

UNETHICAL BEHAVIOUR IN HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract- Unethical behavior is an action that falls outside of what is considered morally right or proper for a person. Higher learning institutions are also facing the problem of unethical behavior or misconduct, and it can involve the students, lecturers or university administrators. This paper provides some insights into the issues of unethical behavior in higher learning institutions in Malaysia. It also identified types of unethical behavior among lecturers. It then discusses importance of ethical leadership in shaping the ethical conduct in higher learning institutions.

Keywords- Unethical Behavior; Higher Learning Institution; Ethical Leadership

1. INTRODUCTION

Every now and then, we come across the increasing number of unethical scandals and cases that happened in our society. Unethical scandals can be in the form of corruption, bribery and fraud. These three common malpractices can happen in every industry, although the degree may vary from one sector to another. It has been discovered through previous studies that education systems can be as corrupt as other parts of government and the economy. The universal characteristics that can be found in the university systems are now being distorted by the interest of specific individuals in the institutions [5].

Previous studies have examined many forms of academic dishonesty and cheating behaviour in the education. Academic dishonesty or unethical behaviour in academic has also been part of the problems faced by higher education in various parts of the world. It can include problem of academic integrity such as cheating and plagiarism, and has become a topic that is being discussed by various parties in the industry. As of now, the level of integrity practiced in the academic area is still

declining and not improving [7]. Academic institutions need to proactively investigate academic dishonesty and to identify what are the factor that influencing such behaviour.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

For decades, researchers and the public have become concerned about organizational misconduct in the higher learning institutions. They have also looked at how the organization and their members (academicians, administrator and students) get themselves into the issue and trying to find the best way to stay out of the trouble.

The statistics given by Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission in March 2018 showing the involvement of students, lecturers and administrative staff of higher learning institutions in Malaysia for the period of 2013-2017. From the given information, we can see that number of lecturers who involve in bribery increases i.e. from 14 cases in 2016 to 16 cases in 2017; and there were 5 people arrested in 2017. Meanwhile, for the administrator, the number is quite high in 2016, whereby 23 people arrested in 2016 and 3 was arrested in 2017.

There are also cases reported in institution of higher learning. Recently, three individuals were arrested for allegedly involved in a syndicate producing fake degree certificates inclusive of masters, degree and diploma bearing few IPTS names. They only take one week to produce all the certificates with cost ranging from RM2,000 to RM16,000 depending on types of certificate and IPTS. [10]. MACC is now trying to identify whether there are IPTS employees who abetting in the syndicate.

An ex-lecturer of USM was caught for presenting false PhD certificates and documents in order to be accepted as a lecturer, and the university has to pay sum of RM195,081.38 for his salary during his two-year service for the university before he resigned in 2010. [9]

A managing director of a private college alleged to have taken bribes from 20 college students. It was reported that the man had allegedly received RM2,500 in bribes from each student so that he would issue certificates that allowed them to pursue medical studies abroad. (NST, October 4, 2017). Two lecturers from University Technical Malaysia (UTeM) who are also husband and wife was remanded on 6 September 2017 on the allegation of abuse of power, suggesting to the faculty's management to choose their company to buy lab equipment together with service for research amounting to RM52,000 in Mac 2015 and Jun 2016.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The occurrences of faculty misconduct consist of plagiarism and fraud are unfortunately exist [4]. Such misconduct examples are false research and failure to attribute credit to original source. Lecturers did not take action when the student cheat, giving false information in student's recommendation letter, giving higher marks to students without considering the quality of the assignment. Lecturer come to class late, using harsh words when dealing with students, abusing research grant, plagiarism, having sex with student, refuse to teach and do research and not being able to carry out the administrative work given. Meanwhile, lecturer's academic misconduct involves plagiarism, having relationship with students and not following the universities' rules and regulation.

Transparency International, have conducted several studies into corrupt practices in academic institutions of different countries. Their monitoring exercises on corruption in the Middle East shown that 70% of respondents described that educational systems in their countries are being either corrupt or extremely corrupt, and corruption perception in the region was very high. Meanwhile, Georgia also facing the same problem with their higher education institutions as students buying their admissions, including grades and diplomas. Transparency International in Bosnia Herzegovina found few most common forms of corruption i.e. bribes for passing examination, compulsory purchase of textbooks written by lecturers and buying and selling of diplomas.

In the US, the reported misconduct resulted in three resignations (including one faculty administrator), a dismissal and a retirement. The case is about several research papers found with identical content and a six-year period of considerable duplication, fabrication, falsification and plagiarism. Some lecturers in higher institutions in Nigeria engage in unethical practices [1]. Among perceived factors to the situation are desperation for promotion, greed for money, and lack of commitment to the profession. This is in line with the study in Nigeria, the reason why lecturers commit the unethical practices, due to desperation for promotion, stagnation in career and many other causes.

As for the case of Vietnam [6] explain that corruption in higher education in their country is uncontrolled following survey information from students, faculty and administrator. The information from students, faculty, and administrators provides clear indications that corruption in higher education in Vietnam is both rampant and institutional. The objectives of this paper are to (i) identify types of unethical behavior in higher learning institution and (ii) identify factors influencing the unethical behavior in higher learning institutions

4. UNETHICAL BEHAVIOUR IN HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS

Unethical behaviour is an action that falls outside of what is considered morally right or proper for a person. This kind of behaviour may occur among students, lecturer and administrative staff of institution of higher learning. Examples of such behaviour among students are cheating in examination, plagiarism, fraud, unacceptable assistance. Examples of misconduct among academicians can be in terms of claim, bias in grading, research plagiarism and abuse of authority. As for the administrative staffs, such behaviour could include the abuse of authority for both personal and material gain, the illegal procurement of goods and services, the use of university property and bribery. [5].

5. FACTORS INFLUENCING UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR

Generally, the job of an academician ranges through teaching, research, supervision, consultancy and contribution to the faculty, university and the society. Performance expectation of the faculty member is quite clear, even though it might differ by academic rank or by institution (comprehensive universities, research universities, private universities, colleges etc.). Teaching workloads can be around four courses a year, publish 1-2 articles in top-tier journal (senior faculty are expected to publish more) supervision, consultancy and community outreach [8].

Higher education institutions have to follow the changing nature of academic workplace. The expectation of the government on the higher education system change with the need to increase the ranking of the universities. Massive investment has been made to produce educated workforce that will attract international investment, the most direct way of raising rankings is through increasing the publication rate among faculty members.

Ranking of universities have been widely used as measure of higher education excellence. The whole system of the universities and colleges were being evaluated, which at the same time consider the publication rates as one of the most important element in most ranking system. Thus to get higher ranking means the universities and colleges must ensure that their faculty are actively involved in research and publication.

Currently, there are intensified pressures for the faculty member to carry out research and publish. The push for more research somehow affects the work of the academician, created tensions together with the need to fulfil other expectation. It will further give impact to the academic integrity, by putting names to the work of other lecturers (I will put your name in my publication and you put my name on yours), or by claiming the work of students as the lecturer own work.

There are many factors that might influence the unethical behavior in higher learning institution and one of the factors is leadership in higher learning institutions. Leaders are considered as “tone at the top” that shapes the direction and ethical culture of an organization.

Leaders are responsible for the conduct of the organization. [2] explained the relationship between ethical leadership and employee unethical behavior. The ethical leadership is known as moral manager whom considers ethics as important. They will ensure the importance of ethics is communicated well to their subordinates. This ethical leader shows good example and modelling ethical behavior; and at the same time using the reward system to hold followers accountable for ethical conduct [2]. Ethical leaders always are the source of guidance, whereby people will pay attention and follow their good attitudes, values and behavior. How ethical leaders influence their followers is guided through the social learning theory. The theory is based on the idea that individuals learn by paying attention to and emulating the attitudes, values and behaviors of attractive and credible models.

In institutions of higher learning, the academic leaders need to strategies to promote ethical conduct. The Deans and the Head of Departments are faculty administrators who are responsible to lead the operation of their respective units of education. As such, they can influence the manner in which faculty are expected to interact. In particular, they are well positioned to provide leadership in creating an inclusive and supportive culture for faculty, staff, and students [3].

6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework that can be derived from this study is the relationship of ethical leadership to unethical behavior. Leaders are expected to communicate with subordinates regarding ethics. Table 1 below shows previous studies looking at the relationship of leadership to unethical behavior.

Table 1: Previous studies on relationship of leadership to unethical behaviour.

Author (s)	Independent Variables	Methodology	Findings
[2]	Leadership – transformational, spiritual, authentic	Conceptual paper	Ethical leaders communicate the importance of ethical standards and use the performance management system to hold employees accountable for their conduct
[5]	Ethical leadership Mediator: Ethical climate	Survey packets – five employee surveys and one supervisor survey	Ethical leadership positively related to ethical climate Ethical climate was negatively related to employee misconduct Ethical climate mediated the relationship between ethical leadership and employee misconduct

[4]	Leadership (tone at the top) Organizational climate Culture	Conceptual paper	Universities must set formal ethical standard, must ensure their leaders are acting ethically which lead to an ethical culture and reduce unethical act.
[5]	Ethical leadership	Three studies with varying methodologies	Managers can create and maintain ethical environments by supporting ethical leadership and encouraging ethical behaviour among co-workers.
[3]	Transformational leadership	38 item leadership inventory (multifactor leadership questionnaires) & interview coded using NVIVO software	Leaders who are aware of the organization culture and have the tools to implement change were more likely to report culture transformation in their departments and colleges, & training can shift administrator attitudes.
[6]	Appreciation vertical trust predictability quality of leadership	E-mail questionnaire 864 staff of universities	Appreciation, vertical trust, predictability and quality of leadership are working environment factors that contribute to the experiences of bullying.

Higher learning institutions should be able to ensure that the leaders that they appoint can carry out their obligations and responsibilities well, than it definitely can help to oversee the behavior of their respective lecturers. The outcome of their decisions will impact the day to day operations and the overall performance of the organization. There is also an expectation that these ethical leaders will use their influence to promote ethical culture throughout the organization, implement a strong governance framework, and be committed to ensuring decisions are made honestly and with integrity.

7. SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The finding of this study will be able to give practical implication to various groups. The Malaysian government can ensure the society at large by providing insight on the universities graduates whom are well equipped with knowledge as well as good moral values. It will follow by better services and delivery and at the same time can improve productivity.

The study will also support the Global Infrastructure Anti-Corruption Centre (GIACC), the newly established National Centre for Governance, Integrity and Anti-Corruption. GIACC is established to help create a corruption free and high integrity environment that the people wanted. GIACC is responsible for planning, formulating strategies and evaluating policies in ensuring all government affairs are done based on good governance, integrity and zero tolerance towards corruption.

The Ministry of Higher Education can be rest assured that higher learning institutions are established and well managed, and at the same time have a high quality education system and standards.

The performance of the institution of higher learning can be improved, which than lead to higher number of student intake, generate higher earnings and be able to give back to the community in terms of corporate social responsibility. At the same time, the institution of higher learning can identify the benefits from ethics awareness and education.

The academicians will be able to share good moral values and portray the best examples to the students, be sincere in their teaching profession. The finding can also serve as an alert to the future employers and professional bodies in their responsibility of ethical modelling in order improve future workforce ethics.

8. CONCLUSION

It can be seen that there are different types of unethical behavior found in higher learning institutions. The factor that influence such behavior is also well identified, which is the importance of having an ethical leader that could lead to better ethical conduct in the institution.

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