

Corruption as a Cultural Phenomenon? Analyzing Corruption Issues in Economics, Politics, Education and the Public Sector

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Abstract

Corruption has presently evolved into a topic of paramount concern across the spheres of economics, politics, education, and the public sector. The government is deeply committed to addressing this issue, recognizing it as one of the most intractable social phenomena or crimes in the nation, surpassing even other social predicaments such as drug abuse. The pivotal question revolves around the underlying reasons for the persistence of this phenomenon. Notably, this issue encompasses not only low-ranking officials but also individuals who have achieved remarkable status and prestige within society. Thus, the primary objective of this study is to dissect the root causes of corruption prevalent in contemporary society. This research identifies the contributing factors, repercussions, and government initiatives aimed at tackling this issue. Four fundamental issues are brought to the forefront within this paper: (i) corruption in economics, (ii) corruption in politics, (iii) corruption in education, and (iv) corruption in the public sector. The qualitative research method is employed in crafting this paper, grounded in the positivist philosophy, and serves to explore the practice of corruption as a cultural phenomenon. Data collection and amalgamation techniques are instrumental in furnishing inductive or qualitative data analysis. The outcomes of this research chiefly emphasize broader connotations. Utilizing the qualitative method, academic journals previously published, and information acquired from official government and non-government websites are harnessed as research materials to accumulate data and information pertinent to the issue of corruption. A comprehensive review of the literature conducted within this study explicates that corruption emanates from the unprofessional conduct of an individual.

Keywords: Corruption, Economics, Politics, Education, Public Sector.

Introduction**Issue 1: Corruption in Economics**

Corruption in economics refers to the act of bribery in which individuals or organizations employ their financial resources or power to influence a country's economic decisions. This is articulated as such because corruption can have a detrimental impact on the economy by eroding public confidence in business and government (Zaini & Kadam-Kiai, 2021). Consequently, corruption in economics can also impede various facets of economic life, including resource management, budget allocation, and policymaking (Othman, Mokhtar & Esa, 2022). This can lead to inequalities in resource distribution and hinder economic growth directly and indirectly. Moreover, corruption in economics can also distort business competition by granting unfair advantages to business owners or entrepreneurs involved in these illicit practices (Adnan & Ismail, 2013). Therefore, such negative activities can jeopardize legitimate and honest businesses and impede innovation and economic growth. Corruption should unequivocally be labelled as the nation's number one enemy. This is because corruption and society appear increasingly intertwined to the point where this immoral practice not only proliferates but also infiltrates nearly every sector and aspect of our daily lives. Despite various efforts to combat the corruption virus, it has become endemic, with the populace seemingly left with no choice but to coexist with it.

Evidently, almost every day there are corruption cases involving various wrongdoings such as bribery, abuse of power, and embezzlement committed by members of the public reported in the media. Transparency International Malaysia has reported that the country incurred losses of approximately RM40 billion to RM50 billion due to corrupt activities, making it a bitter reality that corruption's impact on economic growth is undeniably harsh (Hameed, 2022). The monetary values involved are substantial and astonishing, to the point where it is not an exaggeration to say that these criminals are robbing and crippling the nation's economy and its people. Engagement in this unhealthy culture remains popular as it provides various short-term benefits to those driven by greed and self-interest. Ironically, many have been arrested by authorities and brought to court, resulting in various penalties according to the severity of their offenses (Hairom, 2021). Furthermore, according to the Corruption Perceptions Index for 2021 published by Transparency International, Malaysia ranks 62nd out of 180 countries (Daud, 2022). Although this index shows an improvement in Malaysia's corruption assessment, there are still obstacles to tackling corruption in the country's economics. In principle, corruption as a crime and the problem of wastage will not only affect government revenues but also have a significant impact on the country's overall economic performance.

Issue 2: Corruption in Politics

Corruption has long enveloped the political arena in our nation. It has become a tool for the elite to satisfy their insatiable desire for profit, even to the extent of sacrificing the nation's honour. Politicians who have been entrusted with the responsibility and trust of the people in leading and representing their voices have, on the contrary, become thorns in the flesh, exploiting their positions and offices to gain self-serving and individualistic benefits solely to satiate their worldly desires (Yusop, 2014). Since the emergence of the corruption issue in the political arena of our nation, it has raised a multitude of questions from various segments of society, including those involved in corruption, namely politicians. These questions concern the integrity of the country's governance system, which should be built on integrity and transparency in its execution, leading to the realization of a fair and just system based on

nationalistic principles. However, it is manifested as a reality that is yet to be determined in addressing the long-standing corruption issue that has plagued our country since attaining independence.

The negative externalities of this corruption issue arise from various aspects and factors that serve as evidence of the materialistic nature among politicians who are entangled in the lust for a lavish lifestyle. This is exemplified by the lack of commitment to political will and the consistency of leadership in eradicating corruption issues, as seen in a neighbouring country, Indonesia (Sanusi, 2017). This demonstrates how corruption can become the root cause of undermining a country's governance institutions, which appear feeble in enforcing laws, ultimately obscuring the true role of the legal order in upholding a nation's integrity and transparency. The repercussions of the leadership's insensitivity to the proliferation of political corruption issues can lead to civil movements by societal entities that represent the people's voices, expressing their dissatisfaction with the government, which often downplays the issue of political corruption perpetrated by a select group of elite individuals protected by the government under the guise of safeguarding the nation's honour (Zain & Yusoff, 2019).

Hence, the people have taken the initiative themselves to stage protests and vehemently oppose the situation, disrupting the peace and security of the nation, which stems from the civil unrest (Sopi, 2022). It is undeniable that there are also government entities that take the issue of political corruption seriously, as evidenced by the implementation of the Organizational Anti-Corruption Plan (OACP) by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (SPRM) to address integrity issues within organizations in Malaysia (SPRM, 2021). This plan is designed to be expanded to encompass the political arena, serving as a medium to counter the corruption epidemic that continues to flourish and proliferate in our country. Therefore, this study aims to examine and delve into the issue of corruption, particularly in politics, to serve as a core guideline for the wider community.

Issue 3: Corruption in Education

The prevalence of corruption in education is an urgent concern with extensive implications for the education system in many countries. Acts of corruption, oppression, or injustice within an educational organization demonstrate a lack of integrity, regardless of the level, be it in schools, higher education institutions, or in educational administration itself. When a nation grapples with widespread corruption, public trust in the government is eroded, tarnishing the country's image (Hasan, 2021). In the academic world, various corrupt behaviours include bribery, corruption, or allowing others to do tasks, examinations, projects, or research on one's behalf for personal gain. This directly undermines the fairness of assessment procedures and examination integrity within those institutions. Corruption prospers in the education system when certain individuals exploit their positions for personal or quid pro quo benefits in exchange for special privileges. The desperation to achieve the desired academic performance, regardless of its negative consequences on education quality, principles of fairness, and human rights, drives this practice (Yusoff, 2019).

Statistics show a rise in 909 corruption cases in 2022 compared to 851 in the previous year (Rahman *et al.*, 2023). This demonstrates that highly educated individuals are more likely to engage in corrupt activities than those with lower levels of education (Mangafić & Veselinović, 2020). A lack of thorough and diligent supervision undoubtedly results in irresponsible behaviour. Consequently, in the education sector, the repercussions extend beyond their initial implications, affecting the broader understanding and perception of society regarding basic moral and ethical principles. When corruption infiltrates the realm of

education, it not only diminishes public trust in the integrity of the system but also diminishes students' motivation to pursue academic excellence through honest means. This, in turn, results in dissatisfaction when a few individuals strive diligently to achieve their academic aspirations and knowledge without regard to the negative effects of bribery, while those who are less deserving benefit from it. Individuals who study and acquire knowledge in schools and institutions aim to gain knowledge and education because they represent invaluable assets that expose individuals to ethics and moral values while acquiring knowledge. Therefore, it is crucial for educational institutions and their students to foster a culture of honesty and integrity. A just and equitable education system should provide equal opportunities for every student to achieve success based on their abilities and genuine effort.

Issue 4: Corruption in the Public Sector

Corruption in the public sector, involving civil servants, has long haunted society and governance systems in many countries, including Malaysia. This practice is unethical, in which individuals serving in the public sector, such as government officials, engage in dishonest and unfair acts of receiving or demanding bribes to perform their duties. Past research has demonstrated that internal weaknesses in individuals are the primary cause of corruption and combating it must start from within the individual (Daud, 2019). Engaging in bribery and corruption has far-reaching and harmful consequences for the nation and society. According to an Anti-Corruption Organization, Transparency International (TI) Malaysia, Local Authorities (PBT) are among the most exposed agencies to corrupt practices, misuse of power, and maladministration in the country (Balwi *et al.*, 2012). Corruption among civil servants involves power abuse and integrity violations that ultimately undermine public trust in government institutions and threaten the stability and justice of the national legal system. For instance, public servants involved in corruption receive bribes or gifts as rewards for approving applications, providing preferential treatment, or endorsing specific projects. These actions undoubtedly violate the principles of justice, meritocracy, and qualification-based selection that should form the basis of good governance.

Corruption among civil servants can occur at various levels, from the highest to the lowest within a hierarchy. Cases of corruption involving top government officials often attract public attention because of their broader impact on the economy and national development. However, corruption at lower levels should not be dismissed as it can affect the quality of public services provided to the people. The negative consequences of corruption in civil service are extensive. Economically, corruption is burdensome as it diverts the country's financial resources. Funds that should be used for infrastructure development, education, healthcare, and public services are often used by greedy and corrupt individuals for their own interests. As a result, the country's development stagnates, social disparities increase, and the people do not receive the benefits they deserve. Furthermore, corruption also undermines the principles of fairness and meritocracy within the government system. Qualified and capable individuals who can genuinely contribute to the country's progress are hindered or marginalized because of an unfair and corrupt system. This leads to dissatisfaction among the public and erodes their trust in public institutions. When civil servants who are not qualified gain positions or benefits merely by giving or accepting bribes, talented and experienced individuals are neglected. To achieve sustainable progress and prosperity, there must be a collective effort to combat corruption, strengthen integrity, and build a clean and transparent government system.

Literature Review

This literature review delves into the multifaceted issue of corruption in the context of the Malaysian economy and politics. Corruption, a pervasive problem globally, has a profound impact on economic development and political stability. This review explores the key facets of corruption, including its association with economic growth, its manifestation in the construction industry, and its prevalence in the political arena. Additionally, it examines various factors contributing to corruption and the efforts to combat it.

Issue 1: Corruption in the Economy

In the era of globalization, financial development, energy utilization, and the issue of corruption have significant implications for economic growth (Yahaya, 2020). In the context of a developing country like Malaysia, the introduction of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serves as a guiding framework for achieving balanced development across economic, social, and environmental sectors (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2022). Among the 16 main goals is the provision of access to justice for all and the establishment of effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels, which is crucial for the successful realization of other SDG objectives (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2022). The Malaysian government is committed to ensuring security, justice, and the continuous strengthening of institutions, including law enforcement, to provide the best public services. The National Integrity Plan (PIN), launched in 2004, is an effort to foster integrity within Malaysian society, cultivating a morally upright community with strong religious and spiritual values and noble ethics (Zan *et al.*, 2021). This commitment is further reinforced in the Shared Prosperity Vision 2030, which emphasizes integrity and anti-corruption measures as key indicators of the nation's social development index (Zan *et al.*, 2021).

Continuing in the context of discussing corruption in the economy, money laundering, the process of disguising and cleansing the proceeds of illegal activities, is a complex global crime (Aurasu, 2018). Both money laundering and corruption are deeply intertwined and have significant impacts on social, financial, and economic sectors. In Malaysia, the Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing, and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act 2001 (AMLATFPUAA) and the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2009 (MACCA) constitute the primary legislative and regulatory mechanisms to combat money laundering and the culture of corruption (Aurasu, 2018).

Furthermore, in recent times, the construction industry has gained notoriety as one of the most susceptible sectors to corruption globally. This is due to the industry's complexity, which offers numerous opportunities for dishonest individuals to exploit for personal gain. Corruption in Malaysia has intensified, as evidenced by the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), ranking the country 62nd out of 180 nations in 2021 (Daud, 2022). Corruption not only has a negative impact on the nation's economy but also tarnishes its image and reputation. Therefore, it is essential to identify and assess the contributing factors to corruption throughout the project construction life cycle (CPLC) and to pinpoint the riskiest phases vulnerable to corrupt practices. A review of the literature identified around 200 corruption factors related to the construction industry, with 31 of these factors relevant and categorized under the CPLC phases (Saim, 2021).

This emphasis on corruption in the economy highlights the destabilizing effects on the financial sector, which is a critical intermediary in the economy. Factors such as specific banking issues, institutional shortcomings, and macroeconomic factors contribute to the instability of the banking sector (Mohammad, 2020). Implementing effective measures to

combat corruption can significantly enhance banking stability, as indicated by the need for protective actions to mitigate the adverse effects of inflation and GDP fluctuations on national banking stability (Mohammad, 2020). Simultaneously, the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) serves as a macroeconomic strategy to stimulate national economic growth. However, its announcement in 2015 to replace the Sales and Service Tax (SST) sparked public concern, especially when combined with allegations of corruption scandals and escalating national debt (Zaini & Kadam-Kiai, 2021). Public unease grew as the perception spread that GST could increase the cost of living. Political behaviour shifted during the 14th General Election, which marked the first time in history that the UMNO-BN coalition lost and was replaced by the Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition, amidst concerns about corruption in the economy (Zaini & Kadam-Kiai, 2021).

As discussed, the connecting corruption and the economy in each country involves deconstructing the concerns and challenges related to the culture of corruption. To address this, it is crucial to promote anti-corruption literacy as it relates to educating society about corruption. This includes concepts of integrity, the role of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), the role of the community, and youth awareness. In combating corruption, it is critical for each of us to understand the characteristics of corrupt behaviour and bribery by eradicating the culture of corruption and abuse of power within the community, shaping public perception of corruption in politics, and educating the public about the consequences of corruption on the national administration system. Developing institutions and strategies to combat corruption, emphasizing the importance of experiential learning, and enforcing anti-corruption laws are also essential (Othman et al., 2022). In this context, the elimination of corruption soon necessitates an emphasis on experiential learning for the younger generation to instil integrity, a strong spirit, ethical values, and high discipline, ultimately creating a resilient society capable of eradicating the culture of corruption in Malaysia (Othman et al., 2022).

Issue 2: Corruption in Politics

Political corruption, particularly involving political leaders and politicians, poses the most significant threat. The consequences of political corruption have profound impacts on society and the nation, as these individuals play a pivotal role in determining the country's future. Recent cases of political corruption in Malaysia have raised questions about the prosecution and sentencing of political figures accused of corruption (Yusop, 2014). This study aims to examine the factors that lead political figures into political corruption and analyse the relationship between political activities and corruption. The study utilizes the concepts of political corruption and political activities to explore the direct and indirect linkages between political figures, political activities, and political corruption in Malaysia. The findings suggest that political figures' involvement in corruption is directly and indirectly linked to political activities, especially in the financing of political campaigns and party funding, driven primarily by the absence of integrity resulting from the need to secure funding for political activities (Yusop, 2014). Politicians have often misused their powers for personal and alliance interests while maintaining their grip on power. The study recommends establishing specific guidelines for political financing and the need for introducing a political integrity model to educate political figures about the importance of integrity and transparency in political activities (Yusop, 2014).

It is common knowledge that the year 2020 was a challenging year for Malaysia, marked by a political power transition from Pakatan Harapan (PH) to Perikatan Nasional (PN) and the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, which was associated with political corruption (Sopi, 2022). The PN government was seen as having ascended to power without winning in an election, leading to allegations of political corruption involving their coalition partners to maintain government stability. Despite the Agong's advice to all parliamentarians not to engage in excessive politics during the Covid-19 pandemic, PN's reluctance to follow the Agong's directive became evident when Melaka was compelled to hold a state election. This scenario is believed to label the government's prioritization of political power over the lives of the people, constituting a systematic form of political corruption (Sopi, 2022).

Furthermore, the political situation in Malaysia after the 12th general election has been tumultuous. The ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) government faced unexpected challenges, leading to a loss of reputation due to the resignation of the Prime Minister, power grabs, and individualism. The dissatisfaction among the populace was translated into votes as they chose opposition parties they believed were better suited to govern. The perceptions of the population regarding current political issues reflect the genuine public sentiment on the current political situation (Jalaluddin *et al.*, 2011).

Efforts to combat corruption, beyond stringent laws such as the Anti-Corruption Act of 1997, involve the enforcement agency known as the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) (Ismail & Abu Bakar, 2004). Nevertheless, corruption remains rampant due to factors stemming from individual behaviour. Corruption is often linked to factors such as low salaries, opportunities, and policies. Individual factors, specifically the psychology of individuals and their upbringing by parents, play a crucial role in this issue (Ismail & Abu Bakar, 2004).

Rahman *et al* (2022) conducted a study on corruption among public and private sector employees, which has been a contentious topic in Malaysia. According to the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (SPRM), the number of arrests surged by 205% from 2014 to 2021, increasing from 552 cases to 1125 cases (Rahman *et al.*, 2022). Malaysia has recorded losses of nearly RM1.8 trillion due to this activity. Various measures and initiatives have been taken by the government to combat corruption yet reports of such activities continue to rise. This study aimed to analyse the factors contributing to corruption and the challenges faced by Malaysia in addressing this issue. The research found that internal factors, such as opportunities, personal weaknesses, and a lack of integrity, were the primary causes of corruption (Rahman *et al.*, 2022). External factors included low salaries, financial pressure, excessive workload, and ineffective state policies. The use of technology by culprits to evade detection, political interference, a lack of public support and confidence, were additional challenges encountered by the government and anti-corruption agencies (Rahman *et al.*, 2022).

In the international context, a study by Julkifli *et al* (2022) explored the 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) corruption scandal. Initially established with the aim of boosting Malaysia's economy, the company became infamous for the massive scandal that unfolded around it. One individual, Jho Taek Low, has been implicated as the mastermind behind the 1MDB scandal. Notably, the Prime Minister, Najib Razak, who also served as the finance minister, was embroiled in the scandal. The 1MDB scandal contributed to the downfall of Najib Razak's political power in Malaysia (Julkifli *et al.*, 2022).

Comparatively, research by Sanusi (2017) provides insights into the development of anti-corruption efforts in Indonesia, reflecting the historical progression of corruption from the old order to the new order and the reform era. This study highlights that Indonesia has

adopted various methods to combat corruption, with each leader employing their unique approach. The study suggests that the battle against corruption in Indonesia should be an ongoing process that builds upon past experiences and rectifies past shortcomings (Sanusi, 2017).

In addition, the issue of corruption in politics is also linked to youth, a critical demographic for the development of current national issues, with distinct preferences (Besar *et al.*, 2012). The youth possess extensive, unrestricted access to real-time information, not confined solely to mainstream media. The contemporary advancements in communication and information technology, such as the use of the internet and mobile phones, have facilitated the unimpeded dissemination of information. The utilization of the internet as an information source is a widespread global phenomenon, transcending boundaries, and penetrating various domains, regarded as a 'new media,' especially among the younger generation. The cyber space applications through alternative media roles, such as blogs, websites, cyber forums, YouTube, email, Facebook, and Twitter, can expand the space for expression, concurrently enhancing social, political, and democratic participation and mobilization. Therefore, in the context of analysing the criteria for selecting candidates and political parties, the perception of current political issues and support for the government among the youth in the country are deemed significantly important in the national political scenario. The research findings indicate that 18.0 percent of the youth express a preference for candidates who are honest and trustworthy as their representatives. Political parties advocating humanitarian issues (transparency, justice, human rights, and anti-corruption) are their primary choice (Besar *et al.*, 2012).

Issue 3: Corruption in Education

In navigating the currents of modernization on its path towards achieving high-income developed status, the eradication of corruption has become a national priority, and this commitment extends to the education sector. Academic integrity is a significant concern within the context of corruption in education, encompassing issues such as academic fraud, plagiarism, collusion, and more, affecting both students and educators (Mustapa, 2020). Violations of academic integrity involve the breach of academic norms by oneself, third parties, or others. In other words, unethical behaviour among students often manifests as issues like plagiarism, contract cheating, bribery, or permitting someone else to undertake assignments, examinations, projects, or research on behalf of another, which are examples of unethical and non-integrous behaviours.

Academic integrity involves any transgressions against academic regulations. Plagiarism, ghost-writing, exam cheating, degree buying, bribing instructors, and other forms of academic misconduct are among the common occurrences in the education sector (Yusoff, 2019). Some argue that using third parties to complete academic assignments is not a criminal act. To some, the academic world within universities can be viewed as a source of income, with the opportunity to earn substantial sums by taking on academic assignments or theses. Malaysia has also had cases where Ph.D. degrees have been acquired by purchasing them. Normally, obtaining a Ph.D. degree involves students conducting research and writing a thesis. However, today, some individuals pay large sums to obtain a Ph.D. quickly (Yusoff, 2019). These fraudulent qualifications can severely harm the reputation of the higher education sector in the country and are deemed unethical and lacking integrity (Mustapa, 2020).

Furthermore, integrity is a vital concept, particularly in shaping today's students. Many studies, especially in Malaysia, have focused on integrity issues, particularly in the workplace, particularly in the public sector. However, integrity is not confined to the workplace alone. Academic integrity has become increasingly important, particularly as technology advancements have made it easier for students to access information and engage in plagiarism. Students should possess high integrity to achieve success. To study academic integrity among university students, research should address their general understanding of the concept of integrity and their level of academic integrity (Yusoff, 2019). Some students still don't understand the concept of integrity, and there are students involved in academic integrity violations, either consciously or unconsciously. In conclusion, issues of academic integrity among students do exist, and if not taken seriously and addressed, it could lead these students to engage in integrity violations in their future workplaces (Yusoff, 2019).

Moreover, one of the primary elements associated with corruption in education is integrity, both in terms of knowledge and culture. Discussions on integrity issues often focus on significant shortcomings in applying integrity in one's work. Integrity encompasses various pure values, including politeness, accuracy, reliability, diligence, dignity, modesty, personal integrity, honesty, sincerity, trustworthiness, commitment to promises, truthfulness, and various other positive traits (Ishar *et al.*, 2021). However, an organization cannot achieve excellence if it is plagued by internal issues stemming from integrity or left unaddressed due to external influences arising from institutional weaknesses. Many of the integrity problems raised refer to seemingly minor issues that often relate to their respective areas of expertise; however, these are still incorrect and need correction. Therefore, organizations need to identify the root causes of cultural and institutional integrity weaknesses in organizations, particularly among their employees. Thus, employees should have a fundamental understanding of the concept of integrity, acting in line with moral principles, ethics, and laws, prioritizing public interests over personal interests, and carrying out comprehensive, holistic, and relevant work (Ishar *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, an organizational culture based on high ethical standards should serve as a driving force and a positive influence on ethical behaviour among employees (Ishar *et al.*, 2021).

In addition, anti-corruption education is crucial in curbing corrupt behaviour. However, education related to anti-corruption is not extensively discussed in the context of educational implementation, as it is limited to what should be included in an anti-corruption curriculum for young generations. Hence, some vital considerations for the development of anti-corruption education, especially in initiatives aimed at educating the public about the concept of corruption, which encompasses not only monetary transactions but also implies that corruption is unacceptable under any circumstances. Thus, efforts to educate the public about the consequences of corruption should be a national objective. These proposals can be utilized by the government, stakeholders, schools, and interested non-profit organizations to educate the public or create anti-corruption awareness among the younger generation in Malaysia (Mengzhen *et al.*, 2021). Current global realities suggest that corruption is a widespread phenomenon regardless of the education, urban residency, and higher income levels of individuals, who tend to engage in corruption in various sectors. Measures and policies aimed at reducing corrupt behaviour should be designed in a way that considers the specific characteristics of these individuals (Mangafić & Veselinović, 2020).

In summary, corruption is a pervasive, unprecedented parasite that can debilitate and undermine every sector, including the education sector, in a nation. This parasite continues to impact school education development, particularly in poor nations, resulting in increased

student dropouts. Previous studies have revealed an inseparable connection between corruption and school dropouts caused by various factors. Increased dropout rates are attributed to the prevalence of corrupt practices in the education sector, particularly concerning the allocation of financial resources for basic facilities in rural schools, provision of student loans and scholarships, and adequate teacher training to cater to the student population. It has implications for how education stakeholders can reduce corruption, thereby minimizing student dropout rates to achieve academic excellence (Kromah & Srisuk, 2022).

Issue 4: Corruption in the Public Sector

In the era of globalization, various national policies and plans have been formulated and implemented to instil the concepts of trust and integrity in achieving a clean administration in the public sector, free from corruption. According to Aderonmu (2011), corruption has become one of the worst problems, hindering the socioeconomic and political progress of backward countries. This is synonymous with anti-corruption struggles that are not just limited to government agencies, facing many challenges like a lack of access to valid information, finances, sentiments, and corruption among themselves. In this context, for this anti-corruption campaign to succeed in this nation, every citizen must perceive corruption as a national problem to be faced before economic and social progress can reach full maturity.

Based on a study conducted by Daud (2019), the level of integrity among public service servants in Malaysia is still problematic. In 2014, Malaysia's score on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) decreased each year from a score of 52 to a score of 47 in 2018. Between 2005 and 2014, Malaysia lost RM 1.8 trillion through illegal financial flows, some of which stemmed from corrupt practices (Daud, 2019). Based on the corruption trend in Malaysia from 2013 to 2018, the public sector is seen as the riskiest sector practicing a culture of corruption. Therefore, as one way to curb this corrupt culture, a new model of individual integrity education based on the interpretation of Tasawuf Ishāri for public servants is essential (Hashim & Rasdi, 2021). This is because education in individual integrity will not be successful unless it is based on spiritual development sourced from the Quran, which has been proven to generate noble personalities. Spiritual development is at the core of Tasawuf knowledge. The importance of individual integrity education based on Tasawuf Ishari for public servants is to enhance the integrity of public servants to achieve the Shared Prosperity Vision (WBK) 2030. One of the driving factors of the Shared Prosperity Vision (WBK) is Governance and Integrity through transparency and accountability to increase the public's trust in the country's public servants (Hashim & Rasdi, 2021).

Furthermore, the issue of work ethics among public servants in Malaysia is of concern and can be observed through research findings by Daud et al (2019) regarding the impact of Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) on the intention to commit corruption among civil servants. The study had two objectives: firstly, to determine IWE as a moderating variable in the relationship between factors affecting the intention to commit corruption, and secondly, to identify the values within IWE that can weaken one's intention to commit corruption. The research findings have demonstrated that IWE is a moderating variable between Internal Factors and the Intention to Commit Corruption. The Regression Coefficient for Internal Factors IWE on the Intention to Commit Corruption is negative, indicating that the moderating variable (IWE) has a weakening effect on Internal Factors' influence on the Intention to Commit Corruption. The internal factors that influence the intention to commit corruption among public servants have been identified as a disregard for religious values and obligations,

self-importance, a desire for extravagant lifestyles beyond one's means, and greed (Daud, 2019). The internalization and practice of IWE will produce public servants who act based on the goal of achieving the satisfaction of Allah, adhere to all regulations and responsibilities, establish commitment and high work dedication, and believe that Allah always observes their actions.

According to a study by Azrae et al (2018) examining corruption involvement among government enforcement agencies, it is observed that arrests, detentions, and prosecutions for corruption offenses involving government enforcement agencies occurred almost every month from 2017 to June 2018, as reported in the local news. This demonstrates that many government enforcers in this country do not exhibit professionalism and integrity in carrying out their entrusted responsibilities. According to Ismail et al (2009), professionalism is one of the essential elements in ensuring the quality of public services, which is crucial in promoting effective public administration. Corruption is one consequence when professionalism is not practiced within the public service, where professionalism is a vital value and characteristic leading to effective administrative governance (Ismail et al., 2009).

This argument is supported by the findings of a study conducted by Wook et al (2022), which examines studies of integrity and corruption involving public service employees. This study identifies factors contributing to corrupt behaviour and provides suggestions for addressing these issues concerning administrative employees. The study found that the sectors with a high tendency for corruption are law enforcement and procurement sectors, which pose a serious problem in public administration. The existence of opportunities and leeway taken by public servants due to low work ethics within the organization and weaknesses in law enforcement and management opens the door to corrupt practices.

Undeniably, the government, private sector, and society all have their roles to play in combating corruption. Therefore, the interference of stakeholders with authority in the economy, weak legal sovereignty, inefficient government policies, and a lack of institutional accountability and transparency result in the proliferation of corrupt practices (Balwi *et al.*, 2012). The development of work ethics in the country has been ongoing since the 1980s to date, while examining micro-challenges that may arise in work ethics practice among public servants to practice the principle of neutrality and uphold public interest, which is the core principle of a professional public servant (Balwi *et al.*, 2012).

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, suitable for in-depth observations and analyses, particularly for the topic under investigation. This approach encompasses the collection of qualitative data, including observations and explanations (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). Qualitative data consists of descriptive information in the form of spoken or written words about human behaviour that can be observed (Creswell, 2014). This study primarily focuses on the results derived from secondary sources, such as scholarly journal articles, that have been identified for their relevance to the issue of corruption. To gather additional information, the researchers also consulted online sources, including non-profit organizations, official government websites, news reports, and various documents. These secondary sources provide supportive information to ensure that the study's findings are well-founded. The use of secondary sources contributes supplementary insights for a more precise and realistic comprehension of the issue, and these sources form the foundation on which the study builds its arguments (Babbie, 2017).

Discussion and Recommendations**Issue 1: Corruption in the Economy**

The issue of corruption and its impact on a country's economic decline and growth necessitates various proposals through policy reforms. Therefore, in this context, economic growth, trade openness, and corruption have a significant impact on a nation's economic growth (Yahaya, 2020). In general, financial liberalization can bring many benefits to a country, such as increased access to financial resources and enhanced economic competitiveness. However, it also comes with risks, such as rising interest rates and institutional weaknesses. To harness the advantages of financial liberalization, the government must implement policies that lead towards greater capital account openness, corruption eradication, and institutional improvement. This will help minimize risks and maximize the benefits of financial liberalization. The implementation of these policies can lead to improved economic growth in the country (Mohammad, 2020).

Additionally, the issue of unemployment can lead to political instability and affect economic growth. Therefore, it is crucial for the government to increase spending in the form of subsidies and low-interest loans to create more job opportunities and enhance the productivity of the population. This is essential because people can use these benefits to start small businesses, subsequently having their own sources of income, thus avoiding involvement in corruption. These proposals can help reduce unemployment and boost economic growth. The government should also strengthen cooperation with the private sector to create more job opportunities. Furthermore, the government should reinforce corruption oversight and prevention systems to ensure the effective and efficient use of public resources. This can lead to more sustainable economic growth (Dankumo *et al.*, 2019).

Money laundering and corruption are crimes that significantly impact the financial and economic sectors. The Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Terrorism Financing, and Proceeds of Unlawful Activities Act 2001 (AMLATFPUAA) and the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2009 (SPRM) are the primary legislations enacted to combat money laundering and corruption (Aurasu, 2018). In this context, improving existing laws is the best step for more effective prevention in the future. This includes incorporating anti-corruption and anti-money laundering enforcement plans, enhancing international enforcement, providing adequate training for law enforcement, and increasing penalties for wrongdoers. Such measures are crucial to combat corruption and money laundering practices (Aurasu, 2018).

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serve as a guide for countries to achieve balanced economic development (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2022). Authorities should tighten laws and regulations related to corruption and integrity and introduce stricter penalties for corrupt individuals. If laws and regulations related to corruption and integrity are stricter, it will reduce opportunities for individuals to engage in corrupt practices and make it easier for authorities to take action against corrupt individuals. Monitoring and supervision of law enforcement officers by authorities should also be adapted within an organization to ensure their integrity in anti-corruption measures (Zan *et al.*, 2021). This will help ensure that SDGs are achieved properly and build a safe and inclusive society for sustainable development (Ibrahim *et al.*, 2022).

In recent times, corruption practices in the construction industry have become increasingly prevalent. Consequently, authorities and the industry should collaborate to introduce stricter anti-corruption measures at every stage of the construction project lifecycle, from the initial phase to the final project closure. Moreover, authorities and the industry should introduce stricter corruption mitigation plans to reduce the risk of corruption

in the construction industry (Saim, 2021). Authorities and the industry can also jointly promote awareness and education about the adverse effects of corruption in the construction industry (Saim, 2021).

Furthermore, ensuring stability in the banking sector is crucial through the cooperation of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members. These entities should be prudent in demonstrating their roles in maintaining banking stability, which is often associated with corruption issues. Corruption control plays a vital role in strengthening banking stability. Authorities and banks should cooperate to introduce stricter anti-corruption measures to the public. Authorities should also ensure sufficient capital and introduce measures to reduce inflation and negative effects on the gross domestic product (GDP) on banking stability (Mohammad, 2020). This is particularly important because inflation is one of the issues that can burden society, especially when corruption issues persist in the local community.

Corruption in Malaysia is an issue that needs to be addressed in our society. The government should pay more attention to the educational aspect in fighting corruption, such as introducing holistic and well-planned educational programs teaching values of integrity, ethics, and discipline to the younger generation. This is crucial because corruption is a dangerous issue for future generations if it continues to exist in the coming era. Furthermore, law enforcement and corruption penalties should be tightened and implemented as soon as possible. This is important because if these recommendations are used in our diverse society, the government can ensure that corrupt individuals receive appropriate penalties for their offenses. Moreover, such actions can serve as a warning to others not to engage in corrupt activities in the future (Othman et al. 2022).

Issue 2: Corruption in Politics

Corruption in politics remains an enduring stigma that cannot be eliminated from the political arena, which has to some extent eroded the integrity of politics in our nation. Consequently, a reflective approach must be taken through various initiatives involving all layers of entities existing in our country. One of the key elements is changing the perspective of the public regarding political corruption. This is crucial because there still exist certain segments of society that trivialize this social problem, perceiving the actions taken to combat its expansion as an issue that should start by emphasizing the public's perspective on political corruption, categorizing it as a serious crime akin to other crimes such as murder or robbery. This situation will indirectly open the public's minds to the current political landscape, still clouded by the practice of corruption, and raise awareness among the public to take proactive steps in the anti-corruption movement. For example, during election time, the public should vote for politicians or political parties with high integrity in their leadership (Yusop, 2014).

Moreover, Malaysia is a country that is still in the process of becoming a developed nation, aligning itself with Western countries of today. This segment needs international investment to boost the country's economic sector, and one of the significant prerequisites that investors need is political stability (Sopi, 2022). However, this has not yet materialized in our country due to the ongoing local political situation that is plagued with corruption from various angles. Hence, practical steps like proposing snap elections can be an alternative to addressing this issue. This move would compel the representatives in a constituency to think twice before switching parties purely for materialistic gains, as they would risk losing their seats and the trust bestowed upon them by the public. Implementing this alternative aims to prevent the practice of politicians frequently jumping from one party to another, which can undermine public trust and the mandates given by the people (Sopi, 2022).

Furthermore, the culture of corruption is not foreign in our country, especially in the political arena, where terms like "bribery" and "money politics" erode the integrity of the political landscape, which is supposed to be an ethical bastion in the governance of our nation. Despite the country's ability to achieve progress in line with the ongoing globalization, political instability remains the underlying cause of the breakdown of the nation's governance institutions, which indirectly hinders the effectiveness of the state's governance. Therefore, reinforcing religious values in individuals involved in the political arena can be initiated as an effort to combat the scourge of corruption in this cynical arena. Within Islamic teachings, five concepts have been introduced for inculcating anti-corruption values, namely Mu'ahadah, Muraqabah, Muhasabah, Mu'aqabah, and Mujahada (Hashim & Rasdi, 2021). The application of these Islamic concepts within individuals can raise their awareness of the responsibilities incumbent upon them to serve with integrity in the interest of safeguarding and upholding the welfare of the people who have entrusted them to act with integrity (Ismail & Abu Bakar, 2004).

In the present day, politics has long been a stage that showcases the practice of corruption, committed by politicians or institutions in an arena where corruption has been a perpetual theme since before our country gained independence from foreign rule 66 years ago. This has laid the foundation for the establishment of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (SPRM), a government agency that operates independently, uncontrolled by external elements, and acts without questioning positions or status in the efforts to strengthen the government's campaign against the lingering corruption in the nation (SPRM, 2021). Hence, the SPRM has launched various strategies and initiatives, such as the implementation of the Organizational Anti-Corruption Plan (OACP), a policy document aiming to address issues and governance, integrity, and anti-corruption weaknesses within organizations (SPRM, 2021). The scope of implementing this anti-corruption plan should be expanded to the political arena by involving individuals and political parties. This expansion is essential in addressing the dearth of political integrity that has become the local political norm today (Rahman *et al.*, 2022).

Additionally, politics is often exploited as a game by political parasites to satiate their materialistic desires and overthrow their opponents. However, today's society is more sensitive to political issues, thanks to the globalization trends that facilitate the dissemination of information digitally to the public (Jalaluddin *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, the public plays a significant role in combating corruption in the political arena, primarily through their immense power in shaping the state's administrative structure to ensure comprehensive progress that starts from our society itself. The public should act wisely in electing representatives with high credibility and responsibility in performing their duties, which would, in turn, safeguard the public's interests and ensure that the people's voices are heard at a higher level. When the public makes the right choices, it will indirectly lead to a shift in the political landscape towards a more people-centric direction, rather than being a plaything of the elite (Jalaluddin *et al.*, 2011).

We can observe that misappropriation of funds is one form of corruption frequently perpetrated by individuals or political entities for conducting activities beneath the legal radar, sometimes only revealed when such embezzlement has been prolonged on a large scale (Julkifli *et al.*, 2022). Law enforcement should be intensified by reviewing and updating existing constitutional acts to make them more explicit in their implementation concerning corruption issues, especially in political matters (SPRM, 2021). Empowering the legal

framework is crucial to combat the corruption that plagues state affairs, including the political arena.

It cannot be denied that corruption is deeply rooted in human beings, driven by individualistic behaviours in pursuit of worldly gains that nurture negative morals and ethics. This situation aligns with the current political atmosphere, which is characterized as Janus-like, where politicians primarily manipulate social elements for the pursuit of power, encompassing high-profile status and positions (Sanusi, 2017). Consequently, the strengthening of the legal system must be conducted with specific rationale towards the genuine political ideology for developing an environment that upholds social justice for all sectors of society and not solely in the name of constitutional principles. Robust and rational enforcement of laws in line with the acts specifically addressing political corruption is a fundamental need to combat this issue (Sanusi, 2017).

Furthermore, the question of the prevalence of corruption in the country's politics continues to be a subject of public perception, especially among the increasingly proactive and aware youth demographic. This heightened awareness is facilitated using information and communication technology media. The role played by the youth in opposing the phenomenon of political corruption is significant, given their involvement synonymous with information and communication technology media, such as social media and online entertainment applications. These platforms serve as tools for spreading awareness about corruption cases involving politicians, fostering consciousness about the issue. It is evident that the mediums born out of the global development trends by the youth can be a key factor in inhibiting the issue of corruption prevalent in the political arena of the country (Besar *et al.*, 2012).

Therefore, the anti-corruption movement in the country, especially in the political arena, is far from reaching a resolution as long as a considerable number of political cronies remain indifferent to the issue of corruption. Their nonchalant attitude perpetuates negative externalities affecting various aspects of life, with an expectation that others will take action to address it. Hence, the existence of civil discontent regarding the current political situation, characterized by high corruption rates, could potentially serve as a remedy and platform for eradicating this phenomenon from our nation (Zain & Yusoff, 2019). Civil actions, such as peaceful demonstrations, aim to protest laws and government policies conflicting with the aspirations of the people and can indirectly be applied to address issues of corruption in the political arena. In conclusion, this civil discontent contributes to a more just and mature governance approach to curb the spread of the corruption epidemic among politicians (Zain & Yusoff, 2019).

In conclusion, the political world can be identified as an administrative landscape often manipulated by high-profile individuals with hedonistic tendencies, fostering individualism that adversely impacts society. The public should not underestimate this issue and has a responsibility to raise awareness about the rampant corruption in politics. The youth can engage in anti-corruption workshops through youth organizations and outreach programs where the main elements focus on Zero Corruption and Integrity Enhancement (Besar *et al.*, 2012). The impact of these efforts will cultivate awareness among the populace, empowering them to influence the political landscape towards a more just and corruption-free social change, reshaping the true roles of the government and representatives in society (Besar *et al.*, 2012).

Issue 3: Corruption in Education

To effectively combat corruption in education, it is recommended to implement an integrity-based education approach rooted in Sufism (Hashim & Rasdi, 2021). This approach involves several aspects, including raising awareness of the importance of integrity, incorporating Sufi integrity values into the curriculum, providing training for educators, establishing integrity monitoring bodies, promoting cooperation between educational institutions and the government, and conducting further research in this field (Hashim & Rasdi, 2021). By implementing these suggestions, it is hoped that Malaysia's goal of being renowned for its integrity can be achieved through the successful implementation of Sufi-based integrity education.

Proposals to address corruption and integrity issues in academic settings also include increasing awareness, enforcing strict discipline, enhancing cooperation between educational institutions, and stricter enforcement of the law against academic wrongdoers. Proposed improvements include introducing an academic integrity approach from an early stage, involving educators in monitoring, and detecting student fraud, developing an efficient plagiarism detection system, and strengthening the relationship between educational institutions and industry to ensure that academic integrity values are assimilated into society (Mustapa, 2020). Furthermore, continuous monitoring and improvement in the education system are necessary to prevent collusion and deviations that can harm academic integrity and students and educational institutions (Yusoff, 2019). Fostering mindsets and emotions to eradicate corruption, integrity training, and awareness initiatives related to corruption in the curriculum and preaching content must be incorporated into educational institutions to inculcate a strong aversion to the culture of corruption in students (Rahman *et al.*, 2023).

Furthermore, focusing on moral education and employing domain techniques is one way to address corrupt practices in education (Vengadasalam, Kutty & Sudramanian, 2019). This can enhance students' understanding of the difference between justice and good ethics. When it comes to connecting moral themes with students' thinking and understanding, moral education must be creative. The domain approach can also help in addressing corruption in education, such as conflicts in the education system and discrimination in career choices. Therefore, the creation of a moral education approach that emphasizes domain approach is crucial. Quality moral education can help address educational misappropriation and shape a more moral society with a fair mindset (Vengadasalam *et al.*, 2019).

It is essential to highlight the importance of moral and work ethics in educational institutions, and the ISES approach, which stands for Integrity, Synergy, Excellence, Sustainability, is emphasized as an effective method to cultivate exceptional human capital, particularly concerning integrity, in Malaysian society (Ishar *et al.*, 2021). The participation of a young generation, which may not have strong moral values, can have a detrimental impact on society. Educators must adhere to high standards of integrity and governance, and Islam encourages values such as honesty and compassion. It is important to include moral and work ethics education, as well as religious values, in the curriculum. Prioritizing integrity values will produce a community that values integrity, justice, and sustainable development can be achieved (Ishar *et al.*, 2021).

Corruption is considered a lifestyle that has been inherited and has become an economic norm in most countries. Appropriate preventive measures are necessary to address this issue. Society must have a greater understanding of the dangers and negative effects of corruption. Moreover, strong, and stringent preventive measures are required in sectors vulnerable to corruption, along with close cooperation between the government, private

sector, and the public. Combating corruption and creating a clean, fair, and dignified environment can be achieved through a comprehensive approach involving education, prevention, and collective collaboration (Mangafić & Veselinović, 2020).

Issue 4: Corruption in the Public Sector

While the public sector involving civil servants plays a significant role and contributes greatly to the execution of state administrative duties, there are challenges that need to be addressed. In the context of civil servants, the principle of impartiality becomes a crucial value in making decisions that do not favor political or economic interests. However, the implementation of this principle is a major challenge for civil servants in this country, where the relationship between civil servants and politicians is often too close. In Malaysia, local government administration is often influenced by ruling party members, leading to corrupt practices in the execution of certain tasks. Ethical principles in the consideration and decision-making by civil servants are crucial, and leaders in every organization should play a role in instilling positive and ethical values among their staff (Balwi *et al.*, 2012). A healthy organizational culture can strengthen integrity and work ethics and ensure that unethical conduct can be addressed through efficiency and management skills.

Furthermore, when discussing the Priority of Human Values Ethics (EKI), it can shape the spiritual values within civil servants, promoting dedication, perseverance, and accountability (Daud *et al.*, 2019). EKI teaches individuals to work diligently and with integrity, surpassing unlimited desires and avoiding corrupt practices. The belief that every action is observed by God encourages civil servants not to engage in corruption (Daud *et al.*, 2019). However, EKI needs to be supported by external factors such as law enforcement, politics, leadership, economic development, social, education, and society to prevent negative influences that affect the intent to commit corruption. This comprehensive approach aligns with Islam's demands as a religion that encompasses spiritual and physical values in every aspect of life, including the prevention of corruption (Daud *et al.*, 2019).

Moreover, there is research showing a high level of agreement on eight Islamic Work Ethics values, including taqwa, ihsan, amal saleh, al-Birr, al-Qist, mas'uliyah, ma'ruf, and itqan (Daud *et al.*, 2019). These values are closely related to the spiritual dimension, belief in Allah, and the morality of a Muslim. For example, civil servants serving in enforcement and application tasks often face opportunities to engage in corruption. By internalizing and consistently applying these Islamic Work Ethics values, they are encouraged to become committed, honest, and dedicated workers (Daud, 2019). Awareness and the belief that Allah always sees and knows all their actions create a fear of committing crimes such as corruption. Civil servants who understand and internalize Islamic Work Ethics will work diligently because they see their work as a religious duty and trust that must be fulfilled as an act of worship. Islamic Work Ethics, when understood, internalized, and fully implemented, can inhibit a person's intent to commit corruption. The effectiveness of Islamic Work Ethics depends on the individual's internal strength to apply it in every task they perform (Daud, 2019).

In the effort to achieve progress and prosperity in a country, it is essential for every government worldwide to realize effective governance in both the public and private sectors. Various aspects need to be considered, including political stability, economic development, educational progress, and the effectiveness of the public system. To achieve world-class public services, continuous steps toward developing efficient personnel are essential. Quality personnel are individuals who are qualified with a high level of professionalism. The government has made efforts in this regard by formulating value and ethics policies in the

civil service. Policies related to values and the culture of professionalism in the public service in this country have been advocated since the 1980s to follow developments at that time, including issues of globalization involving international competition in various fields, including economics and services (Ismail et al., 2009). Some of the related policies include the Implementation of Islamic Values in Administration Policy, Orientation Policy, Clean, Efficient, and Trustworthy Policy, Leadership through Example Policy, and Unity Policy (Ismail et al., 2009). The Implementation of Islamic Values in Administration Policy, introduced in 1985, emphasizes the implementation of values in the public administrative sector. Eleven core values were selected as the core of the implementation of this policy, believed to be acceptable to all regardless of religious background and beliefs. These values include trust, responsibility, sincerity, dedication, modesty, diligence, purity, discipline, cooperation, noble character, and gratitude (Ismail et al., 2009). All of these values are expected to serve as the foundation for building a respected, dignified, and united community identity in the spirit of national unity.

Efforts to combat corruption are an essential aspect of public administration. To address this issue, a comprehensive strategy involving individual civil servants, related organizations, laws and enforcement, and the entire community needs to be implemented (Wook et al., 2022). It is essential for all public service organizations, including their units, to create a high ethical and integrity climate. Transparency and accountability in administration must be maintained and follow the national integrity agenda introduced by the government (Wook et al., 2022). This process involves fostering integrity in every individual, organization, institution, and sector through a holistic approach. Strengthening the public bureaucracy system by appropriate information technology is also encouraged. Effective steps to detect and prevent corruption must be known and identified. Operational audits, audit committee improvements, internal control improvements, and fraud reporting policy implementation have proven effective in preventing fraud and corruption in the public sector (Wook et al., 2022). Studies show that internal audits play a vital role in improving integrity and accountability in public administration in Malaysia (Wook et al., 2022).

Corruption damages the credibility and trust of the public in civil servants. To address this issue, the introduction of methods focusing on the prevention, investigation, and penalties for corruption is a crucial step. For example, civil servants must be educated and trained in proper work ethics. This will help them understand the adverse effects of corruption and the importance of conducting their affairs ethically. Additionally, the public administration system must be transparent. This means that performance evaluations, selection processes, and rewards must be fair for responsible civil servants (Balwi *et al.*, 2012). Furthermore, increasing transparency and accountability in financial affairs and asset management is essential to ensure that civil servants are better monitored. Through this clear and firm direction, civil servants can be encouraged to maintain their integrity and work responsibly for the benefit of society.

There are several recommendations that can be considered in addressing this issue. Firstly, institutions and regulatory bodies responsible for addressing corruption cases need to be strengthened. Adequate resources and authority need to be given to these bodies to investigate, prosecute, and judge those involved in corruption. Furthermore, effective systems for monitoring and reporting civil servant misconduct should be implemented. To identify any flaws in this system, technology such as electronic reporting, secure complaint channels, and scheduled audits can be utilized (Azrae et al., 2018). Moreover, through continuous training programs and awareness campaigns, civil servants will be encouraged to

be honest and fair. Civil servants will also be more inclined to carry out their duties with integrity and honesty if they enhance their understanding of the impact of corruption and encourage responsible behavior.

Conclusion

Four principal findings ensue from the scrutiny of these issues. First and foremost, the issue of corruption within the country's economic framework necessitates stringent control measures, as it profoundly influences the stability of the national economic sector, encompassing the Gross Domestic Product and domestic capital flow. Second, the issue of corruption in politics harbours the potential to jeopardize national security by inciting public movements to protest this issue, ultimately destabilizing the government's authority. The research findings concerning corruption within the education sector reveal its role as a catalyst in giving rise to a society characterized by antagonism and self-centeredness. Consequently, moral education is identified as a key instrument in combating this issue. Lastly, the research findings pertaining to corruption in the public sector underscore that corrupt practices undermine public trust in organizations operating under the aegis of the public governance system. These organizations can only function effectively when governed with ethics and integrity.

Issue 1: Corruption in the Economy

Major Findings:

1. **Corruption as a Clandestine Adversary:** Corruption in the economic sphere is acknowledged as a clandestine adversary, capable of undermining the integrity of the economic system and eroding public trust in economic institutions.
2. **Detrimental Impact on Business Environment:** Corruption exerts a detrimental influence on the business environment by hindering fair competition and fostering an inequitable setting, emphasizing the urgency for resolute measures.
3. **Impediment to Economic Development:** Corruption hampers economic development by engendering wasteful resource allocation, leading to negative consequences and exacerbating difficulties for the populace over the long term.
4. **Role of Individuals in Combating Corruption:** Individuals play a crucial role in combating corruption by upholding integrity, abstaining from corrupt activities, and actively reporting instances of corruption to relevant authorities.
5. **Importance of Awareness and Ethical Values:** Fortification of awareness and ethical values within society is highlighted as an avenue to counter corruption, fostering a more integrity-oriented and well-informed society.

Suggestions:

1. **Stringent Anti-Corruption Measures:** Authorities should formulate and enforce stringent anti-corruption legislation, enhancing law enforcement and oversight to safeguard the stability and equitability of the economic system.
2. **Programs for Raising Awareness:** Implementation of programs aimed at raising awareness about the detrimental ramifications of corruption in the economic realm is essential to inform and educate the public.
3. **Efficient Reporting Mechanisms:** Encourage and establish efficient reporting mechanisms for individuals to report corrupt activities, ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable with commensurate penalties.

4. **Ethical Education and Values:** Promote the fortification of ethical values and awareness within society through educational programs, fostering a deeper understanding of the adverse effects of corruption on individuals, families, communities, and the nation.
5. **Collective Stakeholder Action:** Emphasize that combating corruption within the economy is a collective enterprise requiring action from all stakeholders, not solely those in leadership positions, to achieve superior economic development and societal benefits.

Theoretical and contextual contributions of this research lie in recognizing corruption as a covert adversary within the economic sphere. This acknowledgment stems from its potential to undermine the integrity of the economic system, eroding public trust in economic institutions, and creating an environment that hinders fair competition while fostering inequality (Zaini & Kadam-Kiai, 2021). To address this, authorities are urged to implement resolute measures such as stringent anti-corruption legislation, reinforced law enforcement, oversight enhancement, and awareness programs to mitigate the detrimental impact of corruption on the economic realm (Othman et al., 2022). These actions, collectively, contribute to sustaining stability and equity in the national economic system.

Furthermore, the research emphasizes the role of corruption as a hindrance to economic development, primarily due to the wasteful allocation of national resources (Aurasu, 2018). Consequently, the eradication of corruption becomes crucial for ensuring the efficient utilization of resources and preventing negative economic development that exacerbates difficulties for the populace (Akmal, 2019). Successful control of corruption is posited to result in more robust economic development, offering numerous benefits to society at large.

The research also underscores the importance of individual responsibility in the fight against corruption. Individuals are called upon to uphold a high standard of integrity, refrain from engaging in corrupt activities, and actively report corruption to relevant authorities. This collective effort, when coupled with the fortification of awareness and ethical values within society, aims to counter corruption in the economy directly and indirectly. Ultimately, fostering an integrity-oriented and well-informed society is envisioned to deepen understanding regarding the adverse effects of corruption on individuals, families, communities, and the nation.

In summary, the collective endeavor to combat corruption within the economy necessitates actions from all stakeholders, extending beyond leadership roles. Authorities must implement robust measures, and individuals must fulfil their roles by upholding integrity and reporting corruption. These efforts are anticipated to yield superior economic development and confer benefits upon society as a whole.

Issue 2: Corruption in Politics

Major Findings:

1. **Political Corruption as a Persistent Menace:** Corruption in the political governance system is characterized as a persistent and multifaceted menace, likened to a pernicious virus.
2. **Transition of Political Landscape:** The local political landscape has shifted from a formally integral entity shaping governance to an arena manipulated by political entities seeking rewards for the common good.

3. **Factors Fueling Political Corruption:** Political corruption is fuelled by activities involving roles in public institutions, giving or receiving donations, proffering or accepting incentives, and reciprocation, all aligning with foundational elements.
4. **Inadequacy of Political Policies and Leadership:** The primary factor underlying the pervasiveness of political corruption is identified as the inadequacy of political policies and a lack of consistent leadership in anti-corruption endeavors.
5. **Deficiency in Leadership Attributes:** Present-day leaders often lack credibility and strong leadership attributes, resorting to rhetoric and argumentation without effective strategies for addressing corruption.
6. **Proliferation of Corruption:** The absence of effective leadership has led to the proliferation of corruption, with the role of the law reduced to a mere legislative formality lacking enforcement and guidance.
7. **Societal Unrest and Deep-Rooted Corruption:** Public movements challenging the governing party's capacity to govern have resulted in societal unrest, and corruption remains deeply ingrained within societal norms.

Suggestions

1. **Enhance Political Policies:** Develop and implement more effective political policies to address the inadequacies contributing to the prevalence of political corruption.
2. **Leadership Training and Development:** Provide leadership training and development programs to enhance credibility and instill strong leadership attributes among present-day leaders.
3. **Effective Law Enforcement:** Strengthen law enforcement mechanisms to ensure the enforcement of anti-corruption measures, making them more than a legislative formality.
4. **Public Awareness and Education:** Conduct public awareness campaigns and educational programs to inform the populace about the adverse effects of corruption, fostering a collective understanding of its consequences.
5. **Reinforce Religious Values:** Emphasize the reinforcement of religious values within individuals to counteract political corruption, addressing the root cause of corruption originating from a covetous desire for personal gain.
6. **Support Anti-Corruption Initiatives:** Continue supporting and strengthening anti-corruption initiatives, such as the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (SPRM) and its Organizational Anti-Corruption Plan (OACP).
7. **Collective Stakeholder Participation:** Encourage the collective participation of all stakeholders, including government, civil society, and individuals, in the fight against corruption, fostering a society built upon integrity and transparency.

In a broader sense, corruption is portrayed as a persistent and multifaceted menace, akin to a pernicious virus that infiltrates the political governance system. The local political landscape, once a formally integral entity shaping the highest echelon of governance within a nation, has evolved into an arena frequently manipulated by political entities-whether individuals or organizations-seeking rewards of questionable value for the common good (Zain & Yusoff, 2019). The factors driving political corruption are evident through the activities of political actors, often involving four fundamental elements: (i) their roles or positions within public institutions, (ii) the giving or receiving of donations, (iii) the proffering or acceptance of incentives, and the reciprocation thereof regarding donations. Each of these

activities may lead to corruption if aligned with these foundational elements as the basis for their execution (Yusop, 2014).

The conclusion drawn from the discussion surrounding corruption in the political arena posits that the primary factor contributing to its pervasiveness is the inadequacy of political policies and a lack of consistent leadership in anti-corruption endeavors, serving as the root cause of political corruption (Sanusi, 2017). This deficiency is principally attributed to the absence of effective leadership across numerous organizations, resulting in a chaotic and deleterious management paradigm (Rahman *et al.*, 2022). Many present-day leaders lack credibility and strong leadership attributes, often resorting to mere rhetoric, conjecture, and argumentation without pertinent statistical data or optimal methods for effectively addressing the issue of corruption. The leadership void at the helm of the nation has led to the proliferation of corruption, as the role of the law has devolved into a mere legislative formality, devoid of enforcement and guidance from the nation's leadership.

The accountability of national leadership in curbing the spread of political corruption has prompted public movements challenging the governing party's capacity to govern the nation, with societal unrest being a primary consequence (Zain & Yusoff, 2019). The prevalence of corruption remains deeply ingrained within our societal norms.

In conclusion, concerted efforts to combat corruption can serve as the foundation and remedy for this issue. Consequently, the establishment of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (SPRM), a distinctive and autonomous governmental anti-corruption agency tasked with handling corruption-related cases and a pivotal actor in Malaysia's anti-corruption initiatives, is a crucial step forward. The SPRM has initiated various efforts to thwart the proliferation of corruption, including the implementation of the Organizational Anti-Corruption Plan (OACP), a policy document designed to address issues of governance, integrity, and anti-corruption within organizations (SPRM, 2021). Additionally, the reinforcement of religious values within individuals can counteract political corruption, believed to originate from a covetous desire for personal gain. Through the collective participation of all stakeholders, the incidence of corruption can be mitigated, thus paving the way for a society built upon integrity and transparency.

Issue 3: Corruption in Education

Major Findings

1. **Endemic Nature of Corruption in Education:** Corruption is identified as an endemic and tenacious practice within educational institutions, posing significant risks such as abuse of power, embezzlement, dishonesty, and moral decay.
2. **Impact on Human Capital Growth:** The persistent allure of corruption hampers the growth of productive human capital, becoming deeply ingrained within society and leading students to compromise on values, potentially causing integrity issues in their future careers.
3. **Role of Integrity and Anti-Corruption in Humanizing Education:** The cultivation of integrity and anti-corruption measures is deemed essential in humanizing education, at both school and higher education levels, to mitigate the disruptive effects of corruption.
4. **Ethical Academic Culture as a Deterrent:** Institutions fostering an ethical academic culture characterized by trust, competence, fairness, and friendliness, while

maintaining high-quality standards, can effectively prevent corruption from permeating their establishments.

5. **Broader Scope of Integrity in Education:** Practicing integrity in education extends beyond combating corruption, encompassing a broader work culture marked by punctuality, effective communication, service delivery, and positive relationships.

Suggestions

1. **Integrate Integrity Education:** Implement comprehensive integrity education programs at all levels of education, emphasizing moral and ethical principles to instill a strong sense of discipline and ethical values in students.
2. **Strengthen Ethical Academic Culture:** Encourage institutions to strengthen ethical academic cultures characterized by trust, competence, fairness, and friendliness, ensuring that these values are consistently upheld in pursuit of educational missions.
3. **Promote Core Values:** Emphasize the importance of upholding core values and complying with established laws and regulations in educational settings, fostering harmony and justice within society.
4. **Community Involvement:** Engage the broader community, including parents and authorities, in the responsibility to combat corruption in education, promoting awareness and collective efforts to enforce fair and strict penalties for those involved.
5. **Implement Strict Penalties:** Implement strict penalties for individuals involved in corrupt practices within educational institutions, sending a clear message that corruption will not be tolerated.
6. **Raise Awareness of Ethics and Integrity:** Increase awareness of the importance of ethics and integrity to prevent the adverse effects of corruption, safeguarding the reputation of educational institutions and positively impacting the entire nation.
7. **Create a Culture of Honesty:** Foster a culture of honesty within the younger generation through education, ultimately leading to a brighter future with a more reliable and higher-quality education system free from the practice of corruption.

Corruption persists as an endemic and formidable challenge, presenting a seemingly insurmountable obstacle to eradication. This unethical practice disrupts the operations of educational institutions and poses significant risks, including the abuse of power, embezzlement, dishonesty, and moral decay. Furthermore, the entrenched allure of corruption impedes the development of productive human capital, with its pervasive influence on societal norms. Students, in some instances, may compromise values and norms to meet their needs, potentially leading to integrity issues even in their future careers (Yusoff, 2019).

Therefore, the promotion of integrity and anti-corruption measures must be integral components in humanizing education at both the school and higher education levels (Mustapa, 2020). Institutions fostering an ethical academic culture characterized by trust, competence, fairness, and friendliness, while maintaining the highest quality standards in pursuit of their missions, can effectively ward off corruption.

In the educational context, practicing integrity requires individuals to uphold truth, justice, and adherence to moral and ethical principles. Beyond the fight against corruption, integrity encompasses a broader work culture marked by punctuality, effective communication, service delivery, and the cultivation of positive relationships with superiors, colleagues, the community, and support staff (Ishar *et al.*, 2021). Through the development

of a strong sense of self-discipline, ethics, and integrity, the responsibility to uphold core values and comply with established laws and regulations, ensuring societal harmony and justice, can be fulfilled.

In conclusion, the responsibility to combat corruption in education extends beyond students and educational staff to encompass the broader community, including parents and authorities. Raising awareness of the significance of ethics and integrity is crucial, given that the adverse effects of corruption can tarnish the reputation of educational institutions and impact the entire nation. While combating corruption in education may seem daunting, it can be achieved through the implementation of appropriate measures and the collective efforts of relevant stakeholders to enforce fair and strict penalties for those involved. This collective action will cultivate a culture of honesty and instil pure values of integrity in the younger generation, ultimately paving the way to a brighter future for generations to come. Overall, the education system will become more reliable and of higher quality with the elimination of corrupt practices.

Issue 4: Corruption in the Public Sector

Major Findings:

1. **Significant Issue of Corruption in the Public Sector:** The paper emphasizes that corruption in the public sector, particularly involving civil servants, is a significant and pressing issue.
2. **Nature of Corruption in Public Sector:** Corruption in the public sector is defined as the abuse of power and acceptance of illegitimate gifts by individuals in public offices, contributing to a detrimental impact on public trust, integrity, and the delivery of just and high-quality public services.
3. **Internal Factors Contributing to Corruption:** Various internal factors contribute to corruption among civil servants, including the disregard for religious values, self-centred attitudes, extravagant lifestyles, greed, low salaries, inadequate supervision, ineffective management systems, and a prevailing culture of corruption within organizations.
4. **Recommended Actions to Address Corruption:** To salvage the reputation of civil servants, recommended actions include enhancing monitoring and auditing, reinforcing integrity and ethics, and strengthening management systems and enforcement.
5. **Deterrence through Strict Legal Actions:** Imposing strict legal actions against high-ranking government officials is suggested as a deterrent to prevent the public from offering bribes.
6. **Global Disparities in Corruption:** Advanced countries experience less corruption, potentially attributed to higher salaries offered compared to developing countries where corruption levels are higher due to inadequate wages.

Suggestions

1. **Enhance Monitoring and Auditing:** Strengthen monitoring and auditing mechanisms to detect and prevent corrupt practices within the public sector, ensuring transparency and accountability.
2. **Reinforce Integrity and Ethics Training:** Implement comprehensive integrity and ethics training programs for civil servants to foster a culture of integrity and ethical conduct within public offices.

3. **Strengthen Management Systems:** Improve management systems within public organizations to enhance efficiency and reduce opportunities for corruption, emphasizing accountability and responsibility.
4. **Enforce Strict Legal Actions:** Implement and enforce strict legal actions against high-ranking government officials involved in corrupt practices, sending a clear message about the consequences of corruption.
5. **Address Contributing Factors:** Tackle contributing factors such as low salaries, inadequate supervision, and ineffective management systems by conducting thorough reviews and implementing necessary reforms.
6. **Global Best Practices:** Study and adopt best practices from advanced countries in combating corruption, especially focusing on measures that have proven effective in reducing corruption levels.
7. **Promote a Culture of Integrity:** Foster a culture of integrity, responsibility, and accountability within public governance, encouraging civil servants to adhere to ethical standards and values.
8. **International Collaboration:** Collaborate with international organizations and adopt strategies that have been successful in other countries to combat corruption, leveraging global expertise and experiences.

The focal point of this paper's discussion emphasizes that corruption within the public sector, involving civil servants, constitutes a significant and urgent concern. Corruption in the public sector is defined as the misuse of power and acceptance of illegitimate gifts by individuals holding public offices (Azrae et al., 2018). The adverse impact of corruption on public trust in authorities and institutions has compromised integrity and moral standards within the public sector, ultimately undermining the delivery of fair and high-quality public services (Balwi *et al.*, 2012).

Various internal factors contributing to corruption among civil servants include the neglect of religious values, self-centered attitudes, extravagant lifestyles, and greed (Daud, 2019). Additionally, low salaries, inadequate supervision, ineffective management systems, and a culture of corruption within organizations significantly contribute to this issue (Daud, 2019). To restore the reputation of civil servants in the public sector, actions can be taken to address corruption, such as improving monitoring and auditing, reinforcing integrity and ethics, and strengthening management systems and enforcement among civil servants. As suggested by Wook et al (2022), imposing strict legal actions against high-ranking government officials can deter the public from offering bribes. More developed countries tend to experience lower levels of corruption, possibly attributed to higher salaries compared to developing countries, where inadequate wages contribute to higher corruption levels.

In conclusion, this paper asserts that corruption among civil servants in the public sector is a grave issue requiring concerted attention. The outlined actions in this paper offer hope for combating corruption while fostering a clean, integrity-driven, and responsible public governance system.

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