

Integrity Club in Schools: A Best Practice to Foster Values Beyond the Curriculum

Abstract

This study delves into the values of youth, highlighting its importance in influencing ethical behaviors and principles. It emphasizes the importance of public education in spreading these fundamental ideals, especially in the Bhutanese setting. The Anti-Corruption Commission and the Ministry of Education and Skill Development (MoESD) started school integrity clubs to promote ethical behaviors, knowledge-sharing, and participation in fighting corruption. The study utilizes YIA 2022 data, including 130 Integrity Club (IC) members and 179 non-IC members. The study aims to evaluate the impact of IC on the values of youth. Welch's t-test was utilized to compare the values of IC members with non-IC members due to the deviation from normality and unequal variances. The results show that Integrity Clubs have a positive impact on individual integrity levels, highlighting the significance of implementing integrity clubs in schools/institutes. Furthermore, the correlation between the variables shows a positive relationship. This study suggests that agencies should proceed with this initiative.

Keywords: *Integrity, ethics, education, youth, Integrity Clubs, values, corruption, ethical behavior.*

1. Introduction

Integrity refers to “Behaviors and actions consistent with a set of moral or ethical principles and standards that is embraced by individuals as well as institutions which creates a barrier to corruption” (TI, 2009). Integrity is the quality of consistently acting in accordance with the moral values, societal norms, and accepted rules within a given community or society. It reflects a commitment to upholding these ethical principles even in challenging situations, demonstrating unwavering honesty, transparency, and accountability in one's actions and decisions (Nafi & Kamaluddin, 2018).

Promoting these core values within society is greatly facilitated through public education. Education serves as a powerful and far-reaching tool that enables the dissemination of the values

to a wider audience. It not only imparts knowledge but also instills moral and ethical principles, fostering a culture where individuals are not only informed but also committed to upholding the values. When integrity education is executed effectively, it has the potential to empower young individuals to nurture lifelong values of integrity (Munro & Kirya, 2020).

In pursuit of providing a comprehensive understanding of integrity, the ACC has introduced the "Youth Integrity Program," which spans across educational levels, from pre-primary to tertiary education. Among the various initiatives under this program, the establishment of school integrity clubs stands out as a significant step. These clubs serve as platforms for translating moral values into practical actions through diverse means. The Integrity Club is a volunteer club that convenes regularly to enhance individual or group performance and conduct concerning patriotism, integrity, and service excellence, in collaboration with authorities and leadership (Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission [EACC], n.d.).

The Integrity Club is a student association in 21 schools across 20 districts, promoting integrity and good governance. They foster ethical values among students, establish knowledge networks, and involve young individuals in the fight against corruption. The clubs engage in diverse activities, debates, and discussions to instill core values. This article aims to evaluate the efficacy of imparting values to youth through integrity clubs implemented in schools. The Integrity Club is making a significant influence, particularly on its members.

2. Background

In Bhutan, the youth demographic, aged 15 to 24, makes up 19.76% of the population, as emphasized in a study by Gyeltshen and Namgay (2022) and data from the National Statistics Bureau (NSB) in 2018. Youth play a significant role in determining national objectives and policymaking. Moreover, they are acknowledged as crucial allies in combating corruption and are being developed into advocates and supporters of integrity.

Integrity Clubs in schools organize monthly events to involve a wider audience. The events are designed to promote students' focus on integrity and ethics in their everyday activities. They involve various activities, including awareness campaigns, engaging skits, storytelling, and career talks (Jamtsho & Wangchug, 2024).

Creating Integrity Clubs in schools is a notable effort in the Youth Integrity Program (YIP), a joint project between the Ministry of Education and Skills Development (MoESD). The School Integrity Club began by selecting four schools using a School Performance Management System (SPMS) evaluation created by MoESD. This system thoroughly evaluates academics, leadership & management, school atmosphere, and other educational activities.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) assigned the MoESD the task of choosing the best four schools from different districts to establish the Integrity Club, based on their experience in

performing SPMS evaluations. The Integrity Club concept was launched in 2017 with the participation of four chosen schools. The number of Integrity Clubs has increased over time. There are 20 clubs in each district, and one school has voluntarily joined, for a total of 21 Integrity Clubs (Jamtsho & Wangchug, 2024).

3. Significance of the Study

Youth plays a crucial role in national objectives and policymaking. The government plans to develop youth into advocates of integrity (Gyeltshen & Namgay, 2022). One activity initiated towards this cause is the Integrity Clubs in schools. It promotes students' focus on ethics through various programs and activities. Significant resources are allocated to this initiative. However, the effectiveness of this initiative is least studied. Therefore, this article will help decision-makers make informed and evidence-based decisions before replicating to other schools or institutes. Moreover, the Integrity Club is an extracurricular activity offered by the school or institute. The efficacy of the integrity club will assist in disseminating excellent practices to other schools to cultivate values in young people.

4. Methodology

The present study uses data from the Youth Integrity Assessment (YIA) 2022 conducted by the Anti-Corruption Commission of Bhutan (Gyeltshen & Namgay, 2022). This paper aims to confirm the results of the YIA 2022 study, which showed that members of the Integrity Club (IC) scored higher in awareness and values compared to non-IC members. A t-test is utilized to ascertain the differences.

4.1. Sampling Strategies

The YIA 2022 covers 3558 youth (15-24 years) of which 130 were members of the integrity club. From the same schools, 179 were the students who were not members of the integrity club. The analysis was made using the responses of randomly selected 309 respondents on the values of the Integrity Club (IC) members and non-IC members.

4.2. Hypotheses

Table 1 outlines eight research questions and null hypotheses designed to evaluate the values of Bhutanese youth. YIA 2022 used seven items to determine the values of youth but this paper used eight survey items to make it more reliable.

Table 1: Hypotheses

Survey Item	Hypothesis
C1	H ₁ : There is no difference in behavior between the youth of IC members and non-IC members when they are watched over by parents/teachers/lecturers

	compared to when they are not being watched.
C2	H₂ : There is no difference in the likelihood of lying to parents/teachers/lecturers to get out of a difficult situation between IC members and non-IC members.
C4	H₃ : There is no difference in the level of care given to school/institute/agency property compared to home property by the IC members and non-IC members.
C5	H₄ : There is no difference in the willingness to cheat or lie among the IC members and non-IC members.
C7	H₅ : There is no difference in the likelihood of individuals trying to break queues to avail services faster by the IC members and non-IC members.
C8	H₆ : There is no difference in the willingness to resort to unethical means for admission among the IC members and non-IC members.
C21	H₇ : There is no difference in taking responsibility during SUPW periods between the IC members and non-IC members.
C25	H₈ : There is no difference in the importance of being rich and the acceptability of lying or cheating among the IC members and non-IC members.

4.3.Data Analysis

The data has been tested for the Skewness and Kurtosis normality test. Similarly, Leven's test has been conducted to see the equality of variance or the homogeneity of variances. If the data is normally distributed and there is equality of variance, t-tested will be deployed. Since, the data indicates the deviation from the normality and unequal variances, Welch's t-test has been conducted for IC members and non-IC members using the following formula.

$$t = \frac{\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2}{S_p \sqrt{\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2}}}$$

Where, \bar{X}_1 and \bar{X}_2 are the observed sample means,

n_1 and n_2 are the sample sizes of the two groups (no. of observations)

S_p is an estimate of the common (pooled) standard deviation

a. Calculate the standard deviation (s)

$$S_p = \sqrt{\frac{(n_1 - 1) S_1^2 + (n_2 - 1) S_2^2}{n_1 + n_2 - 2}},$$

Where S_1 and S_2 are the standard deviations of the two samples

b. Calculate the degree of freedom (df)

$$df = n_1 + n_2 - 2$$

The t-test uses a p-value less than 0.10 (10%) to indicate significant differences and a p-value greater than 0.10 to indicate otherwise (at a confidence interval of 95%) (Bevans, 2023). The Stata/SE 18.0 is used to compute the t-test.

5. Reliability Analysis

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to evaluate the internal consistency reliability of the scale. The scale comprised 8 components.

Mean interitem covariance: 0.2603

The number of items in the scale: 8

Cronbach's alpha: 0.7026

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.7026 suggests acceptable internal consistency reliability for the scale based on the standard shared by Gyeltshen and Namgay (2022). The general rule of thumb requires the alpha value to be 0.6 or 0.7 and above indicating reliable data (Taber, 2018).

Literature Review

Corruption continues to be a barrier to all forms of development. According to the happiness index, the nation with the least corruption typically ranks highest. Finland, Denmark, and Switzerland are among the happiest nations in the world, according to Helliwell et al.'s World Happiness Report (WHR, 2021). According to Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, these are also the world's least corrupt countries (TI-CPI, 2021). As stated in ICAC, 2019, the International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2017) projects that the cost of corruption globally is greater than 2% of GDP. This demonstrates the negative effects of unethical behavior when a significant portion of funds are diverted into dishonest activities. Worryingly, though, the world's youth population is expanding (15.5%), with Bhutan experiencing a similar situation (19.76%). The fact that the youth unemployment rate increased to 22.6% in 2020 is evidence of this, and many people (Kulkarni, 2016; Rabgyel, 2018) hold the view that young people are the future and that it is important to channel their energy toward a better future.

According to Roosevelt (cited in TT, 2019), "We can prepare our youth for the future, but we can't always create the future for them" (p. 2). According to Kulkarni (2016), youth are viewed as the nation's engine of power. According to Rabgyel (2018), youths who are neglected could end up becoming a burden on the community. Instead, they should be supported and encouraged to realize their full potential for the betterment of society. The government has unquestionably given youths a lot of attention in all areas of development. It is the youths' integrity that will determine their success, though. Youths are seen by ICAC (2019) as being crucial to the

achievement of a cultural shift in attitudes and behavior around corruption, which might then have a knock-on effect on the whole populace in terms of bolstering integrity toward a society free of corruption.

Many countries, including Vietnam, South Korea, Sri Lanka, and Fiji, regularly evaluate the integrity and values of the youth due to their significance. Lee, Whitehead, and Balchin (2000) stated that measuring values in youth entails evaluating beliefs and principles that influence behavior and decision-making. They argued that researchers should employ many methodologies to assess their influence on attitudes, behaviors, and experiences to support the promotion of positive values and ethical behavior. Carrasco and Mediano (2021) discovered that students with greater civic education are less tolerant of corruption, as it enables them to comprehend the repercussions and denounce corrupt behaviors. Denisova- Schmidt, Huber, and Leontyeva (2016) found that higher-class students show a greater acceptance of corruption and informal behaviors, indicating that the higher education system can impact their views on corruption, which could result in adverse effects on society.

A bribe was paid by 27% of individuals under 30 in the past 12 months, according to the Global Corruption Barometer (GCB, 2013) (quoted in ICAC, 2019). Jennett and Thayenthal (2014) discovered that youth in the Asia Pacific region frequently grapple with upholding moral principles, and they are inclined to engage in unethical behavior to further their interests. In a similar vein, half of all youth had encountered corruption within the past year (i.e., above 30 percent). Seventy-two percent of youth would involve in corruption to benefit themselves. As per Towards Transparency's report (TT, 2019), about one-third of Vietnam's youth are prepared to partake in unethical or corrupt activities to obtain a benefit. Teenagers in South Korea would likewise rather become wealthy, according to TI-Korea (2013), even if it means lying and participating in other unfair competitive activities. Over 80% of Sri Lankan students reportedly engaged in unethical activities to obtain a job offer or a crucial document, according to the TISL (2013). Because of this, integrity has proven problematic among youth on a regional and worldwide scale.

A similar survey, involving 2500 respondents from 91 schools in 20 districts was carried out in Bhutan by ACC in 2012. According to the survey, 54.4% of students thought that occasionally lying and cheating were necessary to succeed (p. 41). Furthermore, 76.15 percent of the respondents do not know how to report corruption, even though 87 percent of the respondents are aware of it and 90 percent understand that it is their responsibility to do so. Additionally, Rabgyel (2018) concluded that although young people lack the information and abilities needed to take action against unethical behaviors, they are willing and dedicated to doing so (p.13). As a result, everyone must participate in the battle against corruption, especially the sizable percentage of young people who are seen as Bhutan's future.

6. Result

A Welch's t-test was performed on the eight survey questions of the "Values in Youth" component from the YIA 2022 to demonstrate the impact of Integrity clubs in schools.

Table 2: Skewness and Kurtosis test of normality

Variable	Obs	Pr(skewness)	Pr(kurtosis)	Joint test	
				Adj chi2(2)	Prob>chi2
C1	309	0.0000	0.0018	22.9200	0.0000***
C2	309	0.0297	0.0000	46.4500	0.0000***
C4	309	0.0000	0.2316	24.9100	0.0000***
C5	309	0.0386	0.0000	49.3500	0.0000***
C7	309	0.0000	0.8422	25.0800	0.0000***
C8	309	0.0000	0.7504	27.2600	0.0000***
C21	309	0.0000	0.0019	25.4300	0.0000***
C25	309	0.0000	0.0000	62.1400	0.0000***

Note: Note: $p < 0.1 =$ Reject Null Hypothesis

As depicted in **Table 2**, all variables show significant deviation from the normality based on skewness and kurtosis tests. Therefore, a non-parametric test (Welch's t-test) is suggested for the study.

Table 3: Equality of variance test

Variable	W0	W50	W10	df	Pr(>F)
C1	0.4099	0.0205	0.1816	(1, 307)	0.5225
C2	0.2552	0.0830	0.0175	(1, 307)	0.6138
C4	0.3368	0.0622	0.0638	(1, 307)	0.5621
C5	11.7958	15.5572	13.2104	(1, 307)	0.0007***
C7	0.4533	0.0152	0.3690	(1, 307)	0.5013
C8	6.3758	1.1603	2.5428	(1, 307)	0.0121**
C21	7.0071	2.2209	4.5602	(1, 307)	0.0085***
C25	0.3363	0.3507	2.2152	(1, 307)	0.5624

Note: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

As presented in **Table 3**, C5, C8 and C21 indicate a significant level of the test and reject the null hypotheses of equal variances. On the other hand, C1, C2, C4, C7, and C25 failed to reject the null hypotheses and conclude that there is no significant evidence of unequal variances.

The two-sample t-test was conducted for the youth of 130 who are members of IC and 179 who are non-members of IC. As depicted in **Table 4**, the survey items C1, C2, and C7 failed to reject the null hypothesis. On the other hand, C4, C5, C8, C21, and C25 reject the null hypothesis.

Table 4: Hypotheses test results

Questions	Hypotheses	Results
		$H_0: \text{mean(Yes)} - \text{mean(No)} = 0$ $H_1: \text{mean(Yes)} - \text{mean(No)} \neq 0$
C1	H ₁	$Pr(T > t) == 0.3688$ <i>Fail to Reject Null Hypothesis</i>
C2	H ₂	$Pr(T > t) == 0.6348$ <i>Fail to Reject Null Hypothesis</i>
C4	H ₃	$Pr(T > t) == 0.0020$ <i>Reject Null Hypothesis</i>
C5	H ₄	$Pr(T > t) == 0.0002$ <i>Reject Null Hypothesis</i>
C7	H ₅	$Pr(T > t) == 0.5255$ <i>Fail to Reject Null Hypothesis</i>
C8	H ₆	$Pr(T > t) == 0.0518$ <i>Reject Null Hypothesis</i>
C21	H ₇	$Pr(T > t) == 0.0733$ <i>Reject Null Hypothesis</i>
C25	H ₈	$Pr(T > t) == 0.0002$ <i>Reject Null Hypothesis</i>

Note: $p < 0.1 =$ Reject Null Hypothesis

Table 5: Two-sample t-test results by survey items

Question	Mean	Std. Err.	Std. Dev.	95% Conf. Interval Lower	95% Conf. Interval Upper	Diff	t-value	p-value
C1	3.569579	.0654553	1.150598	3.440783	3.698375	-.1189085	-0.9001	0.3688
C2	2.886731	.0647517	1.138231	2.75932	3.014143	-.0627417	-0.4755	0.6348
C4	4.006472	.0502157	.882711	3.907663	4.105282	-.3075204	-3.1183	0.002***
C5	3.469256	.0631017	1.109226	3.345091	3.593421	-.4647185	-3.7906	0.0002***
C7	3.886731	.0595091	1.046074	3.769636	4.003827	-.0760206	-0.6356	0.5255

C8	3.789644	.0634644	1.115602	3.664765	3.914523	-.2436184	-1.9522	0.0518*
C21	3.68932	.0686229	1.206281	3.554291	3.824349	-.2441771	-1.7975	0.0733*
C25	4.197411	.0479651	.8431503	4.10303	4.291792	-.2700473	-2.9389	0.0035***

Note: *p < 0.10, ** p < 0.05, ***p < 0.01

The mean values of C1, C2, and C7 show differences between IC and non-IC members, although the difference is not statistically significant. The C4 had a combined mean of 4.006 and a group mean difference of -0.3075. The t-statistic was -3.1183 with a 95% confidence range of (3.9077, 4.1053) and a standard deviation of 0.8827. There is a statistically significant in the average values between the IC members and non-IC members. The IC members show a higher level of care for government/public property compared to non-IC members.

In the case of C5, the difference in means between the groups is -0.4647 (95% CI: 3.3450 to 3.5934), with a t-statistic of -3.7906. These results indicate a significant difference in means between the IC members and non-IC members. Therefore, more youth who are non-IC members are willing to lie or cheat when compared to the IC members.

In the case of C8, the difference in means between the groups was -0.2441 (95% CI: 3.6648 to 3.9145)), with a t-statistic of -1.9522. The p-value is 0.0518, indicating a significant difference in means at 10%. Non-IC youth are more inclined to resort to dishonest or unethical means, such as lying, bribing, or seeking help from influential individuals, to secure admission into prestigious schools or institutes compared to IC members.

The "non-IC members" had a mean of 3.587 (SD = 1.262), while the "IC members" had a mean of 3.831. The difference in means between the groups was -0.2441 (95% CI: 3.5543 to 3.8244), with a t-statistic of -1.7975. The p-value of 0.0733 indicates a marginally significant difference as presented by the survey item C21. This test specifically evaluates the importance of natural responsibility assessed using the SUPW. Youth who are non-IC members typically work under the pressure of receiving poor grades or the perception that they are being monitored. Conversely, IC members consider it their duty regardless of supervision or the fear of receiving low grades.

Survey item C25 specifically assesses the youth's value in becoming rich at the cost of compromising integrity. The difference in means between the two groups was -0.2700, with a 95% confidence interval of (4.1030, 4.2918). The t-statistic was -2.9389, indicating a significant difference in means. This demonstrates that the IC members are unwilling to compromise their integrity in exchange for wealth. The finding shows that non-IC members are willing to cheat or lie to become rich.

Table 6: Pearson correlation coefficient

	C1	C2	C4	C5	C7	C8	C21	C25
C1	1.0000							
C2	0.2279*	1.0000						
C4	0.1178*	0.1074	1.0000					
C5	0.2453*	0.3508*	0.3053*	1.0000				
C7	0.2453*	0.1364*	0.1661*	0.2978*	1.0000			
C8	0.1872*	0.1729*	0.2783*	0.2191*	0.3273*	1.0000		
C21	0.3150*	0.1658*	0.2428*	0.3107*	0.2576*	0.1781*	1.0000	
C25	0.2485*	0.2196*	0.2033*	0.2617*	0.1948*	0.1755*	0.2712*	1.0000

Note: Significant at 0.05 level

All variables have a positive correlation based on the Pearson correlation coefficient. The coefficients listed in **Table 6** are positive, ranging between 0 and 1, and statistically significant at a 0.05 level (except C2 and C4). It suggests that a rise in one variable corresponds immediately to an increase in another variable.

7. Discussion

According to Gyeltshen & Namgay (2022), the existence of Integrity Clubs in schools has led to increased levels of integrity. Schools with Integrity Clubs had an integrity score of 65.55, higher than schools without Integrity Clubs, which had a score of 63.64. The rise in integrity is clearly shown in the "Index on Integrity Awareness," thanks to the committed work of club coordinators and the ACC in promoting integrity and tackling corruption. Upon further analysis of the data and comparison of the results between Integrity Club members and non-members, a notable difference is evident. Members of the Integrity Club scored 67.03, surpassing non-members by 4.18 points.

The present study also shows that from the eight tested variables, five are found to be significantly different. The IC members significantly inculcated the values of taking good care of public property, not willing to cheat or lie to get rich or get out of difficult situations, and having a sense of natural responsibility when compared to the non-IC members. This in itself indicates the positive impact of integrity clubs in schools. Jamtsho and Wangchug (2024) discovered that youth who are members of the Integrity Club are more likely to value honesty and ethical behavior as crucial for achieving success in life.

Not only in Bhutan, but many countries have established integrity clubs in schools. EACC has established 1000 integrity clubs in schools (Mbutia, 2023). The Chinese government is implementing integrity education in schools, colleges, and universities, prioritizing students' development and moral education. This holistic approach aims to instill integrity and honesty in students, fostering wholesome growth and development (UNODC, n.d). The Education for

Justice initiative, a collaboration between UNODC and UNESCO, aims to prevent crime and promote lawfulness through integrity education at all educational levels. It equips students with an understanding of issues threatening the rule of law, encouraging them to uphold honesty, ethics, and lawfulness (UNODC, 2021).

8. Conclusion

The study shows that Integrity Clubs positively impact school-wide and individual student integrity. Schools with clubs show a stronger commitment to integrity, while members of clubs display higher integrity awareness and adherence to ethical values. Integrity education empowers young individuals to uphold honesty, transparency, and accountability, fostering responsibility and moral consciousness. The MoESD is implementing integrity programs in youth education, integrating Integrity Club initiatives into Anti-Corruption Commission plans, providing comprehensive orientation and training for key stakeholders, and establishing a robust monitoring mechanism for progress and effectiveness. Further, the correlation also shows a positive relation between the values indicating an increase in one value will increase the other values.

9. Limitations

The analysis aimed to be comprehensive, reliable, and authentic, however the subjective nature of ethics, integrity, and values may be interpreted differently by different authors. The data collected pertains to the Financial Year 2021-2022, hence the findings may vary in the present scenario. This study focuses on the "values in youth" of schools with Integrity Club, not other schools. The Integrity Club is a modern initiative that is not often studied. Hence, further study is recommended on this subject.

10. References

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11. Annexures

Annexure 1: Questions and Survey items

Questions	Survey Items
C1	You are generally well behaved only when you are watched over either by parents or teachers/lecturers.
C2	You would lie to either your parents or teachers/lecturers to get out of a difficult situation
C4	You take care of school/institute/agency property in the same way that you handle home property.

C5	You are willing to cheat or lie if it is going to benefit you
C7	You would try to break the queue to avail the services faster (eg. hospitals, banks, etc.).
C8	If it was the only way to get admission into a better school/institute/agency, you would be willing to lie/bribe/go to somebody with influence for help.
C21	During SUPW periods, you work because the teacher/lecturer is watching over you and if you don't work, you get low grades.
C25	Being rich is the most important and it is acceptable to lie or cheat to attain this objective.

Annexure 2: Mean of different survey items by Sex

Sex	C1	C2	C4	C5	C8	C7	C21	C25
Male	3.62	2.86	3.92	3.37	3.77	4.03	3.63	4.19
Female	3.53	2.91	4.08	3.55	3.80	3.77	3.74	4.21
Total	3.57	2.89	4.01	3.47	3.79	3.89	3.69	4.20

Annexure 3: Mean of different survey items by age

Age (yrs)	C1	C2	C4	C5	C7	C8	C21	C25
15	3.54	2.65	3.78	3.22	3.80	3.76	3.65	3.83
16	3.66	2.85	4.08	3.53	3.89	3.87	4.00	4.23
17	3.76	2.96	4.00	3.44	3.83	3.63	3.80	4.31
18	3.53	2.76	3.90	3.45	3.90	3.84	3.69	4.29
19	3.40	3.00	4.14	3.49	3.97	3.71	3.40	4.17
20	3.75	2.85	3.95	3.80	4.10	3.80	3.75	4.15
21	3.31	2.93	4.00	3.38	3.86	3.86	3.41	4.24
22	3.58	3.50	4.50	3.75	3.75	4.33	3.67	4.50
23	4.67	3.67	4.33	4.00	4.67	3.67	3.33	4.67
24	2.67	3.00	4.33	3.67	3.67	3.33	3.33	4.17
Total	3.57	2.89	4.01	3.47	3.89	3.79	3.69	4.20