:

[...] as they believe that integrity and anti-corruption education can be embedded within existing courses; it does not need to be made as a separate course" [R1].

"[...] This integrity and anti-corruption course cannot only take place within formal education. It must also be in non-formal and informal settings. Formal education is structured, where there are courses, academics, and assessments, like what we learn in classes in lectures. However, there is also non-formal education, which involves learning outside the classroom, such as associations, clubs, and co-curricular activities. Thirdly, informal education means interaction and observation. So, for me, if we want to talk about integrity and anti-corruption education, it must take place across all these three platforms. This means that if we introduce anti-corruption education, it must, for me, not only be formal but also informal and non-formal." [R1]

It was also supported by another respondent (R4) that rather than creating anti-corruption education as a standalone course, it is more effective to incorporate it into an existing course that already addresses ethics, integrity, and professionalism in the programme. Zin et al. (2023a) examined the integration of KIAR as content and a topic within language and humanities courses and found that students in higher education institutions are willing to accept KIAR as a compulsory subject, as this would enhance the emphasis and overall impact.

Despite the arguments, past studies emphasised the necessity of developing a new national education curriculum in Malaysia as one of the preventive measures in anti-corruption initiatives. Previously, Abdul Rahim et al. (2021) argued that there is a need for a comprehensive education system that teaches the knowledge, skills, and behaviours to eradicate corrupt practices and establish new behavioural norms embraced with integrity and societal values. The anti-corruption education implemented for public integrity in educational institutions aims to promote values and integrity. Furthermore, Mohammed et al. (2023) agreed and highlighted several news reports emphasising a strong interest in the implementation of a holistic education system against corruption in Malaysia. Notably, the KIAR module has been a successful collaboration project between the agency and education institutions since 2018 and has recently been mandated as a compulsory subject; hence, it is prudent to monitor the outcomes over time.

4.2 Implementation of KIAR

For the implementation of the course, the respondents suggest that each institution should be given the authority to manage the course according to the guidelines provided by the Ministry because each institution has its own way of management. The following quote supports this:

“I feel that universities should be given autonomy in how they implement things. I think it is not healthy because we are not in school. At school, the Ministry of Education will give directions. However, for universities, the Ministry should only provide guidelines, but universities should be the ones to carry them out”. [R1]

Another respondent, R4, also agreed that each university should be given autonomy to determine the direction of anti-corruption education because each university is unique and faces different challenges. Respondent 5 states that, even though different universities have different setups due to their size, the execution of the course is compulsory for students to graduate as per the requirements set by the ministry. According to the respondent (R2), at her university, KIAR is implemented as a General Studies (MPU) subject under the U3 or U4 cluster and only required to be taken once during the period of study in a Diploma or Degree programme, starting from the 2023/2024 first session. The acronym MPU refers to *Mata Pelajaran Umum*. The Ministry of Higher Education (2016) states that there are five objectives for introducing MPU subjects as complementary courses for students in higher education institutions. First, there will be an alignment of Compulsory Subjects (MPW) with MPU subjects in higher education institutions. The acronym MPW refers to *Mata Pelajaran Wajib*. This is followed by nation-building; mastery, and expansion of soft skills; strengthening and broadening knowledge about Malaysia; and lastly, the application of soft skills.

Based on the five objectives, MPU has been divided into four clusters: U1, U2, U3, and U4. Each cluster has its own outcomes. For example, the outcome of U1 is the appreciation of philosophy, values, and history. Meanwhile, U2 focuses on the mastery of soft skills, U3 aims to broaden the knowledge about Malaysia, and U4 is geared toward practical community management, including community service and co-curricular activities. Under each cluster, different credit hours can be allocated. To illustrate, KIAR can be executed with 2 or 3 credit hours under the U3 cluster, while under the U4 cluster, it can carry either 1 or 2 credit hours. Details of the MPU course execution structure are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Structure of MPU Implementation

Academic Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2 or 3 credits for each course in cluster U1 ▪ 2 or 3 credits for each course in clusters U2 and U3 ▪ 2 credits for each course in cluster U4 				
	U1	U2	U3	U4	Total Credits
Bachelor Degree, *Graduate Certificate and *Graduate Diploma (Level 6 KKM)	2 courses (4-6 credits)	1 course (2 or 3 credits)	1 course (2 or 3 credits)	1 course (2 credits)	10-14

Academic Level	U1	U2	U3	U4	Total Credits
*Advanced Diploma (Level 5 KKM)	1 course (2 or 3 credits)	1 course (2 or 3 credits)	1 course (2 or 3 credits)	1 course (2 credits)	8-11

Diploma (Level 4 KKM)					
Certificate (Level 3 KKM)	1 course (2 or 3 credits)	1 course (2 or 3 credits)	1 course (2 or 3 credits)	-	6-9
*The offering of MPU for Advanced Diploma, Graduate Certificate, and Graduate Diploma programmes is mandatory for students who have not previously taken MPU at the earlier level of study. The total credits required in such cases follow the Level 3 structure (6 – 9 credit hours), Source: Ministry of Higher Education (2016)					

According to respondents R2 and R3, who were involved in the structuring of the KIAR module as part of the technical committee, four types of proforma for the course module were developed to suit the needs of higher education institutions: 1+1 credit, 1 credit, 2 credits, and 3 credits. The differences between each credit hour rely on the assessment method, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Assessment Methods for the KIAR Module

Proforma	Assessment Method				Student Learning Time (SLT)
	Quiz/Role Play/Walkabout/Reflection	Quiz	Presentation	Report	
1+1		20%	40%	40%	40
1		20%	40%	40%	40
2	20%		40%	40%	80
3	30%		30%	40%	120

Source: Ministry of Higher Education (2024)

Regardless of the proforma used, the body of knowledge comprises ten modules that must be fully taught. The modules provided by the MOHE (2024) are listed in Table 4.

Table 4. The Modules of KIAR

No	Module	Particular
1	Module 1	Introduction to Integrity and Anti-Corruption Course (KIAR) (<i>Pengenalan Kursus Integriti dan Antirasuah (KIAR)</i>)
2	Module 2	Integrity as the Foundation of Well-Being (<i>Integriti Teras Kesejahteraan</i>)
3	Module 3	Abhor Corruption, Uphold Pride (<i>Rasuah Dihina, Maruah Dibina</i>)
4	Module 4	Anti-Corruption Agency and Integrity Empowerment (<i>Agensi Pencegahan Rasuah dan Pernerakasan Integriti</i>)
5	Module 5	Corruption According to the MACC Act 2009 (<i>Rasuah Berdasarkan Akta SPRM 2009</i>)
6	Module 6	Corporate Liability Offences (<i>Kesalahan Liabiliti Korporat</i>)
7	Module 7	White-Collar Crime (<i>Jenayah Kolar Putih</i>)
8	Module 8	Causes, Symptoms and the Effects of Corruption

9	Module 9	<i>(Punca, Simptom dan Kesan Jenayah Rasuah)</i> Report Corruption, Preventive Measures, and Government Initiatives <i>(Perangi Rasuah Laporan, Cegah dan Inisiatif Kerajaan)</i>
10	Module 10	Social Institution in Instilling Integrity and Anti-Corruption <i>(Institusi Sosial dalam Pembudayaan Integriti dan Antirasuah)</i>

Source: Ministry of Higher Education (2024)

The respondents suggest that to increase the competency of the lecturers or trainers delivering the course, one of the universities, UiTM, decided to offer KIAR as a micro-credential. According to the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (2022), micro-credentials are courses or learning packages designed to be offered through conventional methods (traditional, online, and blended learning) or via open and distance learning. One of the respondents, R4, stated that the university had also taken an additional approach to implement KIAR micro-credentials through online platforms, with automatic registration for new students starting in October 2023. This will also be reflected in the academic transcript.

Through the micro-credential approach, fewer instructors are needed for the course, and each instructor is required to have knowledge, understanding, and competency in regard to anti-corruption. The constructivist theory emphasises teacher-student interaction. Instructors or teachers should possess strong professional competence and a comprehensive plan for self-development, which includes morality, sociability, and character values. In turn, the student will develop a self-regulation system for all aspects of life based on values and value-based relationships (Juvova et al., 2015).

Zin et al. (2023b) support the idea that teachers play an important role as mentors and motivators for the students, and their guidance is capable of guiding the next generation toward a better future free from corruption. Furthermore, studies have shown that SCT supports the link that ethical role modelling and its influence on the behaviour and attitudes of others (Zainun et al., 2021; Inam et al., 2021). In the context of education, this is consistent with the theories that suggest students learn not only through direct instructions but also significantly through observation and modelling by instructors.

Similarly, prior studies in accounting ethics education pointed out the importance of educators' self-efficacy in teaching ethics to strengthen the integration of ethics education into the curriculum. Educators need to adapt their teaching to align with the course's understanding and perception of its importance to improve the effectiveness of accounting ethics education. Moreover, a supportive environment and cooperation among educators contribute to improving self-efficacy in teaching ethics (Nguyen & Dellaportas, 2020; Marzuki et al., 2017). According to Bandura (2006), individuals acquire and maintain particular behaviour patterns by observing others and often adapt those behaviours within their ability to shape situations around them. Based on the underpinning theory, the study provides further evidence that self-efficacy is an essential attribute that can influence an individual's thought patterns, learning, and emotions, thereby enabling and moulding their behaviours and actions. In the context of this study, educators' self-efficacy affects their behaviour in expanding ethics in their teaching.

4.3 Challenges in the Implementation of KIAR

This section highlights several findings on the critical challenges in implementing the KIAR course, such as increased workloads, lack of exposure, and variation in settings. The introduction of KIAR as a compulsory course increases the workload of lecturers and staff in higher learning institutions. Despite the materials provided by the MOHE and MACC to guide instructors in delivering the course, the focus on connecting real case studies through various approaches to engage students requires a comprehensive understanding of the subject. Additional training is required for the instructors to build confidence in their knowledge and to educate students on integrity and anti-corruption effectively. Respondent 1 stated that lecturers prefer to integrate the issues of integrity and anti-corruption within existing courses

because having KIAR as a separate course adds to their burden with additional training, assignments, and work. However, a previous study strongly suggested that university management should make it mandatory for all staff, not only educators, to attend integrity and anti-corruption training and courses annually. This would emphasise and expose everyone to recent real-life cases of corruption (Zin et al., 2023b).

The literature to date suggests that the management of higher education institutions should not take anti-corruption education for granted and should support and promote the programmes introduced by the MACC. During the interview session with respondent R5, the respondent stressed that despite the mandate from the Ministry to make the KIAR course compulsory, there remains a lack of awareness among university academicians. Even though the pilot project of the course was conducted in 2018 and was declared a success in 2021—subsequently expanding to other public and private education institutions in Malaysia—there has still been a lack of exposure within the institutions. This was supported by the interview with respondent R1, a university management representative, who confirmed a lack of awareness regarding the course details when asked about the operational method for implementing KIAR. The respondent acknowledged that they were unaware and did not know the specifics, as the course had just started during the semester. Hence, this explains the reason behind the lack of information.

Lastly, the study found that different universities have different settings for implementing KIAR. Some universities implemented KIAR as a co-curricular course due to the high number of students, which makes it easier to manage. In other universities, KIAR is offered as a compulsory core subject instead of an elective. Although there are various approaches based on each institution's setup, adherence to the guidelines provided by the MOHE is essential. To accommodate these differences, four types of proforma are provided: 1+1 credit, 1 credit, 2 credits, and 3 credits, and can be chosen accordingly, provided that all ten modules are fully delivered as discussed earlier in the study (MOHE, 2024).

5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This paper highlights the current situation of KIAR implementation in Malaysian higher education institutions. The literature has highlighted the importance of anti-corruption education for the nation. Despite the presence of anti-corruption initiatives in educational institutions, the implementation remains unclear, and efforts are still ongoing to find effective ways to provide students with a robust understanding of integrity and ethical values (Mohammed et al., 2023). Many believe they understand corruption, whereas in reality, their knowledge is still limited and unclear. It is expected that through KIAR, students can empower themselves as agents of change. It is important for students to be given more responsibilities that can help boost their empowerment and competencies, which will benefit them during their professional careers.

This study contributes to the existing literature by highlighting the development and implementation of KIAR in higher education institutions in Malaysia. This is particularly important for policymakers and institutions, as the study demonstrates that KIAR is one of the anti-corruption education programmes developed for students to help prevent and reduce corrupt practices. Several initiatives have been provided by the MACC and the government to enhance the course, such as ToT, seminars, and campaigns. Therefore, it is suggested that university management provide support and commitment to ensure the success of the course. The course should not be undermined, even though it is placed under the MPU subject category, as it is one of the requirements provided by the MQA to ensure that students graduate not only equipped with theoretical knowledge but also with practical ability to uphold the nation's dignity with integrity and honesty.

Further, the study provides empirical support for the theories advanced by Bandura (1986) and Piaget (1952), highlighting the roles of educators and students in the context of anti-

corruption education engagement, specifically in the KIAR course module. This theory supports the integration of real-world problem-solving tasks into the curriculum, such as corruption case studies and simulations. This theory not only facilitates knowledge acquisition about corruption but also nurtures critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and effective collaboration. According to the theory, one object can be perceived and interpreted differently by different individuals even though the same approach is applied, because constructivism varies according to one's perspective and position (Ültanır, 2012).

These theories inform the educational process and provide guidance to educators in helping students navigate learning through cognitive and constructivist paradigms. The paper also discusses the potential for learner development through lifelong learning and experiential education, as supported by constructivist theory. Additionally, the study highlights that educators must have a deeper understanding of the course module to maximise the effectiveness of their educational practice, particularly through self-efficacy, which aligns with SCT. This perspective also views behavioural outcomes as the result of the interplay between intrapersonal influences, the behaviours individuals engage in, and the environmental forces acting upon them.

It is known that the roots of preventive measures must be planted at the grassroots level (Mohammed et al., 2023; Othman et al., 2022). However, this study focuses specifically on the implementation of one anti-corruption education programme in Malaysian higher education institutions, which is the KIAR module. The course has only recently been offered as a compulsory subject for students, starting in the October 2023 semester, and is still in its initial stage (MOHE, 2023). Therefore, as the implementation of the course is still at its initial stage, it is essential to encourage further research to provide an in-depth evaluation of the course. Moreover, the government has taken steps to integrate education as a preventive measure against corruption. Hence, all stakeholders should collaborate and actively participate in supporting this initiative. Malaysian citizens are expected to uphold the values of integrity and foster mutual accountability towards the government and among themselves. Through collective efforts, Malaysia can build a corruption-free nation and a society grounded in integrity.

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