

The Discovery of Terengganu Civil Servants' Integrity

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARSS/v14-i9/22614> DOI:10.6007/IJARSS/v14-i9/22614

Published Date: 15 September 2024

Abstract

Employee integrity is an important element in having a smooth operation in any organization. This study will explore the factors influencing the integrity levels of civil servants in Terengganu. Understanding the complex interactions between individual and organizational elements are crucial, particularly during a time when integrity within public service institutions is paramount. The objective of this study is to discover the influence level of integrity among civil servants in Terengganu. This is a correlation study focusing on the relationship between individual, organizational, situational, and level of integrity among the civil servants. This research was conducted using non-probability convenience sampling. A questionnaire was distributed to 137 civil servants in Terengganu. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire were checked, and responses were collected and analyzed via SPSS software. The analysis and research findings showed that individual, organizational, situational have a positively significant relationship with the level of integrity among the civil servants in Terengganu. The result supported the hypotheses and was accepted. This study aims to shed light on the complex dynamics that either help or hinder the organization's efforts to cultivate ethical behaviour by exposing the underlying factors that influence the integrity of civil servants. Results from this study are intended to guide practice and policy, providing civil servants and other organizations dedicated to upholding the highest standards of integrity in their business practices with valuable insights.

Keywords: Civil Servants, Organizational Factor; Individual Factor; Level Of Integrity; Public Service Institutions

Introduction and Background

In contemporary society, integrity is often regarded as a crucial attribute for ensuring the efficient functioning of an organization or institution. Integrity is a fundamental characteristic of human beings. Macomber (2019) defines integrity as possessing moral rectitude. Integrity refers to the characteristic of behaving in accordance with moral principles, norms, and

regulations, which are influenced by the arguments stated earlier (Huberts, 2018). In 2010, the Malaysian government introduced the implementation of Trust Settlement (IP) legislation in public procurement. Subsequently, the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission has provided its support. The newest National Anti-Corruption Strategy (2024 - 2028) by Suruhanjaya Pencegahan Rasuah Malaysia (2019) continues to endorse the utilization of intellectual property to enhance Malaysia's Public Procurement Framework. IP Malaysia acknowledges the importance of integrity and anti-corruption measures for procurement professionals and bidders, as well as the need for compliance. However, it does not yet have a formal system in place for monitoring and oversight. "Clean, Efficient and Trustworthy" campaign in 1982 (NST, 2018). It also involves people, and relationships with each of those people are critical to a company's success over its competitors. Integrity, as defined by Said et al (2016), encompasses not just the absence of dishonesty or corruption, but also the presence of certain qualities or characteristics in an individual. As per Bernama (2020), corruption and abuse of power perpetrated by government personnel in Malaysia can be likened to a malignant tumor that poses a gradual but significant threat to government institutions. In addition, a study conducted by Mohamed et al (2018), presented empirical evidence indicating that the Malaysian Enforcement Agency Integrity Commission (EAIC) identified the public sector, specifically enforcement and local authorities, as one of the five agencies receiving the most complaints. The Malaysian Welfare Degradation Commission (MACC) showed there were 998 incidents of defilement including community workers and the public in 2020, 1,011 cases in 2019, and 894 cases in 2018. In addition, demotion will affect the economy of a country. If Malaysia wants to attract more investment from abroad, it needs to improve its CPI ranking for 2021. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) published a report in 2020 stating that the amount of foreign direct investment (FDI) into Malaysia has decreased by 68 % to a pitiful US\$2.5 billion.

In 2020, the Malaysian Integrity Institute reported a total of 1,571 cases involving bribery, 605 cases of erroneous claims, 217 cases of abuse of position, 29 cases of illicit money laundering, and 14 cases of bribery. The notion of good governance entails the rejection of unethical conduct and the identification of exemplary administrative behavior (Jr. & Penol, 2018). Within this environment, four significant characteristics were discerned: management within the public sector, accountability, the legislative framework pertaining to development, and transparency and information. Effective implementation of good governance principles is crucial for enhancing employee integrity (Rachmat et al., 2020). Due to its high significance, excellent governance ultimately leads to efficient and effective performance. To enhance quality, morale, and dependability, organizations should prioritize the monitoring of conflicting situations and the prevention of humiliation. Nevertheless, an organization's pursuit of excellence is hindered when it faces internal integrity issues or external influences that cannot be resolved due to its inherent weakness. This is particularly problematic in a time when human values are overshadowed by technological and digital advancements, and there are fewer institutions dedicated to fostering pure values within their organizations (Noh, 2021). Most of the integrity concerns, such as dishonesty, breach of trust, abuse of power, and misconduct, occur within an organization. Given this, the problem prompts us to query why this act of dishonesty continues to exist despite the application of different approaches. The motivation of this study is to increase honesty and moral principles among civil servants.

Literature Review*Underpinning Theories*

The Theory of Reasoning and Action (TRA) by Ajzen and Fishbein states that a person's behavior, such as choosing one information source over another, is governed by his or her intention to perform the action, which is influenced by his or her attitude toward performing the action. The behavioral views about the significance of the behavior and the normative principles that the precise reference believes he or she should or should not execute the behavior define the social pressure that the individual is subjected to that is important to him or her, such as subjective norms. According to the Fishbein Model, individual beliefs influence external influences' behavioral intention only indirectly (Matthew & Leandre, 2020). It is made up of three parts in TRA, like behavioral intention, attitude, and subjective norm. The Planned Behavior Theory (TPB) provides a theoretical framework for systematic analysis of the factors that influence behavioral decisions. It is used in numerous studies on environmentally friendly behavior, such as recycling. According to Majid et al. (2021), this theory is also influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and behaviors.

Level of Integrity

Integrity is a collection of superior qualities that people have and is based on the idea of being honest and having high moral standards (Megat Arifin & Ahmad, 2016). At the individual level, integrity is aligning one's actions with moral, ethical, and legal principles as well as self-interest and public interest. At the organizational level, it has been enshrined in the implementation of ethical codes, customer charters, work systems and processes, and best practices. The organization's members uphold, reiterate, and live the code of ethics until it becomes a habit and eventually the culture of the organization. The ideal definition of integrity would be a code of conduct or code of ethics for an individual, an organization, or a situation Zahari et al (2021). The current process of globalization has had an impact not only on trade and the economy but also on society and culture. It caused competition to affect the public service sector, particularly in terms of the need to improve governance and delivery systems, transparent service, and integrity. The openness of the world and the free flow of information, aided by the advancement of information technology, have had an indirect impact on employee morale and ethics. As a result, to be a civil servant, one must be responsible for knowing, comprehending, and upholding moral values in all of one's actions and in one's actions while completing tasks (Muhamad & Gani, 2020).

Individual Factors

An individual is a single organism whose life stands alone and is physiologically independent and does not have an organic relationship with others (Prawiro, 2019). An individual's behavior and reaction are significantly influenced by a variety of individual factors (Md Yunus et al., 2018). Race, gender, religion, work experience, and educational background have all been found to have a significant impact on one's integrity. According to extensive previous research, there is a positive correlation between the level of employee integrity and individual factors. It was discovered that female representatives have a higher moral standard than male workers in terms of orientation (Alalwan et al., 2018). In addition, it was found that there was no correlation between the individual factor and the degree of employee integrity (Lokman & Mahadzi, 2019). Clients and other workers don't want to work with people who don't trust them, so they won't be given opportunities or responsibilities. Professionals who have worked

with employees who lack integrity talk about the inability to rely on a person to do what they say they will do, the community where customers have focused on protecting themselves, and the leaders' inability to adhere to the standards they publicly support.

Therefore, what can be concluded here and hypotheses that can be made based on previous studies, are:

H1: There is a significant relationship between individual factors and level of integrity

Organizational Factors

An organization is a group of people working together to achieve predetermined objectives. Additionally, it refers to a group of resources working together toward a common goal (Mcnamara, 2020). Roszkowska (2020), suggests that organizational factors may be more closely linked to ethical behavior at work than individual traits. The integrity scores of employees who took an ethics course were significantly higher than those of employees who did not. If individual employees comprehend social relationships, personal values, ethical codes, and jurisdiction, they will also share the same moral thoughts and intentions with other employees (Abdullah et al., 2019). Top employees need a code of conduct or code of ethics to provide good governance (Alam et al., 2019). A good code of ethics should emphasize contractual responsibility and stakeholder transparency. There are some organizational factors that affect an individual's integrity (Roszkowska, 2020). Codes of conduct, the process of implementation, rewards and sanctions, ethical training, organizational culture, and so on are all examples of organizational factors. An organization's personality and character are shaped by its setting. It is made up of shared beliefs, values, and preferences regarding the way people ought to act and communicate, make decisions, and carry out tasks.

Therefore, what can be concluded here and hypotheses that can be made based on previous studies, is:

H2: There is a significant relationship between organizational factors and level of integrity.

Situational Factors

Situational refers to the way a person's response to a particular circumstance is influenced by their global meaning in the context of that circumstance (Park & Kennedy, 2017). Situational includes things like the situation's appraised meaning, the processes of meaning making, the meaning created from the situation, and the identification of similarities and differences between that appraised meaning and global meaning. Situational factors are types of factors that a person cannot control on an individual basis but have a greater impact on how they react to a situation. Situational factors may have significant implications for unethical behavior, according to numerous scientists. External and internal factors make up situational factors. Consumer desire and economic conditions are external factors, whereas time, human resources, finances, and workplace facilities are internal factors. Any component-related events can have an impact on integrity implementation (Syamir & Syamsir, 2020). In addition, there are certain situations within the organization's control, which can boost employee integrity and performance (Zainal et al., 2019).

Therefore, what can be concluded here and hypotheses that can be made based on previous studies, is:

H3: There is a significant relationship between situational factors and level of integrity.

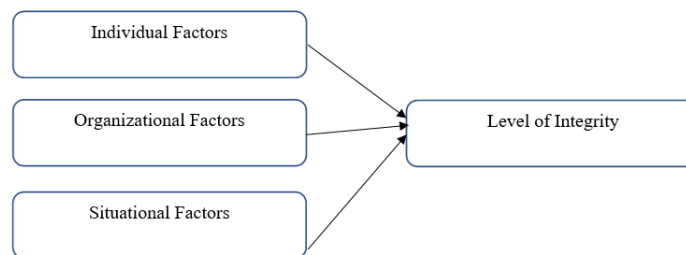


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

Research Methodology

A correlational study is used to investigate the relationships between variables. Questionnaires were distributed to 211 respondents which are civil servants in one organization in Terengganu. However, only 137 individual respondents completed the survey. Researchers choose to use this non-probability sampling technique because its nature is easier and cheaper to access. Moreover, the researcher’s conclusions may be more limited. The data gathered and analyzed quantitatively using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Responses were evaluated using a five-point Likert scale with the score ranging from “Strongly Disagree” on one end to “Strongly Agree” on the other with “Neutral” in the middle. In addition, a pilot test was conducted to obtain reliable and useful research results. A total of 30 respondents were participating in the pilot test. Cronbach’s Alpha value for integrity was 0.961.

Results

Demographic Profile of Respondent

Table 1 shows the demographic of the participants. The data showed that 52.6% of participants were females. 52.6% of the respondents were aged 30 – 39 years old. The majority of the respondents are diploma holders with 45.3% of them. 90.5% were married while only 9.5% are single. 73.7% are income between RM3000 to RM4900, and only 2.9% of them have RM7000 to RM8900 income. Finally, 47.4% have worked between 10 to 20 years and only 1.5% have worked between 30 to 40 years.

Table 1
Demographic of the Respondents

VARIABLE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
GENDER		
Males	65	47.4%
Females	72	52.6%
Total	415	100%
AGE		
19 - 29	5	3.6%
30 – 39	72	52.6%
40 – 49	38	27.7%
>50	22	16.1%

Total	137	100%
EDUCATION		
SPM	44	32.1%
STPM	17	12.4%
Diploma	62	45.3%
Degree	13	13%
Post-graduate qualification	1	0.7%
Total	137	100%
STATUS		
Single	13	9.5%
Married	124	90.5%
Total	137	100%
INCOME		
RM1200-RM2900	25	18.2%
RM3000-RM4900	101	73.7%
RM5000-RM6900	7	5.1%
RM7000-RM8900	4	2.9%
TOTAL	137	100%
TERM OF SERVICE		
1 - 5 years	13	9.5%
5 - 10 years	47	34.3%
10 - 20 years	65	47.4%
20 - 30 years	10	7.3%
30 – 40 years	2	1.5%
TOTAL	137	100%

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for civil servants' level of integrity were conducted and Table 2 below displays the outcome. The individual factors had a mean of 3.6296, organizational factors had a mean of 4.8414, and situational factors had a mean of 3.6543, according to the study's analysis. Most of the factors that influence civil servants at Terengganu's integrity value were found to fall somewhere in the middle of the mean. If the dependent variable's mean score is at least 3.0, this indicates that civil servants are highly satisfied with or strongly agree with the factors that influence integrity values. However, if the mean score falls below 2.5, it indicates that civil servants do not agree with the integrity value.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Descriptive Statistics		
	Factor Name	Mean	Std. Dev.
IF	Individual factors	3.6296	0.60658
OF	Organizational factors	4.8414	0.29168
SF	Situational factors	3.6543	0.59243
LOI	Level of integrity	3.7102	0.67008

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA, and Multiple Comparisons): ANOVA was used to determine whether significant differences exist among civil servants at Terengganu participants of the three selected variables on level of integrity (i.e. individual factors, organizational factors, and situational factors) based on the respondents' demographic profile variables (age, level of education, gender, status, income and term of service). The ANOVA results are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3
Multiple Regression
ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	49.298	3	16.433	185.729	.000b
	Residual	11.767	133	.088		
	Total	61.066	136			

a. Dependent Variable: Level of Integrity

b. Predictors: (Constant), Situational Factor, Organizational Factor, Individual Factor

Multiple regression in Table 3 shows an F value of 185.729 and all the independent variables used in this research were significant and the p-value obtained was less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$), hence the hypothesis can be tested. Then, Table 3 summarizes the hypothesis' results.

Discussion

The primary objective of the research question is to determine the correlation between individual variables and the level of integrity among civil servants in Terengganu. The survey results have established a notable correlation between individual factors and the level of integrity. Most respondents in Terengganu have expressed a strong inclination for promoting integrity among civil personnel. The study findings indicate that the mean score of 3.6296 is in the moderate range. Furthermore, there is a notable correlation between the dependent variables and individual factors. Thus, it demonstrates a correlation between individual variables and the level of integrity among civil servants in Terengganu, supporting prior research findings. To summarize, a rise in the independent variable will result in a corresponding increase in the dependent variable, specifically in relation to individual variables among civil servants in Terengganu. The presentation of individual representatives was found to have a major influence on the advancement of an association (Tari & Syamsir, 2020). In order to facilitate the attainment of hierarchical objectives, any organization will continuously strive to enhance the representation of its members. Therefore, it is crucial to locate individuals who possess trustworthiness and loyalty towards the organizations. In addition, a prior study by Lokman & Mahadzi (2019), found that the degree of employee integrity was unrelated to the individual factor. They won't be given opportunities or responsibilities because clients and other employees won't want to work with people they don't trust.

Based on the results of the survey, a significant relationship between organizational factors and the level of integrity has determined that most respondents have a willingness for the level of integrity among civil servants in Terengganu. Based on the findings of the study, it shows that the result of the mean score of 4.8414. is high and there is a significant relationship between the dependent variables and individual factors. Therefore, it proves that there is a relationship between organizational factors and the level of integrity among civil servants in Terengganu by supporting some previous studies. In summary, if the independent variable increases, the dependent variable will increase in terms of individual factors among civil servants in Terengganu.

Managerial Implications and Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, situational factors have been identified as the primary determinants of integrity levels, whilst organizational factors have been found to have the least impact. These findings emphasize the need to prioritize the improvement of integrity levels. The importance of organizational matters should be prioritized and given greater attention. The objective of this initiative is to enhance the level of integrity among civil servants in Terengganu. If the upper-level management takes on the role of a mentor and consistently encourages a strong commitment to honesty and moral principles among its civil servants, it can greatly improve the level of integrity among civil servants, not only in the state of Terengganu but also throughout Malaysia.

Conclusion

In conclusion, situational factors influence the level of integrity among civil servants in Terengganu so that they are more sensitive to the level of integrity and practice it. Not only the organization needs to consider a program or campaign that involves the level of integrity among civil servants in Terengganu, but it is better to involve civil servants in all states in Malaysia.

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