

Upholding Academic Integrity: Addressing Faculty Misconduct in Malaysian Higher Education

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Academic honesty is one of the main pillars of higher learning institutions. However, there is currently an increase in incidents of academic dishonesty committed by academicians. Many issues have arisen that question the effectiveness of addressing academic dishonesty in Malaysia, thus requiring further exploration into the underlying causes and preventive measures related to the issue. Academic misconduct by faculty members can occur in many forms. Universities expect faculty members to conduct original research, but cases of plagiarism including copying academic work from students, reusing previous journal publications without references and failing to acknowledge contributions to papers have been reported by Malaysian universities (Aliran, 2024).

In the Malaysian higher education context, several factors drive academic misconduct among faculty. One reason is the publishing culture that pressures faculty to publish research in high-impact journals in order to secure promotions and research funding. In the drive to publish papers as quickly as possible, research quality is neglected. This leads to duplication of papers and plagiarism. Furthermore, the demand for papers has led some academics to turn to predatory journals where shady publications occur without proper peer review or academic integrity. One of the highest rates of predatory journal publication is in Malaysia (Sozon et al., 2024). There are also academicians who attach their names to research papers without making any meaningful contributions or leaving out contributors who deserve credit. This unethical practice calls into question the credibility of the research results (Tiong et al., 2024). Furthermore, many universities lack rigorous mechanisms to detect and prevent academic misconduct. Due to weak sanctions, unethical behaviour can spread unchecked. In addition, there are very few or no penalties for these offenses, and institutions often choose to ignore them for fear of damaging their reputations. Furthermore, individuals responsible for these crimes usually do not suffer any consequences.

Other things that contribute to misconduct are financial rewards and dishonest business practices. There are limited study grants and other financial rewards for academics, and they sometimes do unethical things to get them. The problem is made worse by the fact that many educational institutions put research output over ethical research practices. This means that faculty members do not get the right advice on things like responsible authorship, data management, and academic integrity. When put together, these things make it easy for wrongdoing to happen, which threatens the trustworthiness and honesty of Malaysia's higher education system.

To prevent faculty misconduct in Malaysian higher education institutions, we need to change policies, hold institutions accountable, and raise knowledge of ethical issues. First, it's important to make academic integrity policies stronger. Universities need to set clear definitions of misconduct, apply strict penalties, and make sure that everyone knows how the rules are being followed. In addition, putting in place a strong tracking system with tools for finding plagiarism, audits of peer-reviewed work, and stricter validation of research outputs can help stop false research and unethical behaviour. Encouraging ethical research practices through required training programs on ethical writing, responsible authorship, and data integrity can also make people more aware and cut down on violations that happen by accident. Moreover, universities should be more open about how they evaluate candidates for positions and how much money they give out, changing the focus from how many papers there are to how good and influential the research is. Also, working with global academic integrity bodies can help universities follow international rules and adopt the best ways to keep study environments ethical.

As a conclusion, Malaysian colleges and universities can protect their standing, keep up their high standards of academic performance, and make honest contributions to the global knowledge economy if they promote an environment that values ethical research above production alone.

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