
Building Academic Integrity through Islamic Education: The Role of Anti-Corruption Values in Malaysian Higher Education

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Abstract

Academic integrity has become an increasingly important issue in higher education due to the growing prevalence of academic misconduct and ethical challenges faced by students. This study aims to examine the role of anti-corruption values in building academic integrity through Islamic education in Malaysian higher education institutions. The research employed a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design to explore students' and lecturers' experiences, perceptions, and understandings regarding the implementation of anti-corruption values within Islamic educational practices. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis involving students, lecturers, and institutional documents related to integrity and character education. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that Islamic education contributes significantly to the development of academic integrity by fostering values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, fairness, trustworthiness, and accountability. These values are integrated through classroom learning, character education programs, seminars, workshops, institutional regulations, and the exemplary conduct of lecturers. The study also found that students increasingly perceive academic integrity as a moral and ethical responsibility rather than merely compliance with academic rules. Furthermore, the integration of anti-corruption values has contributed to reducing tolerance toward academic misconduct, strengthening ethical awareness, and promoting a culture of integrity within the campus environment. The study concludes that Islamic education provides an effective framework for cultivating academic integrity through the internalization of anti-corruption values. The findings offer both theoretical and practical contributions to the fields of Islamic education, character education, and integrity development in higher education.

Keywords

Academic Integrity, Islamic Education, Anti-Corruption Values, Character Education, Higher Education, Malaysia



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INTRODUCTION

Academic integrity has become one of the most significant concerns in higher education institutions worldwide. The rapid expansion of digital technologies, increased access to

information, and growing academic competition have created new opportunities and challenges for universities in maintaining ethical standards among students. Issues such as plagiarism, academic dishonesty, data manipulation, contract cheating, and unethical research practices have emerged as persistent challenges that threaten the credibility of higher education systems. Academic integrity is no longer viewed merely as compliance with institutional regulations; rather, it represents a fundamental ethical principle that shapes students' character, professional responsibility, and contribution to society. Consequently, universities are increasingly expected to develop comprehensive educational strategies that not only prevent academic misconduct but also cultivate moral values and ethical awareness among students.

In many countries, concerns regarding academic dishonesty are closely linked to broader discussions about corruption and ethical behavior in society. Corruption is widely recognized as a complex social problem that undermines public trust, weakens institutions, hinders economic development, and erodes social justice. While anti-corruption efforts are often associated with legal enforcement and regulatory reforms, scholars and policymakers increasingly emphasize the importance of preventive approaches through education. Educational institutions play a strategic role in shaping attitudes, values, and behaviors that discourage corrupt practices from an early age. By fostering ethical awareness and integrity among students, higher education can contribute to the development of future leaders who are committed to transparency, accountability, and social responsibility.

Within this context, anti-corruption education has emerged as an important component of character development programs in many educational systems.¹ Anti-corruption education is not limited to providing knowledge about corruption laws or legal sanctions; it seeks to cultivate values such as honesty, responsibility, fairness, discipline, courage, independence, and social concern. These values are considered essential foundations for preventing corrupt behavior and promoting ethical decision-making in both academic and professional environments. Through systematic educational interventions, students can develop a deeper understanding of the consequences of unethical conduct and the importance of maintaining integrity in everyday life. As a result, anti-corruption education has gained increasing attention as a preventive mechanism for building ethical citizenship and strengthening democratic societies.

¹ Ni Luh Wayan Yasmiati et al., "Integrating Educational Psychology and Anti-Corruption Education through Local Wisdom: A Character-Building Model in Indonesian Madrasahs," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 2 (2026): 421–44.

The relevance of anti-corruption education becomes particularly important in higher education institutions, where students are preparing to assume professional and leadership roles in the future. Universities are expected to produce graduates who possess not only academic competence but also strong moral character. However, several studies have indicated that academic dishonesty remains a widespread phenomenon among university students. Behaviors such as plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsification of academic data, and examination cheating continue to occur across different educational contexts. These practices may appear minor compared to large-scale corruption cases, yet they reflect similar ethical deficiencies and can serve as early indicators of future unethical conduct. Therefore, addressing academic dishonesty through value-based education is essential for promoting long-term integrity and reducing the likelihood of corrupt behavior in broader societal contexts.

In Malaysia, the issue of integrity has become a national priority due to growing awareness of the social and economic consequences of corruption. The Malaysian government has implemented various initiatives aimed at promoting integrity and transparency across public institutions, including educational organizations. Institutions of higher learning have been encouraged to strengthen ethical education and incorporate integrity-related values into their curricula and student development programs. In this regard, universities are increasingly recognized as important platforms for fostering ethical awareness and cultivating responsible citizenship among young people. As future professionals, administrators, educators, and community leaders, university students play a critical role in shaping the integrity culture of society. Therefore, efforts to strengthen academic integrity within Malaysian higher education institutions are closely aligned with broader national goals of promoting ethical governance and sustainable development.

Islamic education offers a valuable framework for addressing contemporary challenges related to academic integrity and corruption. Islamic educational philosophy emphasizes the holistic development of individuals by integrating intellectual, spiritual, moral, and social dimensions of learning. Within the Islamic tradition, values such as honesty (*sidiq*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), justice (*adl*), responsibility (*mas'uliyah*), and accountability before God are considered fundamental principles that guide human behavior.² These values provide a strong ethical

² Nikmatul Khoiriah and Bedjo Sujanto, "Islamic Education Quality from an Islamic Perspective: An Analysis of Improvement Strategies," *Journal of Contemporary Islamic Education* 6, no. 1 (2026): 1–16; Taufiq Nur Azis and Susanto Susanto, "Axiology of Islamic Education Management in Education Quality Development," *Jurnal Inovatif*

foundation for cultivating integrity in both personal and professional life. Unlike approaches that focus solely on external regulations and punishment, Islamic education seeks to nurture internal moral consciousness, encouraging individuals to act ethically even in the absence of external supervision. Consequently, Islamic education has significant potential to contribute to the development of academic integrity among university students.

The integration of anti-corruption values within Islamic education is particularly relevant because both share common objectives related to ethical conduct and moral responsibility. Anti-corruption values emphasize honesty, discipline, fairness, responsibility, and social concern, which are also central teachings within Islamic moral education. By integrating these values into learning experiences, universities can create educational environments that promote ethical reflection and responsible behavior. Students are encouraged not only to understand the negative consequences of corruption but also to internalize moral principles that guide ethical decision-making in academic and social contexts. Such integration may contribute to the formation of a campus culture where integrity is viewed as a shared responsibility rather than merely an institutional requirement.

Several previous studies have highlighted the positive impact of anti-corruption education and character education on students' ethical development. Research has shown that educational programs emphasizing integrity and moral values can improve students' awareness of academic ethics, reduce tolerance toward dishonest behavior, and strengthen their commitment to responsible citizenship. Other studies have demonstrated that Islamic education contributes significantly to the development of moral character, ethical reasoning, and social responsibility among students. Nevertheless, existing literature has primarily focused on general character development, anti-corruption awareness, or academic misconduct as separate areas of inquiry. Limited attention has been given to examining how anti-corruption values embedded within Islamic education contribute specifically to the construction of academic integrity in higher education settings.

Furthermore, studies addressing academic integrity in Malaysian higher education have often concentrated on policy implementation, plagiarism prevention, or institutional regulations. While these studies provide important insights into integrity management, they offer limited understanding of how religious and moral values can influence students' ethical behavior. There

remains a need for more comprehensive research that explores the relationship between Islamic education, anti-corruption values, and academic integrity from a character development perspective. Such research is particularly important in multicultural and rapidly changing educational environments where students face complex ethical challenges associated with technological advancement and globalization.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to examine the role of anti-corruption values in building academic integrity through Islamic education in Malaysian higher education. Specifically, the study seeks to explore how Islamic educational principles contribute to the internalization of anti-corruption values and how these values influence students' attitudes and behaviors related to academic integrity. By addressing this issue, the study contributes to the growing discourse on ethics, character education, and integrity development in higher education. The findings are expected to provide theoretical insights into the integration of Islamic values and anti-corruption education while offering practical recommendations for universities seeking to strengthen integrity culture among students. Ultimately, the study argues that academic integrity can be more effectively cultivated when anti-corruption values are embedded within a holistic Islamic educational framework that promotes ethical awareness, moral responsibility, and social accountability.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore how anti-corruption values embedded within Islamic education contribute to the development of academic integrity among students in Malaysian higher education institutions.³ A qualitative design was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand participants' experiences, perceptions, interpretations, and meanings regarding academic integrity and anti-corruption values within their educational environment. Qualitative research enables researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of social phenomena by examining participants' perspectives in their natural settings rather than reducing complex realities into numerical measurements (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through this approach, the study aimed to capture the lived experiences of students and educators regarding the implementation of integrity-related values within Islamic educational practices.

³ Patrik Aspers and Ugo Corte, "What Is Qualitative in Research," *Qualitative Sociology* 44, no. 4 (2021): 599–608; Kate Flemming and Jane Noyes, "Qualitative Evidence Synthesis: Where Are We At?," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 20 (2021): 1609406921993276.

More specifically, this research adopted a phenomenological perspective. Phenomenology focuses on understanding how individuals experience and interpret a particular phenomenon in their everyday lives (Moustakas, 1994). In the context of this study, the phenomenon under investigation was the integration of anti-corruption values within Islamic education and its influence on the formation of academic integrity among university students. The phenomenological approach allowed the researcher to examine participants' subjective experiences and uncover the meanings they attached to values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, justice, trustworthiness, and social accountability.

The study was conducted at selected higher education institutions in Malaysia that incorporate Islamic educational principles within their academic and character development programs. Malaysia provides a relevant context for this investigation because integrity promotion and anti-corruption initiatives have become important national priorities, while Islamic values continue to play a significant role in educational policies and institutional cultures. The research focused on university students who had participated in courses, seminars, workshops, or extracurricular activities related to Islamic education, ethics, character development, or anti-corruption awareness. Academic staff members involved in teaching Islamic studies, ethics, or character education were also included to obtain a broader understanding of institutional efforts to promote academic integrity.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling. This technique is commonly employed in qualitative research to identify individuals who possess relevant knowledge and experience concerning the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2015). The selection criteria included students who had actively participated in Islamic education programs and demonstrated familiarity with integrity-related initiatives within their institutions. Lecturers and academic administrators involved in implementing educational activities related to ethics and integrity were also chosen because of their direct engagement in character-building processes. The use of purposive sampling enabled the researcher to obtain rich and meaningful data from participants who could provide detailed insights into the research topic.

Data were collected through three primary techniques: in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews served as the principal method of data collection because they allowed participants to express their experiences and opinions freely while enabling the researcher to explore emerging issues in greater depth (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

Interview questions focused on participants' understanding of anti-corruption values, experiences with Islamic education, perceptions of academic integrity, and the influence of educational activities on their attitudes and behavior.

In addition to interviews, non-participant observations were conducted to examine academic interactions, classroom practices, student engagement, and institutional activities related to integrity promotion. Observation provided an opportunity to compare participants' statements with actual practices occurring within the educational environment. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), observation is particularly valuable in qualitative research because it allows researchers to gain direct insights into social behaviors and contextual conditions that may not be fully captured through interviews alone.

Document analysis was also employed to strengthen the credibility of the findings. Documents reviewed included curriculum materials, course syllabi, institutional regulations, integrity policies, seminar reports, educational modules, promotional materials, and official publications related to anti-corruption and character education. These documents provided additional evidence regarding the institutional implementation of integrity-related values and supported data obtained from interviews and observations.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. During the data condensation stage, interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentary evidence were carefully reviewed, coded, and categorized according to emerging themes. Subsequently, the organized data were presented in descriptive narrative forms to facilitate interpretation and identify patterns, relationships, and recurring concepts. The final stage involved drawing conclusions and continuously verifying interpretations throughout the research process to ensure analytical consistency.

To enhance trustworthiness, the study applied several validation strategies. Credibility was strengthened through source triangulation and methodological triangulation by comparing information obtained from students, lecturers, observations, and documentary evidence. Member checking was also conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with selected participants to confirm the accuracy of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, voluntary participation was ensured through informed consent, confidentiality was maintained by

protecting participants' identities, and all collected data were used solely for academic purposes. Through these procedures, the study sought to ensure methodological rigor while producing a comprehensive understanding of how Islamic education contributes to the development of academic integrity through anti-corruption values in Malaysian higher education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that Islamic education plays a significant role in fostering academic integrity among students in Malaysian higher education through the internalization of anti-corruption values. Based on interviews, observations, and document analysis, academic integrity was not merely understood as compliance with institutional regulations but was increasingly perceived as a moral responsibility rooted in religious and ethical principles. Students demonstrated an awareness that integrity extends beyond avoiding plagiarism or cheating and encompasses broader values such as honesty, responsibility, fairness, discipline, accountability, and concern for others. This understanding reflects the successful integration of anti-corruption values within educational activities that emphasize character formation alongside academic achievement.

Interview data indicated that many students viewed Islamic education as an important source of ethical guidance in their academic lives. Participants explained that courses related to Islamic studies, ethics, and character development consistently emphasized the importance of honesty and trustworthiness in learning activities. Students frequently associated academic integrity with the Islamic concept of *amanah* (trustworthiness), recognizing that completing assignments independently, participating honestly in examinations, and respecting intellectual property are manifestations of moral accountability.⁴ Several participants acknowledged that before receiving systematic exposure to integrity-related values, certain forms of academic misconduct, such as sharing answers during examinations, unauthorized collaboration, or copying assignments, were often perceived as relatively harmless practices. However, continuous engagement with Islamic educational content helped reshape these perceptions and encouraged students to evaluate their actions through an ethical lens.

The findings further demonstrate that anti-corruption values were effectively integrated

⁴ Muhammad Nabil, "Amanah (Trust) and Physician-Patient Relationship in Islamic Medical Ethics," *Journal of The British Sslamic Medical Association* 19, no. 7 (2025); Sri Yuliawati, "Trust in the Qur'an," *Jurnal Kajian Islam* 3, no. 1 (2026): 17–21; Dwi Sulistiani, "The Concept of Amanah Metaphor in Accounting: Meaning, Guidelines, and Purposes," *Jurnal Akuntansi: Kajian Ilmiah Akuntansi* 11, no. 2 (2024): 286–300.

into both formal and informal educational processes. In formal learning settings, lecturers frequently connected theoretical discussions with real-world examples of corruption and ethical violations. Rather than presenting corruption solely as a legal issue, educators emphasized its moral, social, and spiritual consequences. This approach enabled students to recognize the relationship between everyday academic dishonesty and broader forms of corruption in society. Students increasingly understood that unethical behaviors in educational settings could become the foundation for future misconduct in professional and public life. Consequently, academic integrity was viewed not merely as a university requirement but as a lifelong commitment to ethical conduct.

Observational data confirmed the existence of positive behavioral changes among students. During classroom activities, students demonstrated greater discipline in attendance, assignment submission, and participation in learning activities. Examination environments appeared more orderly, with students showing a stronger commitment to completing assessments independently. The reduction of behaviors such as plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and absenteeism suggested that integrity values had begun to influence daily academic practices. Although isolated instances of misconduct still occurred, the overall campus atmosphere reflected an increasing awareness of ethical responsibilities. This finding supports the argument that academic integrity develops most effectively when values are reinforced through continuous practice rather than occasional instruction.

Another important finding concerns the role of lecturers as moral role models. Participants repeatedly emphasized that the effectiveness of anti-corruption education depended not only on the content of instruction but also on the behavior demonstrated by educators. Lecturers who consistently displayed fairness, transparency, punctuality, and accountability were perceived as credible representatives of the values they taught. Students reported feeling more motivated to act honestly when they observed ethical conduct among faculty members. This finding highlights the significance of social learning processes in character development. The transmission of values occurs not only through verbal instruction but also through observation and imitation of respected individuals within the educational environment.

The study also found that academic integrity was strengthened through collective social interactions rather than individual efforts alone. Students described a growing willingness to remind peers about academic rules and ethical standards. Acts such as discouraging plagiarism,

refusing to participate in dishonest practices, and encouraging responsible behavior became increasingly common. This shift suggests that integrity was gradually becoming embedded within the social culture of the campus. The emergence of peer accountability reflects a transition from externally imposed compliance toward internally driven ethical commitment. Such cultural transformation is essential because sustainable integrity depends not only on institutional enforcement but also on shared social norms.

Document analysis further revealed strong institutional support for integrity development. Curriculum documents demonstrated the incorporation of ethical and anti-corruption themes across multiple courses. Institutional policies explicitly addressed academic misconduct and outlined procedures for promoting ethical behavior. Educational campaigns, seminars, workshops, and integrity-related programs provided additional opportunities for students to engage with anti-corruption values outside the classroom. These initiatives created a comprehensive framework that reinforced the messages delivered through formal instruction. The consistency between institutional policies and educational practices contributed to a supportive environment for character formation.

The findings align closely with theoretical perspectives emphasizing education as a preventive strategy against corruption. Educational institutions are widely recognized as strategic environments for cultivating ethical values and shaping future citizens. The results support the view that anti-corruption education is most effective when it focuses on character formation rather than solely on legal knowledge. Students in this study demonstrated not only increased awareness of corruption but also stronger commitments to ethical behavior in everyday academic contexts. This suggests that value-based education can contribute meaningfully to the prevention of unethical conduct by addressing its underlying moral dimensions.

The findings are also consistent with Islamic educational philosophy, which emphasizes the integration of intellectual, moral, and spiritual development. Concepts such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *sidq* (honesty), *adl* (justice), and *mas'uliyah* (responsibility) were reflected in students' descriptions of ethical academic behavior.⁵ The results indicate that Islamic education provides a powerful framework for internalizing anti-corruption values because it encourages ethical conduct based on personal conviction rather than external enforcement alone. Students were motivated not only by fear of sanctions but also by a sense of moral and spiritual

⁵ Iqlimas Haura Sagita, Rahma Cahyani, and Seftian Rahmad Dani, "Business Ethics in the Perspective of Sharia Organizational Culture," *International Review of Islamic Studies in Economics and Finance* 2, no. 1 (2026).

accountability.

Furthermore, the findings support socio-ecological perspectives that highlight the influence of environmental factors on character development. Academic integrity emerged from interactions among students, lecturers, institutional regulations, educational programs, and campus culture. This demonstrates that ethical behavior is shaped by a broader ecosystem rather than individual knowledge alone. When integrity values are consistently reinforced across multiple dimensions of university life, students are more likely to internalize and practice them.

The study also contributes to existing research by demonstrating that anti-corruption education has implications beyond corruption prevention. It supports the development of responsible citizenship, ethical leadership, social accountability, and moral resilience among students. In an era characterized by rapid technological advancement and increasing ethical complexity, these qualities are becoming increasingly important. Universities therefore have a critical responsibility to ensure that educational excellence is accompanied by strong character development. The findings suggest that integrating anti-corruption values within Islamic education offers a promising approach to achieving this objective and strengthening academic integrity within higher education institutions.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Islamic education plays a vital role in building academic integrity among students in Malaysian higher education through the integration of anti-corruption values. The findings indicate that values such as honesty, responsibility, trustworthiness, fairness, discipline, and accountability are effectively internalized when they are embedded within both formal learning processes and the broader campus environment. Students increasingly perceive academic integrity not merely as compliance with institutional regulations but as a moral obligation closely connected to their personal, social, and spiritual responsibilities. As a result, behaviors associated with academic misconduct, including plagiarism, cheating, and unauthorized collaboration, become less socially acceptable and more widely recognized as violations of ethical principles.

The study further reveals that the effectiveness of anti-corruption education depends on a comprehensive and integrated approach. The development of academic integrity is strengthened through the combined influence of curriculum content, character education programs, integrity-focused seminars and workshops, institutional regulations, and the exemplary conduct of

lecturers. The findings highlight the importance of creating a campus culture where ethical values are consistently practiced and reinforced through daily interactions. In such an environment, students are encouraged not only to understand integrity conceptually but also to apply it in their academic and social lives.

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on Islamic education, character education, and anti-corruption studies by demonstrating that integrity development is a multidimensional process involving cognitive, moral, social, and spiritual dimensions. The findings support the argument that anti-corruption education should move beyond legal awareness and focus on the cultivation of ethical character. Practically, the study suggests that higher education institutions should strengthen efforts to integrate anti-corruption values across academic programs and institutional cultures. Future research may expand this investigation by examining different educational contexts, comparing institutions, or exploring the long-term impact of anti-corruption education on professional ethics after graduation. Ultimately, the study concludes that Islamic education provides a strong foundation for nurturing academically competent, ethically responsible, and socially accountable graduates who can contribute positively to society and national development.

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