Journal of Education and Educational Research
ISSN: 2957-9465 | Vol. 15, No. 3, 2025

A Study on the Current State and Paths for Cultivation of Medical Students' Integrity Awareness in the New Era

Yuzhi Pan, Yuanyue Chen

Renji College of Wenzhou Medical University, Wenzhou Zhejiang, 325035, China

Abstract: Objective: Strengthening integrity education among medical students serves as a foundational project for fostering a clean and upright atmosphere in the healthcare industry. This study aims to systematically assess the current state of medical students' awareness of integrity, identify shortcomings in existing educational approaches, and explore effective pathways for enhancement. Methods: A mixed-methods approach combining questionnaire surveys and in-depth interviews was employed, involving 2,090 medical students from Wenzhou Medical University. The study examined four dimensions: perception of corruption, attitudinal orientation, behavioral manifestations, and level of participation in integrity education. Results: Overall, medical students exhibited a generally negative attitude toward corruption and demonstrate a basic awareness of integrity. However, the findings revealed several issues such as ambiguous attitudes in specific contexts, limited initiative in engaging in integrity education, and low levels of participation and satisfaction, indicating the current integrity education remains insufficiently effective. Conclusion: Systematic innovation in integrity education for medical students should focus on improving the educational framework, fostering a culture of integrity on campus, establishing collaborative education mechanisms both on and off campus, and strengthening students' capacity for self-education, self-management, and self-service (the "Three Selfs"), thereby providing theoretical support and practical reference for cultivating clean medical professionals in the new era.

Keywords: Medical Students; Awareness of Integrity; Integrity Education; Collaborative Education.

1. Introduction

The healthcare sector is fundamental to public well-being, and its integrity directly impacts people's sense of benefit and social trust. Although anti-corruption efforts have been intensified, risks remain in key areas such as pharmaceutical procurement and medical billing, highlighting the urgency of reinforcing ideological defenses at the source and reinforcing mechanisms for integrity risk prevention. Medical students, as the future backbone of the healthcare workforce, must "fasten the first button" of their careers by developing a strong awareness of integrity. Their commitment will profoundly shape the ethical standards and clean ecosystem of the future medical profession.

Therefore, advancing integrity education to an earlier stage and embedding it throughout the entire process of medical talent cultivation is of forward-looking strategic importance. Against this backdrop, this study aims to systematically examine medical students' awareness of corruption, their value orientations, behavioral choices, and their feedback on integrity education, thereby providing a comprehensive diagnosis of the current state and challenges in shaping their integrity awareness. Through empirical research on medical students at Wenzhou Medical University, this study seeks to offer data-driven support and practical pathways for constructing an integrity education system tailored to medical education. Ultimately, it aims to contribute both theoretical and practical solutions for enhancing medical students' professional ethics and solidifying the talent foundation required for a clean and trustworthy healthcare system.

2. Methods

To gain a comprehensive and objective understanding of medical students' integrity awareness, and to develop more effective and targeted integrity education programs, a questionnaire survey titled "Survey on Medical Students' Integrity Awareness in the New Era" was administered to 2,090 medical students at a university. The survey mainly focused on the following aspects.

2.1. Participant Demographics

The study participants were selected from on-campus medical students at a specific college. The sample of 2,090 respondents, stratified by gender, student leadership experience, and academic year, demonstrated a certain degree of representativeness and can largely reflect the current status of integrity education awareness among medical students at the college.

In terms of gender distribution, 878 participants (42.01%) were male and 1,212 (57.99%) were female. Regarding student leadership experience, 1,112 respondents (53.20%) had served as student leaders, while 978 (46.80%) had not. By academic year distribution, there were 716 first-year students (34.26%), 661 second-year students (31.63%), and 713 third-year and above students (34.11%).

2.2. Research Methodology and General Information

This study employed a questionnaire-based survey, consisting of 34 items, including single-choice, multiple-choice, and open-ended questions. The questionnaire was designed to assess five key dimensions: understanding of integrity-related knowledge, satisfaction with integrity-promoting phenomena in one's surroundings, disapproval of non-integrity behaviors in society, endorsement of school-led integrity education initiatives, and awareness of the need to strengthen integrity education for medical students. These dimensions aimed to investigate both the current state of medical students' integrity awareness and the implementation status of integrity education in the new era.

A total of 2,090 students were recruited to participate in the

survey via Wenjuanxing (a popular online survey platform in China) by scanning QR codes. All 2,090 questionnaires were completed and returned, resulting in a 100% valid response rate. The survey effectively covered diverse subgroups of medical students within the college, ensuring the authenticity and validity of the collected data and providing a solid foundation for subsequent research and analysis.

3. Results

3.1. Medical Students Possess Basic Awareness of Corruption but Lack Understanding of the Current Anti-Corruption Landscape

Medical students' awareness of corruption directly influences the development of their integrity values and serves as a crucial foundation for implementing integrity education. The survey results show that the majority of medical students hold negative and disapproving attitudes towards corruption. Specifically, 60.7% expressed contempt, resentment, or even a willingness to report corrupt practices, reflecting a strong sense of moral judgment. However, 30.5% of respondents displayed an indifferent attitude, while 8.8% expressed understanding or acceptance of such behaviors, indicating ambiguous perceptions and misconceptions about corruption among some students.

Regarding perceptions of social misconduct such as income disparity, opportunism, and bureaucracy, 68.2% of students attributed these problems to inadequate supervision and punishment mechanisms, 20.6% attributed them to deficiencies in education, and only 11.2% viewed them as inevitable outcomes of social development. This suggests that students generally demonstrate institutional awareness and and a certain level of problem consciousness. Meanwhile, when asked about improper competition for Party membership or student leadership positions around them, only 6.3% believed it was "widespread," 26.8% considered it "occasional," while a significant 66.9% reported being "unclear" or "unaware." This reveals insufficient attention and vigilance among some students towards potential integrity violations on campus.

Overall, while medical students demonstrate a basic moral stance and understanding of corruption, they lack a comprehensive awareness of the long-term and complex nature of anti-corruption efforts. Their systematic understanding of the harms of corruption remains inadequate, with some students perceiving corruption as distant from their own lives, manifesting signs of cognitive weakening and emotional detachment. Therefore, it is imperative to imrpove the relevance and practical focus of integrity education. Through case studies, institutional analysis, and professional scenario simulations, medical students should be guided to deeply understand the nature and dangers of corruption, thereby strengthening their self-discipline and professional ethical judgment, and fortifying their ideological defenses against corruption.

3.2. Medical Students Hold Consistent Anti-Corruption Attitudes but Lack Strong Self-Awareness in Integrity Practices

Medical students' behavioral responses to corruption reflect their fundamental attitudes toward the issue and serve as a key indicator of their integrity awareness. The survey revealed that when faced with the question, "Would you accept behaviors such as 'using connections,' 'pulling strings,' or 'giving gifts' if your parents or close relatives did so for your benefit or their own?", only 4.1% explicitly stated they would "fully understand and accept" such actions, while 32.7% expressed firm opposition. However, 40.1% said they "disapproved but felt helpless," and 23.1% responded that their stance would "depend on the situation." This demonstrates that although most medical students reject unethical behaviors in principle, a significant proportion display hesitation or compromise in practical scenarios, revealing moral ambivalence and uncertainty in real-life decision-making.

This mindset stems partly from misconceptions about integrity among some students, who have not yet established a firm value-based judgment system. It also reflects a lack of effective guidance and habitual cultivation of ethical behaviors in their daily academic and personal development. Therefore, it is important to strengthen practical guidance in integrity education for medical students, internalizing integrity as a conscious practice. This will enable them to uphold professional boundaries, distinguish right from wrong, and courageously resist corruption when faced with real-world temptations.

3.3. Medical Students Demonstrate Clear Commitment to Self-Discipline but Show Low Engagement and Support for Integrity Education Initiatives

Medical students' fundamental attitudes toward and participation in university-led integrity education are important metrics for evaluating the effectiveness of such initiatives. According to the survey, when asked "Do you believe integrity education can help prevent corruption?", 28.6% of respondents considered it highly effective, 63.9% believed it had some effect, and only 7.5% deemed it ineffective. This suggests that most medical students recognize the positive role of integrity education in corruption prevention.

However, regarding the forms of integrity education activities organized by the university, 46.03% of students found them overly rigid and didactic, 54.78% thought the educational channels were insufficiently diverse and lacked novelty and appeal, and 42.8% felt the content was not targeted enough to evoke emotional resonance or practical reflection among medical students. Despite this general recognition, participation and enthusiasm remained low. When asked whether they followed any WeChat public accounts related to integrity education, only 23.9% reported regular engagement, 54.1% seldom followed such accounts, 16.7% had never followed any, and 5.3% expressed interest but were unable to find relevant resources.

In summary, although medical students possess strong integrity awareness and self-discipline intentions at the conceptual level, their participation in integrity education activities remains limited, with low motivation, minimal interaction, and weak resonance. This phenomenon underscores the need for universities to further innovate the content and delivery of integrity education, enhancing its relevance, appeal, and practicality. By doing so, students can truly "absorb, retain, and implement" these principles, facilitating a shift from a "top-down indoctrination" model to an "immersive cultivation" approach.

4. Discussion

While significant progress has been made in advancing clean governance, corruption continues to occur frequently in areas such as pharmaceutical procurement and medical billing, undermining both public satisfaction and government credibility [1]. As future pillars of the healthcare system, medical students' awareness of integrity is directly linked to the sustainable and ethical development of the medical profession. Therefore, advancing integrity education to the university stage to build a solid ideological defense against corruption is a crucial component of establishing a clean healthcare system [2]. However, the overall awareness of integrity among medical students remains uneven. Although some students oppose corruption in principle, they may demonstrate cognitive-behavioral discrepancies when confronted with real-world temptations, highlighting both the urgency and necessity of integrity education [3,4].

From a theoretical perspective, "integrity awareness" embodies a comprehensive value orientation, moral judgment, and behavioral standard. Li Yuanchao emphasizes the influence of family upbringing and intergenerational transmission [5]; Li Yuhua et al. define it from a value perspective as the endorsement of ethical and fair conduct [6]; while Huo Peng proposes that its developmental pathway should form a chain of cognition, judgment, will, and behavior [7]. In the context of medical education, medical students' integrity awareness should be understood as the comprehensive manifestation of their concepts, attitudes, and behaviors regarding ethical medical practice during their academic and practical training. It serves as the ideological foundation for realizing clean healthcare.

4.1. Improving the Education System to Enhance the Effectiveness of Integrity Education

The survey reveals that while 92.5% of medical students acknowledge the value of integrity education, 42.8% find the content insufficiently targeted, and 46.03% consider the formats overly didactic and unappealing. These results indicate that current educational practices fall short of achieving deep internalization. Medical schools should therefore adopt a systematic approach, strengthen top-level design, and establish a comprehensive integrity education framework that integrates Party conduct, institutional ethos, teaching ethics, ideological education, and professional courses [8].

In terms of content, integrity education should be embedded into the broader ideological and political education framework. Ritualistic activities such as the "First Lesson of the Semester" and "Final Lesson upon Graduation" can enhance emotional resonance, while topics like medical ethics and healthcare anti-corruption should be integrated into professional courses and practical training to enrich educational substance [9]. Regarding delivery methods, modern information technologies should be leveraged deliver tailored integrity cases based on students' interests. Emerging tools such as virtual reality (VR) and artificial intelligence (AI) can be utilized to create immersive learning environments, forming a new model of "integrity culture + internet" integrated dissemination [10]. Furthermore, faculty should be actively involved as role models, guiding students to develop integrity awareness through learning and practice. Only by prioritizing student needs and driving pedagogical innovation can integrity education transition from "indoctrination" to "endorsement," thereby enhancing both quality and effectiveness.

4.2. Strengthening Intra- and Extra-Curricular Collaboration to Create a Holistic Integrity Education Environment

Although medical students generally express strong disapproval of corruption, some still exhibit wavering attitudes in practical scenarios involving "using backdoor channels" or "pulling strings," indicating that their integrity convictions are not yet firmly established. Hence, building a campus integrity culture requires simultaneous efforts in educational atmosphere and nurturing environment.

Within the institution, emphasis should be placed on enhancing teaching ethics and leveraging exemplary role models. Measures such as supervision beyond working hours and integrity warning education can help foster a clean and upright educational ecology [11]. Meanwhile, diverse platforms including campus newspapers, new media, and bulletin boards should be utilized to establish an all-encompassing communication matrix for integrity culture, promoting positive values and guiding students to subconsciously internalize these principles.

Externally, a tripartite collaborative education mechanism involving universities, families, and society should be promoted. By engaging external stakeholders such as communities and medical institutions in co-developing educational resources, the social breadth and practical depth of integrity education can be enhanced. Additionally, communication channels with parents should be established, and home-school collaborative activities such as parent-child integrity crafts and family tradition-themed writing competitions should be organized to guide families in becoming important venues for cultivating integrity values [12]. Through a multi-dimensional and collaboratively promoted integrity culture education system, a cognitive-attitude-behavior value chain can be established, ensuring the internalization and externalization of integrity awareness.

4.3. Stimulating Endogenous Motivation to Promote the Rootedness of Integrity Culture

The fundamental goal of integrity education is to stimulate students' endogenous motivation, achieving the "Three Selfs" transformation: self-education, self-management, and self-service [13]. Only when students proactively endorse and actively practice can integrity culture truly "come alive." Materialist dialectics emphasizes that internal causes are the fundamental drivers of development. While providing educational resources, medical schools should fully mobilize students' initiative in self-cultivation.

Taking a "Integrity Education Society" at one university as an example, the student-led organization has created a practical platform for spontaneous organization, self-operation, and self-improvement by arranging visits to warning education bases, organizing screenings of integrity-themed films, hosting family tradition creation activities, and conducting speech and essay contests. The society also operates a WeChat public account titled "Clean Practice Along the Medical Journey," regularly disseminating integrity cases and exemplary stories, building an online-offline integrated communication ecosystem [14]. Such self-initiated

organizations effectively enhance students' sense of engagement and endorsement, shifting integrity education from "compelled to learn" to "eager to learn." Moving forward, universities should refine support mechanisms to provide adequate space and resources for autonomous learning, encouraging students to integrate integrity principles into both professional studies and daily conduct, ultimately becoming powerful promoters and practitioners of a clean healthcare system.

5. Conclusion

As the future cornerstone of the healthcare profession, the cultivation of medical students' integrity awareness is crucial to the sustainable development of the medical system and the achievement of clean governance objectives. Through a combination of questionnaires and interviews, this study systematically examined the current status of medical students' integrity awareness across four dimensions—cognition, attitude, behavior, and participation. The findings reveal that despite students' fundamental anti-corruption values, they still exhibit a surface-level understanding of integrity, insufficient commitment to autonomous ethical practice, and weak engagement in integrity education.

To address these issues, comprehensive efforts must be made to improve the educational framework, cultivate a campus integrity culture, promote family-society collaboration, and stimulate the "Three Selfs" (self-education, self-management, self-service). This will help build a diversified, integrated, and multi-dimensional integrity education system that facilitates the transformation of medical students from merely "knowing integrity" to "upholding integrity" and ultimately "practicing integrity."

Looking ahead, medical schools should continue to explore educational models that better align with student characteristics and contemporary needs. By genuinely enhancing the penetration, appeal, and educational effectiveness of integrity education, institutions can consolidate the moral and ideological foundation of young people, thereby contributing to the development of a Clean Zhejiang and the cultivation of an integrity-driven healthcare ecosystem.

References

[1] Shao Chaojie, Huo Tianyan. (2015). Q&A with reporters on carrying out the "Medical Service Management Improvement Year" and "Thousands of Doctors to Thousands of Villages Serving Millions of Households" activities. Shangqiu Daily, p. A03.

[2] Qin Mengjian. (2024). Research on Integrity Culture Education for Medical Students [Master's thesis]. Anhui Medical University.

[3] Zeng Linghua. (2019). Research on the path of sustainable construction of Clean Zhejiang. Reform & Opening, (2), 71-73.

[4] Jia Liqin, Zhang Ping. (2025). Characteristics, functions, and objectives of strengthening integrity culture construction in medical universities in the new era. Health Vocational Education, 43(7), 4-8.

[5] Li Yuanchao. (2009). Communist Party cadres must be honest and clean. Administration Reform, (3), 7-10.

[6] Zhu Xinguang, Su Ping. (2014). Comparative Study on Civic Integrity Education in Western Countries. Peking University Press.

[7] Huo Peng. (2012). On integrity education for contemporary college students. Journal of North China University of Water Resources and Electric Power (Social Science Edition), 28(5), 162-164.

[8] Wu Fulai. (2023). Solidly promote the construction of integrity culture in the new era and strengthen the political consciousness of exercising full and rigorous governance over the Party. Guangming Daily.

[9] Hua Zhansheng, Liu Guoliang. (2024). The path of integrating integrity education into the integrated teaching of ideological and political courses. Abroad Study, (20), 31.

[10] Zhang Siyao. (2024). Research on innovative paths of integrity culture construction in universities under the "Internet+" background. Society and Philanthropy, (9), 37-39.

[11] Tian Yu. (2025). Practical research on integrity education themed class meetings assisting the professional growth of senior medical students. Knowledge Library, 41(6), 171-174.

[12] Liu Hui, Zheng Guojiao. (2025). Research on integrity culture education for medical students under the background of "Three-wide Education". Journal of Jinzhou Medical University (Social Science Edition), 23(2), 63-66.

[13] Wei Bianzhu, Zhang Youwu. (2023). The triple dimensions of integrating integrity culture into the teaching of ideological and political theory courses in universities. Education Theory and Practice, (33), 36-40.

[14] Zhou Lu. (2016). A brief discussion on the development and construction of university student unions: The functions of "self-education, self-management, and self-service". Modern Vocational Education, (25), 171.