

Empowering Youth Integrity: Assessing Anti-Corruption Awareness Among Malaysian University Students
(Memperkasa Integriti Belia: Menilai Kesedaran Anti-Rasuah dalam Kalangan Pelajar Universiti di Malaysia)

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ABSTRACT

Corruption is a serious world issue which compromises people and institutional integrity. Universities are thus very important in molding the ethical values to be held by students and their future leadership abilities. This paper assesses the SATRIA25, a national anti-corruption and integrity experiential programme that is undertaken in a joint venture between Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM), the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) and PEACE Foundation. The pre- post survey design was used to determine any differences in the knowledge, attitude, and perceptions of students concerning corruption. The 122 students that participated in pre-program data collection and 140 students who participated in post-program data collection were used to collect pre-program and post-program data respectively, and 64 matched responses were used to do individual-level analysis. Findings show that there is an overall 9.4 percent improvement of integrity awareness with the mean scores showing an increase of 4.13 (pre-program) to 4.52 (post-program). The most significant was seen in attitudes towards corruption (+0.57), knowledge (+0.40) and perception (+0.26). Paired analysis of individuals showed that a steady upward trend was observed in almost all the matched. Nonetheless, the highest benefit was experienced by the students who scored lower at baseline. Further, distributional analysis showed a definite lifting the floor effect, characterized by the disappearance of low-awareness outliers and a significant change in the direction to the excellent performance range. These findings were reinforced by qualitative feedback, which indicated increased ethical awareness, better knowledge of reporting mechanisms, and increased desire to comply with integrity. On the whole, the research results are very good proof that anti-corruption programmes based on experience and leadership work can be effective not just in enhancing the average integrity awareness but also in the process of standardising the ethical values among the student populations. The research justifies the increased use of experimental integrity programmes in higher education as a strategic solution to youth integrity development.

Keywords: Corruption, Integrity, Ethical Awareness, Leadership, University Students, Anti-Corruption Education, Experiential Learning, SATRIA25

ABSTRAK

Rasuah adalah isu global yang serius yang menjejaskan integriti individu dan institusi. Oleh itu, universiti memainkan peranan yang amat penting dalam membentuk nilai etika pelajar serta kebolehan kepimpinan masa depan mereka. Kertas kerja ini menilai SATRIA25, sebuah program pengalaman antirasuah dan integriti kebangsaan yang dijalankan secara usaha sama antara Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM), Suruhanjaya Pencegahan Rasuah Malaysia (SPRM), dan Yayasan PEACE. Reka bentuk tinjauan pra-pasca telah digunakan untuk menentukan sebarang perbezaan dalam pengetahuan, sikap, dan persepsi pelajar mengenai rasuah. Seramai 122 pelajar yang menyertai pengumpulan data pra-program dan 140 pelajar yang menyertai pengumpulan data pasca-program telah terlibat, manakala 64 respons sepadan (matched responses) telah digunakan untuk analisis peringkat individu. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan terdapat peningkatan kesedaran integriti secara keseluruhan sebanyak 9.4 peratus, dengan skor min meningkat daripada 4.13 (pra-program) kepada 4.52 (pasca-program). Peningkatan paling ketara dapat dilihat pada sikap terhadap rasuah (+0.57), pengetahuan (+0.40), dan persepsi

(+0.26). Analisis berpasangan individu menunjukkan trend peningkatan yang stabil dalam hampir kesemua data yang dipadankan. Walau bagaimanapun, manfaat tertinggi dialami oleh pelajar yang mencatatkan skor lebih rendah pada peringkat asas (baseline). Seterusnya, analisis taburan menunjukkan kesan peningkatan tahap minimum (*lifting the floor effect*) yang jelas, dicirikan oleh kehilangan data terpencil (*outliers*) berkesedaran rendah dan perubahan ketara ke arah julat prestasi cemerlang. Dapatan ini diperkukuhkan oleh maklum balas kualitatif yang menunjukkan peningkatan kesedaran etika, pengetahuan yang lebih baik mengenai mekanisme pelaporan, dan keinginan yang lebih tinggi untuk mematuhi integriti. Secara keseluruhannya, hasil kajian ini membuktikan bahawa program antirasuah berasaskan pengalaman dan kepimpinan berkesan bukan sahaja dalam meningkatkan purata kesedaran integriti, malah dalam menyeragamkan nilai etika dalam kalangan populasi pelajar. Kajian ini menjustifikasikan peningkatan penggunaan program integriti eksperimental di institusi pengajian tinggi sebagai penyelesaian strategik bagi pembangunan integriti belia.

Kata Kunci: *Rasuah, Integriti, Kesedaran Etika, Kepimpinan, Pelajar Universiti, Pendidikan Anti-Rasuah, Pembelajaran Berdasarkan Pengalaman, SATRIA25*

INTRODUCTION

Corruption remains a massive problem in the entire world, and it has disrupted the administrative systems and institutions and eroded the trust that people have in their leaders. Researchers repeat and repeat that corruption is not merely a legal issue but also an ethical and cultural mess and a crisis in leadership that cannot be solved in a short span without long-term cultural transformation (Prakasa & Fatmawati, 2024). As we, as undergraduates, are the future generation of employees and leaders of our nation, it is logical that universities have a significant role to play in inculcating integrity, morality, and civic quality.

This has led to anti-corruption training being at the leading priority in most of the countries particularly Malaysia. Research findings are constant in demonstrating that this form of education can enhance the students in terms of knowledge, awareness and decision-making power enabling us to identify bad practices, push back and even report (Rahman et al., 2024; Vikhryan and Fedorov, 2020). Nevertheless, the study notes that initiatives against corruption in Malaysian universities may appear more like a check-off list, are divided or not applied in practice, or do not involve practical learning that is not effective in the long term (Nor Farizal et al., 2024). In the meantime, although in theory we shout no to corruption, it is easy to go over to academic cheating or rule bending, which demonstrates a discrepancy between values and actions (Benlahcene et al., 2025; Chevtayeva et al., 2024).

One way to correct such issues is to continue to emphasize the necessity of real-world, leadership-oriented learning that goes beyond textbook lectures and gets us actively engaged in difficult ethical

choices, teamwork and real-life situations. It is upon this platform that SATRIA25 - the national level Symposium Anti Rasuah Integriti Mahasiswa Peringkat 2025 organized by Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM) in collaboration with Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) Melaka and Policy and Economic Affairs Centre of Malaysia Foundation (PEACE). The explanation of young people enhancing their integrity by offering them practical training in leadership is a big call. The program that combines leadership simulations, forum discussions, and team challenges has 250 students all over the country to instil leadership focused on integrity into us.

Although such initiatives are increasingly becoming popular, we are only yet to have sufficient data to find out whether short-term leadership and integrity programs do indeed alter what we think, feel, or commit to. According to researchers, these anti-corruption campaigns may only appear attractive but may not actually achieve much unless their evaluation is conducted properly (Rahman et al., 2024; Nor Farizal et al., 2024). That is why it is necessary to check the effectiveness of these programs.

The case study addresses that gap by addressing the effects of SATRIA25 through pre- and post-program surveys. We also determine the change in our knowledge, attitudes and perceptions of integrity-based leadership change after we complete training. The quantitative approach associated with measuring pre-intervention and post-intervention changes provides this study with evidence-based information on how experiential civic education can increase youth integrity and contribute to the development of future leaders who will be devoted to the principles of transparency, accountability, and anti-corruption.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Corruption remains a high menace that disorganizes the belief in the institutions, undermines the government and erodes justice in the society. Although MACC in Malaysia continues combating graft, it is so endemic that it takes nothing less than law to ensure that people remain honest in the long term. In fact, this is the only best way of putting people on their straight, the university is where we can begin to mold our minds on ethics, civic responsibility and leadership.

University based lessons on anti-corruption have become a significant instrument in preventing corruption before it occurs. A recent study indicates that once we include real anti-corruption courses and integrity modules in the curriculum, students do begin to think more morally, and abandon corrupt acts (Nor Farizal et al., 2023). This was also discovered in a qualitative study at a Malaysian state university, where the courses were found to enable students to develop sound values, become more ethically conscious and provide them with a roadmap of future pro-professional decisions. It is not only what we learn in textbooks, but it is the building block of our personality.

Nevertheless, the manner in which we teach the courses and what we teach is critical to their effectiveness. One of the guides, *Five Important Considerations in the Development of Anti-corruption Education in Malaysia among the Youth*, states that the most successful program should engage the youth in its development, should be connected with the realities of the country, with the encouragement of the civic activities, and should repeat the lessons repeatedly instead of delivering a one-time speech (Lim et al., 2021). It can also be researched that young people should not be passive listeners but active participants and workers in their community through community involvement, participation, and collaboration with other agencies such as MACC.

The attitude and behaviour of students is also altered by the education on anti-corruption or integrity, as evidenced by other universities of other countries. As an example, in 2025, a study conducted among students revealed that those who completed a structured program were more conscious of the corruption practices and made better ethical decisions, as well as commitments to anti-corruption following the completion of the program (Al-Sabah et al., 2025). Such findings support the notion that a good interactive reflective course can actually change what students believe and intend to undertake.

But however much this math, things still

remain unknown to us:

- i. Existing pre- and post-tests in Malaysian universities are few instances that demonstrate the extent to which the courses influence the attitude, awareness or behaviour of students.
- ii. Majority of the courses are yet to leave the lecture or individual lectures; less of them involve real-life or student-led activities that place us in the actual ethical dilemma.
- iii. The majority of research is not done on the youth as the key agents of change; we never hear of programs that would transform students into civic leaders or agents of their own.

We actually do need good research that examines how the anti-corruption programs can indeed empower the students and does not merely provide them facts. SATRIA25 program bridges that gap - A national, practical program that brings together students of all Malaysians, workshop, role plays and civic talks. The study can assist theory (on how the young people take the lead in civic action and learn integrity) and practice (on how the universities and organizations such as MACC can provide effective courses on anti-corruption) by conducting a pre- and post-evaluation.

That is, in brief, anti-corruption training in higher education institutions, particularly when it is experiential, student centred and leadership based, may result in a new generation of university graduates who are ethically oriented. But research is still necessary to demonstrate it. This research would like to address that gap by verifying the effect of SATRIA25 on the level of awareness of students, their attitudes, and their leadership attitude towards anti-corruption.

ISSUE

The fact of corruption remains a huge issue in Malaysia and more so in school where we as the students have to contend with or even engage in questionable conduct. Although countless campaigns aimed at creating awareness of this issue exist, there are studies that indicate that even when we claim to be anti-corruption in theory, we still are not averse to minor acts of unethical behaviour, particularly when it comes to academic work (Benlahcene and Awang, 2025; Chevtaeva et al., 2024). It is actually very important to examine what we know, feel and think of corruption to determine whether our educational programs are at least functioning.

Just before the program, we conducted a survey wherein 122 students at the university responded to a questionnaire regarding SATRIA25 and it was not all

that well as far as our comprehension of corruption and our attitudes towards it. Fifty percent of us had already participated in any anti-corruption programme in the past, indicating that there is indeed a gap in training. The knowledge questions reveal that we generally have a clear understanding of what corruption is (such as bribery or nepotism), however, we are less clear about how we can be explicit about how we report corruption or where it is implicitly manifested on campus. Indicatively, we, most of us, were unable to answer the question how we were going to report a corrupt act or how we were going to notice favouritism in homework. Attitudes were the matter where we would generally say that we are against corruption, although the reverse coded questions (which were likely to be of the form, Corruption is ok as long as someone is in debt) revealed that many of us still believe in tolerating unethical behaviour.

The lesson that can be learned in the open-ended answers is that money pressure, peer pressure, course work stress, money-mad mindset and moral illiteracy are all driving factors making us corrupt. Many of us said that we cut corners or do some unethical actions getting a high grade or personal benefits which demonstrates that it is really not easy to resist internal and external factors.

The positive changes were recorded after the program with 140 students having a second survey. The majority of us concurred that the program material, instructors and group work indeed assisted us in comprehending the aspect of integrity and anti-

corruption better. We were bold enough to say no to unethical methods, we knew more about how to report it, and we were more eager to take these values into our daily lives in campus. The free-ended responses also indicated that we have come to appreciate personal integrity better, we are aware of how corruption impacts on our social networks and we genuinely desire to initiate student-led projects to keep us honest.

On the whole, the research reveals that a guided, student-led initiative like SATRIA25 is effective at not only increasing our understanding of anti-corruption but also enhancing our attitudes and encouraging positive moral behaviours in the life of the university. These transformations include the knowledge gaps as well as practical challenges of previous studies (Prakasa and Fatmawati, 2024; Rahman et al., 2024; Nor Farizal et al., 2024). The fact only highlights the need to ensure that we the youth learn how to lead responsibly and create a culture of integrity.

THEORY OF ANALYSIS

A combination of survey and discussion helped us to determine the extent to which the SATRIA25 program helped us to increase our awareness about corruption. The research was a mix of both quantitative information provided by the pre- and post-program questionnaire and qualitative information provided by the open-ended answers and the discussions with the stakeholders.

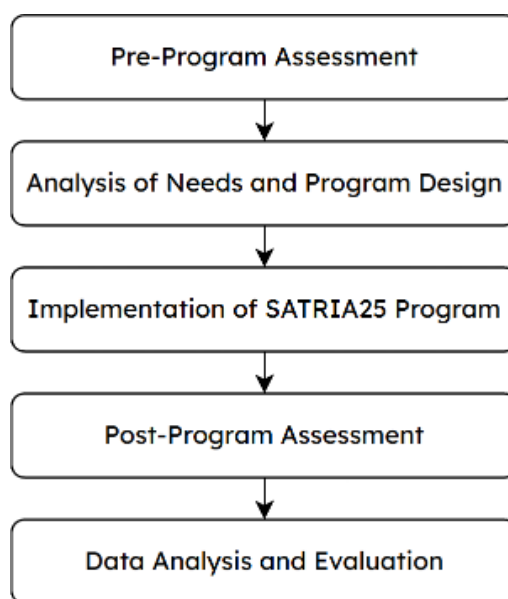


FIGURE 1. Flowchart of SATRIA25 Program Assessment Process

As shown in FIGURE 1, the study was conducted in several stages:

Pre-Program Assessment

Therefore, we started by administering pre-program questionnaire to all people in order to determine their level of knowledge, perception and attitudes concerning corruption and integrity. We took it as a point of reference to measure the effectiveness of the program at a later point. The questionnaires consist of 3 sections Knowledge of Corruption, Attitude Toward Corruption, and Perception of Anti-Corruption Programs.

To quantify the responses, the mean score for

each item was calculated using the formula:

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{\sum(\text{Frequency of each rating} \times \text{Rating})}{\text{Total respondents}}$$

For negatively worded items, reverse coding was applied:

$$\text{Adjusted Rating} = 6 - \text{Original Rating}$$

The TABLE 1 below summarizes the average scores for the pre-program assessment in the key areas of knowledge, attitude, and perception.

TABLE 1. Pre-Program Assessment Mean Scores

Section	Dimension	Mean Score
C	Knowledge of Corruption	4.15
D	Attitude Toward Corruption	4.02
E	Perception of Anti-Corruption Programs	4.22

Note: Scores for negatively phrased questions were reverse coded before calculation.

Assessment Results:

The initial assessment showed that the participants had little initial awareness of their own internal corruption, including subtle forms, and how to report what they witnessed. The needs identified in the assessment informed program development for the SATRIA25 program.

Analysis of needs and Program design.

Once we have sucked in all the responses we then jump into the data and identify patterns, weak areas and any areas where we think we have low awareness. This discussion demonstrates the particular knowledge gaps and misunderstandings that the interviewees possess. The information we can get here is what prompts the initiation of the SATRIA25 program and ensures that the intervention strikes the very problem areas mentioned in the data.

Implementation of SATRIA25 Program.

According to the results of the data analysis, we structure the SATRIA25 program to address those gaps in the knowledge of students. We design activities, modules, and discussion to enhance the knowledge regarding

integrity and anti-corruption practices. After everything is prepared, we launch the program where we put it to practice in order to create awareness of the students and change their perception towards corruption.

Post-Program Assessment

Shortly following SATRIA25, post-program questionnaires were given to 140 students to determine the effects of the program on participants. Using identical questions enables us to make a comparison between pre-program results and a precise assessment of the program's impact.

The TABLE 2 below summarizes the average scores for the post-program assessment in the key areas of knowledge, attitude, and perception.

Assessment Results:

The results of the post-level show a significant increase in all areas. The data indicates an increase in participant awareness, an increase in positive attitudes towards rejecting corruption, and an increased perception of the effectiveness of the PRACTICE program. Therefore, we can conclude that SATRIA25 accomplished its educational goals.

TABLE 2: Post-Program Assessment Mean Scores

Section	Dimension	Mean Score
C	Knowledge of Corruption	4.53
D	Attitude Toward Corruption	4.63
E	Perception of Anti-Corruption Programs	4.44

Note: Scores for negatively phrased questions were reverse coded before calculation.

Data Analysis & Evaluation

Mean Score Comparison (Pre–Post)

To determine SATRIA25's effectiveness, pre- and post-program mean scores were compared. The increase in score averages indicates that the program improved awareness, comprehension, and participation in areas related to anti-corruption. The formula:

$$\text{Improvement} = \text{Post-Program Mean} - \text{Pre-Program Mean}$$

As illustrated in FIGURE 1, the Attitude dimension recorded the highest increase, indicating that the programme was particularly effective in shifting students' value systems and ethical stance toward corruption. The results reveal that overall integrity awareness has increased by 9.4% since the respondent has attended the SATRIA25 programme. Attitude experienced the greatest change, which indicates a significant change of personal values and moral position to corruption.

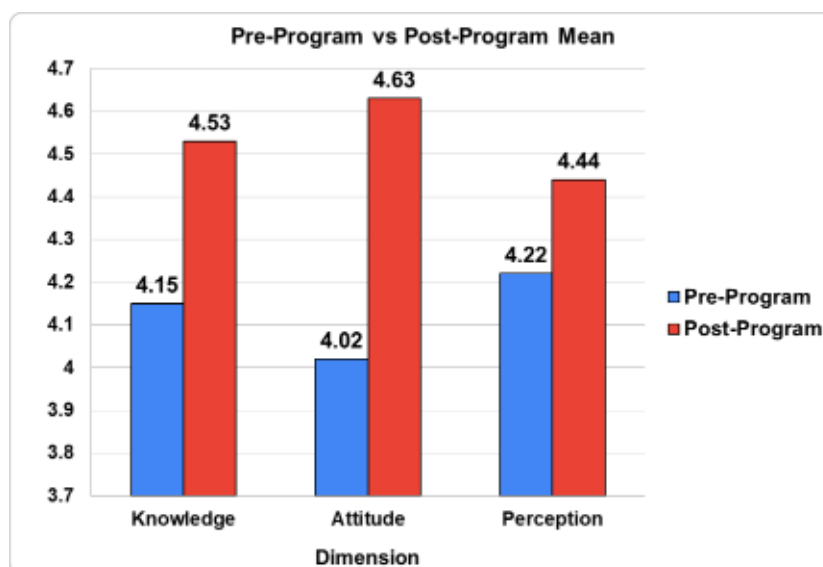


FIGURE 1. Pre-Program vs Post-Program Mean Comparison

Improvement Magnitude

As indicated in FIGURE 2, SATRIA25 programme generated different levels of enhancement on the three dimensions.

Attitude was the most improved with the next being Knowledge as Perception showed a smaller increase. This trend indicates that the experiential and

leadership-oriented aspects of the programme proved to have greater success in affecting the value-oriented and behavioural dimensions as opposed to the perception awareness only.

The comparatively lower increase in Perception can be a hint at the ceiling effect since students were already over the high threshold of perception of anti-corruption initiatives once they entered the programme.

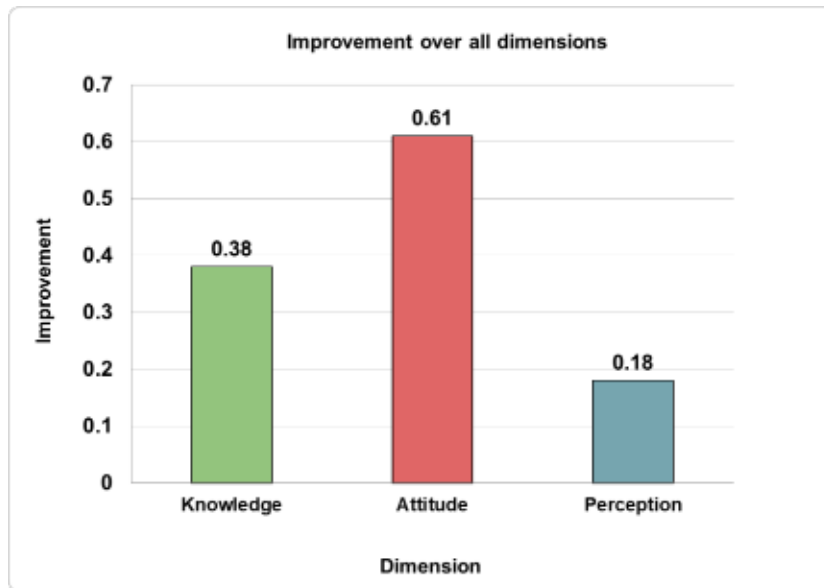


FIGURE 2. Improvement Magnitude

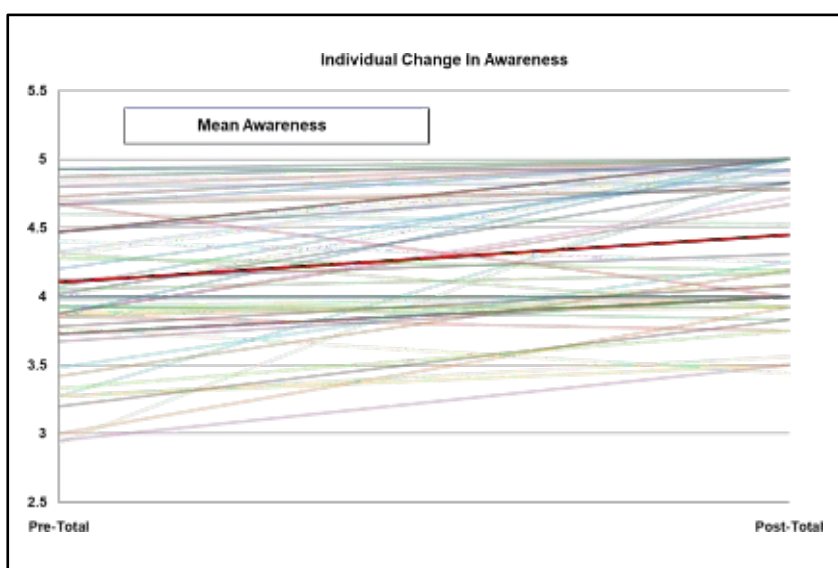
Individual-Level Change (Paired Analysis)

To further validate the programme's effectiveness, individual-level changes were examined using 64 matched pre-post responses, as visualised in FIGURE 3 (Individual-Level Paired Line Plot).

According to FIGURE 3, a steady increase was witnessed in almost all participants which implies that it was not only a few high performers influencing the trend to go upwards. The greatest improvements were

recorded in the participants with a lower baseline score, and the improvement was up to +1.5 points.

Additionally, FIGURE 3 demonstrates a marked shift of participants into the "Excellent" score range (4.5–5.0) following the programme. This provides support that SATRIA25 brought forth direct and consistent individual-level change, which provides support to its validity as an effective integrity intervention.



Total Students (N): 64

Average Pre-Score: 4.10

Average Post-Score: 4.45

Overall Growth: +8.5%

FIGURE 3. Individual-Level Change

Data Distribution Analysis (Box Plot)

The change in the score distribution as shown in FIGURE 4 (Pre-Post Data Distribution) indicates much an upward migration of the integrity awareness. The analysis of the program demonstrated an improvement in the median score by +0.56-points, which is the increase in the median score of 4.16 to 4.72, however, the most interesting results are observed in the changes in the lower distribution.

By increasing the first quartile (Q1) to 4.00 and substantially raising the lower whisker, the program successfully "lifted the floor," effectively eliminating low-awareness outliers. This transition is best highlighted by the fact that the post-program lower quartile now approaches the pre-program median. This convergence suggests that SATRIA25 did more than just raise average scores; it standardized integrity awareness across the entire cohort, establishing a consistent and elevated moral baseline for all participants.

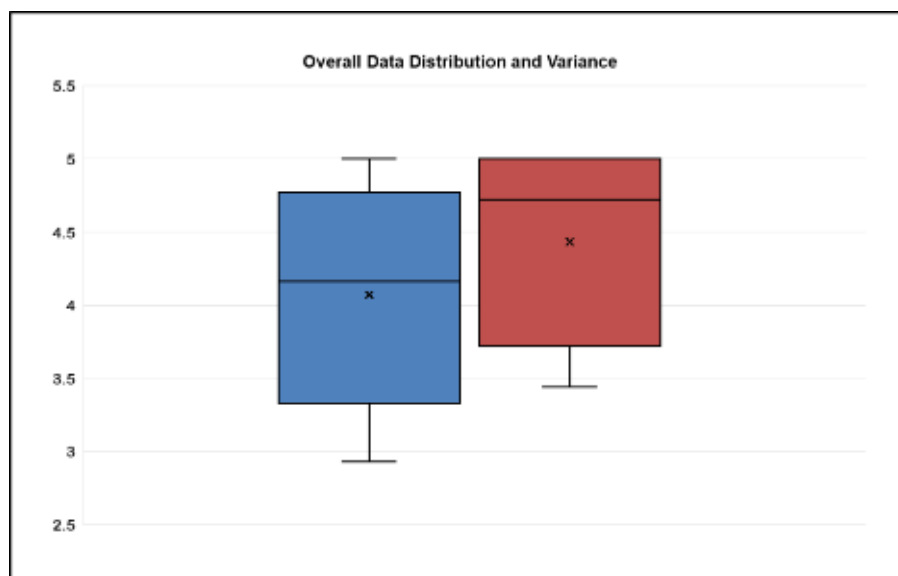


FIGURE 4. Data Distribution (Box Plot)

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the SATRIA25 program indicate that the inclusion of structured Anti - Corruption and integrity education can effectively improve students' knowledge, awareness and attitudes towards corruption. The results of pre - programme assessments versus post - programme assessments show clear increases in students understanding of the various aspects of corruption, their ability to identify subtle acts of misconduct, and the significance of integrity in both academic and personal domains. These findings are consistent with many previous studies which have indicated that providing students with Anti-Corruption Education will lead to Improvement in Moral Reasoning, and Ethical Decision-Making. (Samuni et al., 2025; Habib Sultan et al., 2025).

Furthermore, there are several areas that could be improved upon within the SATRIA25 programme. There still exists moderate gaps in participant's knowledge of mechanisms for reporting instances of

misconduct, as well as being able to identify different forms of corruption. Thus, it has been suggested that the programme could benefit from further utilizing additional case studies, incorporating more scenario-based learning experiences, and providing interactivity to aid student learning and engagement. In addition to this it has been suggested by some longitudinal studies of Anti-Corruption programmes that to maintain the improvements made by students, it may be beneficial to provide additional training via follow-up sessions and / or reinforcement sessions (Al-Sabah et al., 2025).

From a practical standpoint, it is recommended that universities and/or governmental entities provide for the repeated and systematic delivery of integrity-based workshops and related programs (e.g. SATRIA25). These workshops provide an excellent opportunity for students. As such, it will enhance the chances of creating an environment whereby ethical behaviour is viewed as the norm within that particular educational institution.

Incorporating additional anti-corruption elements into the curriculum would reinforce the

concepts taught during these workshops and allow students to develop an additional understanding of how this concept fits within their overall academic experience. For these reasons, the outcome of this particular study is favourable in the sense that it demonstrates a positive impact on students' awareness and ethical behaviour, but there is room for improving the effectiveness of the overall design of similar programs through increased interactivity and by using multiple teaching methods and by reaching out to a much larger audience of students to create a much greater long-term effect/cultural change on the integrity of campuses.

CONCLUSION

The SATRIA25 program has shown a strong ability to enhance the ability of Malaysian University Students to understand corruption and to have positive attitudes toward integrity. A comparative analysis of pre-and post-program assessments indicates that the SATRIA25 Program has improved College Students' knowledge about what constitutes corrupt behaviour and how to defend against such behaviours and that students' belief systems towards Integrity have developed. Areas that the Program could expand upon to maximize the impact on College Students' Lives are Developing Reporting Mechanisms and Providing Greater Learning Opportunities on subtle forms of Corruption.

This study illustrates the impact of utilizing an organized and through Interactive Process in developing Ethical Behaviour in Young Adults. It provides a unique view of the Student Perspective of the Program through the combination of a quantitative survey and qualitative feedback to create a comprehensive view of both the effectiveness of the SATRIA25 Program and a Student's Understanding of the Value of Integrity. The results of this evaluation suggest that continued support of structured and consistent Programming by Universities and Government and Non-Government Organizations could strengthen the student culture of Integrity and Anti-Corruption Awareness. Future Programs may consider Developing more Targeted Workshop Presentations, Incorporating Real-World Situations, and allowing Student Leaders to Lead Group Discussions with Peers regarding the Information Presented in the Program.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author gratefully acknowledges the invaluable

opportunity, support and sponsorship provided by Ministry of Higher Education (KPT), Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM), Centre for Student Empowerment, Alumni & Careers (SPAC), Office of Deputy Vice Chancellor (Student Affairs & Alumni). Sincere appreciation is also extended to all individuals who contributed their time, expertise and insights throughout the SATRIA25 program.

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