

# The Role of Moral Engagement in the Relationship Between Locus of Control and Intention to Commit Corruption among University Students

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## ABSTRACT

The increasing tendency of integrity-violating behaviors among university students such as academic dishonesty and the normalization of unethical actions demonstrates the urgency of understanding psychological factors that may foster corrupt intentions from an early stage in higher education. This study aims to analyze the relationship between locus of control and intention to corruption and to examine the mediating role of moral engagement. A total of 350 students from public and private universities in Surabaya participated through a convenience sampling technique. Mediation analysis using linear regression showed that internal locus of control decreases intention to corruption ( $\beta = -0.088$ ,  $p = 0.045$ ), whereas the external dimensions, *powerful others* and *chance*, increase it ( $\beta = 0.526$ ;  $\beta = 0.247$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). Internal locus of control increases moral engagement ( $\beta = 0.299$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), while the two external dimensions reduce it. When moral engagement is included as a mediator, the effect of internal locus of control becomes non-significant, whereas moral engagement consistently shows a strong negative effect on intention to corruption ( $\beta = -0.462$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). These findings highlight that moral engagement plays a crucial role in preventing corrupt behavioral tendencies among university students.

**Keywords :** Intention to Corruption, Locus of Control, Moral Engagement, Mahasiswa

## INTRODUCTION

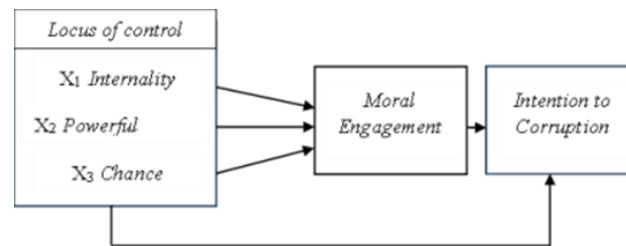
Corruption is a moral issue with far-reaching impacts and is not only associated with violations of the law but also reflects a crisis of values and social responsibility. Etymologically, the term “corruption” originates from the Latin words *corruption* or *corrupt*, which later developed in French and Dutch as *corruptie*, meaning deviant behavior, misconduct, accepting bribes, or abusing power for personal gain. In the context of Indonesian law, corruption is defined as an unlawful act committed to enrich oneself or others, resulting in losses to the state’s finances. The 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) positions Indonesia at rank 99 out of 180 countries with a score of 37, indicating the persistent prevalence of corrupt practices across sectors (Transparency International, 2024). This phenomenon is not only found among public officials but also among individuals with higher education backgrounds who should, in principle, possess a more mature moral understanding. Studies show that approximately 82% of fraud perpetrators are university graduates (Maharani, 2015), suggesting that formal education has not yet fully succeeded in cultivating moral integrity.

Furthermore, dishonest behavior is also evident in the academic environment, such as the use of ideas without proper referencing, the use of unauthorized materials during examinations, and plagiarism in assignments (Sayed, 2015). In the context of university students, the trend of dishonest behavior continues to grow and reflects the potential for corrupt behavior in the future. Reports from the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) through the Education Integrity Index indicate an increase in academic misconduct cases, including plagiarism, the use of unauthorized tools, and data manipulation. These findings reinforce that corruption does not only occur at structural levels but is rooted in seemingly minor behaviors associated with weak self-control and individual moral values. Therefore, examining the psychological factors that influence corruptive tendencies among university students has become increasingly urgent. One of the psychological factors involved is locus of control. Locus of control is categorized into internal and external orientations. Individuals with an external orientation tend to attribute their behavior including unethical actions to the system or external circumstances. It has also been suggested that individuals who perceive the social system as unjust are more likely to possess a strong external locus of control, which may increase their tendency to morally justify violations such as corruption. In the context of corrupt behavior, locus of control becomes a relevant personality characteristic because it is related to an individual's decision to accept or reject bribery (Zhao et al., 2017). This highlights that locus of control is indeed an important personality trait. Corruption occurs when a power holder accepts a bribe (Köbis et al., 2016). Furthermore, the concept of moral engagement was developed to understand how moral values function within the decision-making process. Moral engagement emphasizes active involvement in processing moral values (Reynolds & Miller, 2015). Individuals with high moral engagement consciously consider moral aspects when thinking, evaluating, and acting. Research has shown that corrupt behavior tends to emerge when moral commitment weakens (Rusmita, 2015) and when individuals fail to maintain consistency in their moral values (Pozsgai-Alvarez, 2020). In educational settings, low moral engagement is reflected in academic dishonesty and weak moral reflection among students.

Although previous studies have examined the relationship between locus of control and unethical behavior (intention to corruption), as well as the link between moral disengagement and corrupt behavior, research that specifically positions moral engagement as a mediating variable remains very limited, particularly within student populations. Most prior studies have focused more on moral disengagement rather than on active moral involvement (moral engagement), which may in fact offer a more accurate explanation of how personality factors such as locus of control influence corruptive tendencies. In addition, research on corruption intention among university students generally examines academic cheating behaviors directly such as favoritism, bribery, or fraud (Julián, M., & Bonavia, 2022), without investigating the psychological mechanisms that connect internal factors to the intention to engage in corrupt behavior.

However, research examining moral engagement as a mediating variable in the relationship between locus of control and intention to corruption remains limited, particularly within the context of university students in Indonesia. This is concerning, given that students are future actors in various public and private sectors who will eventually hold important roles in national governance. Based on this research gap, the present study aims to examine the mediating role

of moral engagement in the effect of locus of control on intention to corruption among university students. The findings are expected to provide theoretical contributions as well as practical implications for strengthening moral integrity within higher education environments.



**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework**

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Locus of control explains the extent to which individuals believe that the outcomes of their lives are determined by internal or external factors. In a moral context, an internal locus of control is associated with personal responsibility and resistance to justifying unethical behavior, whereas an external locus of control facilitates the shifting of responsibility to external circumstances. Recent findings indicate that an internal locus of control is associated with ethical decision-making and the rejection of fraudulent practices (Ayu et al., 2023), while an external locus of control is correlated with lower work ethics (Herianti, 2021). These findings reinforce the role of locus of control as an important psychological factor that influences tendencies toward corrupt intentions.

Intention to corruption refers to the cognitive readiness to engage in corrupt acts when opportunities arise. Regarding the intensity of fraudulent behavior, if the three variables within the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) perceive or believe that engaging in fraud is positive and reasonable, this will encourage individuals to develop a tendency to commit fraudulent acts. Conversely, if the TPB variables view or believe that fraud is harmful and inappropriate, individuals will be less likely to intend to commit such acts. Recent studies support this notion; permissive attitudes and social norms that endorse unethical behavior have been shown to strengthen corrupt intentions (Vilanova et al., 2022). Thus, intention to corruption emerges as an initial construct reflecting an individual's potential involvement in corrupt behavior.

Moral engagement describes the extent to which individuals attend to, process, and consider moral aspects before acting. Individuals with high moral engagement are better able to resist rationalizations for unethical behavior. Experimental studies show that moral commitment reduces the likelihood of accepting bribes (Tanner et al., 2022), while moral attentiveness and moral efficacy have been demonstrated to buffer the influence of situations that trigger unethical behavior (Afsar et al., 2019). Therefore, moral engagement functions as an important protective factor against corrupt intentions.

Theoretically, locus of control influences intention to corruption through the strength of moral engagement. An internal locus of control fosters a sense of moral responsibility, thereby strengthening moral engagement, whereas an external locus of control weakens moral involvement and opens space for justifying unethical behavior. Nevertheless, over the past decade, the literature has predominantly examined moral disengagement, and studies investigating moral engagement as a mediating variable in the relationship between locus of

control and intention to corruption among university students remain extremely limited. This research addresses that gap by examining the role of moral engagement as a psychological mechanism that mediates the influence of locus of control on intention to corruption.

## **METHODS**

The population in this study consisted of active undergraduate (S1) students from several public and private universities. Participant selection was carried out using a convenience sampling technique, namely a sampling method based on the availability and willingness of individuals who were encountered and met the predetermined criteria for the study. To determine the minimum number of participants required, this research referred to the Isaac and Michael formula with a significance level of 5%. The participants in this study were active students from various universities in Surabaya. A total of 350 participants completed the questionnaire in full and met the inclusion criteria.

This research employed a quantitative correlational design because it did not manipulate variables but rather aimed to determine the extent of the relationships between the independent variable (locus of control), the mediating variable (moral engagement), and the dependent variable (intention to corruption). The study design utilized a mediation model to examine whether the influence of locus of control on intention to corruption is explained through moral engagement. Methodologically, this research adopted the classical mediation regression approach (Baron & Kenny) because it provides a clear mapping of direct and indirect effects, is easy to interpret, and is suitable for a research model involving three variables as implemented in this study. Moreover, classical mediation regression is appropriate when the objective is to explain the intermediary process (psychological mechanism) between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

Data collection in this study was conducted using a questionnaire instrument. The instrument was constructed in the form of statements consisting of two types of items: favorable and unfavorable items. A five-point Likert scale was used with the following response options: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument included statements such as:

1. Locus of Control: An item assessing “My life is controlled by other people who hold power.”
2. Moral Engagement: An item assessing “I evaluate my daily actions by considering the things I consider important.”
3. Intention to Corruption: An item assessing “When I do not have enough time to complete an assignment, using someone else’s work is acceptable.”

The procedure for distributing the questionnaire followed the standard guidelines for social and psychological research. The study ensured that all participants understood that participation was voluntary, free from coercion, and that their data would remain confidential. This information was provided in the Google Form, and participants were also informed that all responses would be considered valid as long as they reflected their true personal condition, not the expectations of others. The study obtained the necessary permissions for data collection. The questionnaire was distributed online through social media and student networks, enabling safe, easy, and accessible participation, particularly given the time constraints of the research.

**Table 1. Intention to Corruption Scale**

Variable	Indicator	Item Distribution		Total Aitems
		<i>F</i>	<i>UF</i>	
<i>Intention to Corruption</i>	Academic pressure and pragmatic choices	1, 2, 3, 4	-	4
	Social relationships and academic reciprocity	5, 6, 7	-	3
	Academic information manipulation	8, 9, 10	-	3
Total Aitems		10	0	10

In this study, the intention toward corrupt behavior is understood as a unidimensional construct. The validity test conducted on the items within the scale showed that all items demonstrated very high significance values, namely  $p < 0.001$ . These results indicate that each item has a significant relationship with the total score of the measured construct. The correlation coefficients ( $r$ ) of the eight items tested ranged from 0.635 to 0.755. All items in this scale were therefore declared valid and suitable for further analysis in this study. The reliability coefficient of 0.958 indicates that the scale possesses exceptionally high internal consistency. According to (Azwar, 2017), a measurement instrument is considered to have good reliability if the coefficient is  $\geq 0.70$ . Thus, the Intention to Corruption scale is deemed reliable and appropriate for use as a measurement instrument in this research.

**Table 2. Locus of Control Scale**

Variable	Dimension	Indicator	Item Distribution		Total Aitems
			<i>F</i>	<i>UF</i>	
<i>Internal Locus of Control</i>	<i>Internality</i>	Belief in one's own effort and abilities	1, 3, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22	-	8
<i>Eksternal Locus of Control</i>	<i>Powerful Others</i>	Unable to escape the influence of others	2, 4, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23	-	8
	<i>Chance</i>	Life is determined by fate	3, 5, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24	-	8
Total Aitems			24	0	24

Locus of control is defined as students' beliefs regarding the source of control that influences events in their lives, indicating the extent to which individuals perceive whether

the outcomes of events are determined by themselves or by external factors. The validity test conducted on the items of the Internality scale showed correlation coefficients ( $r$ ) ranging from 0.246 to 0.317. The validity test for the eight items of the Powerful Others scale indicated that all items had very high significance values, namely  $p < 0.001$ , with correlation coefficients ranging from 0.288 to 0.636. The validity test for the eight items of the Chance scale also showed that all items had very high significance values ( $p < 0.001$ ), with correlation coefficients ranging from 0.233 to 0.447. The reliability coefficient of 0.951 indicates that the Internality scale possesses very high internal consistency. The reliability coefficient of 0.981 shows that the Powerful Others scale also has very high internal consistency. Likewise, the reliability coefficient of 0.987 demonstrates that the Chance scale exhibits exceptionally high internal consistency.

**Table 3. Moral Engagement Scale**

Variable	Dimension	Indicator	Item Distribution		Total Aitems
			<i>F</i>	<i>UF</i>	
<i>Moral Engagement</i>	Integrity of internal moral values	Moral identity	19, 13	8, 15	4
		Ethical decision-making	7,3	6, 9	4
	Capability to act ethically	Responsibility	12 ,2	5, 16	4
	Awareness of moral situations	Moral awareness	20, 1	18,10	4
		Reflection on moral values	23, 22	14, 24	4
	Commitment to ethical action	Consistency between morals and actions	21, 11	4, 17	4
	Total Aitems			12	12

In this study, moral engagement is operationalized as the extent to which individuals remain consciously and consistently committed to moral principles and values in their thinking and actions; make decisions based on the ethical principles they uphold; take responsibility for the consequences of both ethical and unethical behaviors; recognize and consider the moral dimensions of an action; reflect on and evaluate moral values when facing situations or dilemmas; and maintain consistency between their moral beliefs and their actual behavior in daily life. The validity test results indicate that each item contributes meaningfully to the measured construct. The majority of items have correlation coefficients  $\geq 0.30$ , demonstrating

good discriminative power. However, several items—such as item 2 ( $r = 0.219$ ) and item 14 ( $r = 0.213$ ) show correlation values slightly below the conventional threshold for validity. Based on the calculations, the total mean square (MS total) obtained was 47.049 and the error mean square (MS error) was 0.637, resulting in a scale reliability coefficient of 0.987.

## RESULTS

Based on the score classification criteria for each variable in this study, the distribution of participants' score categories for each measured variable can be identified. The details of these categorical distributions are presented in the table below.

**Table 4. Empirical Categorization of the Intention to Corruption Scale**

<b>Intention to Corruption</b>			
<b>Mean= 25,306 ; SD= 3,366</b>			
<b>Category</b>	<b>Interval</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Very High	31,364	86	24,6
High	27,325 – 31,364	64	18,3
Moderate	23,286 – 27,325	70	20,0
Low	19,246 – 23,286	52	14,9
Very Low	19,247	78	22,3

Descriptive analysis shows that the Intention to Corruption category exhibits a “two-pole” distribution pattern, with a large proportion falling into the Very Low category (22.3%) and the Very High category (24.6%). This finding indicates the presence of two distinctly different groups of students in terms of their corrupt intention tendencies. The average score (Mean = 25.306) falls within the moderate category, suggesting that overall, students' corrupt intentions are at a moderate level, although there is substantial individual variation at both extremes.

**Table 5. Empirical Categorization of the Locus of Control Scale**

<b>Internality Locus of Control</b>			
<b>Mean= 20,704 ; SD= 3,554</b>			
<b>Category</b>	<b>Interval</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Very High	27,101	226	64,6
High	22,837 – 27,101	100	28,6
Moderate	18,527 – 22,837	22	6,3
Low	14,307 – 18,527	2	6
Very Low	14,307	0	0

Descriptive analysis indicates that the Internality component is dominated by the Very High category (64.6%). This finding suggests that the majority of students have a strong tendency to perceive that the outcomes they achieve are primarily the result of their own efforts and abilities. The average score (Mean = 20.704) supports this depiction, showing that students' level of internality is generally high, although a small proportion of respondents fall within the moderate and low categories.

**Table 6. Empirical Categorization of Powerful Others Locus of Control Scale**

Powerful Others Locus of Control			
Mean= 20,544 ; SD= 3,059			
Category	Interval	Frequency	%
Very High	26,050	85	24,,3
High	22,379 – 26,050	88	25,1
Moderate	18,709 – 22,379	88	25,1
Low	15,039 – 18,709	68	19,4
Very Low	15,038	21	6,0

The score categories for Powerful Others show that the largest proportion of participants fall within the High category (25.1%) and the Very High category (24.3%). This pattern indicates that a number of students tend to perceive their outcomes as being influenced by authoritative figures or individuals who hold power. The average score (Mean = 20.544) falls within the moderate–high range, suggesting that the tendency toward externality directed at powerful figures is fairly prominent in the research sample. These findings illustrate that students still perceive a significant role of lecturers, institutions, or other authorities in determining their success or failure.

**Table 7. Empirical Categorization of Chance Locus of Control Scale**

Chance Locus of Control			
Mean= 21,133 ; SD= 3,367			
Category	Interval	Frequency	%
Very High	27,194	105	30,0
High	23,154 – 27,194	132	37,7
Moderate	19,113 – 23,154	85	24,3
Low	15,073 – 19,113	23	6,6
Very Low	15,073	5	1,4

The score categories for Chance Locus of Control show a strong tendency toward the High (37.7%) and Very High (30.0%) categories. This pattern indicates that most students perceive success or failure as something influenced by luck or random circumstances beyond personal control. The average score (Mean = 21.133) falls within the moderate–high range, suggesting that beliefs in the role of “luck” in determining outcomes are quite prominent within this sample. Nevertheless, the presence of the Moderate category (24.3%), along with smaller proportions in the Low (6.6%) and Very Low (1.4%) categories, indicates that perceptions regarding the influence of chance factors still vary across individuals.

**Tabel 8. Empirical Categorization of the Moral Engagement Scale**

Moral Engagement			
Mean= 50,544 ; SD= 5,297			
Category	Interval	Frequency	%
Very High	60,078	173	49,4
High	53,722 – 60,078	73	20,9
Moderate	47,367 – 53,722	75	21,4
Low	41,011 – 47,367	8,3	8,3
Very Low	41,011	0	0

Descriptive analysis shows that the Moral Engagement category is dominated by the Very High group (49.4%). This indicates that nearly half of the students have a strong ability to uphold



moral values when faced with potentially unethical situations. The proportions in the High (20.9%) and Moderate (21.4%) categories are also substantial, suggesting that the majority of students possess a good level of moral engagement. The average score (Mean = 50.544), which falls within the high range, further reinforces that students in this study generally tend to resist justifications for unethical behavior. Meanwhile, only a small number of students fall within the Low category (8.3%), and none are classified as Very Low, indicating that low levels of moral engagement are exceptions rather than the general pattern.

**Table 9. Normality Test**

			Nilai Statistic	Std. Error	Z- score	Normality Criterion (±1,96)
Locus of Control- Moral Engagement	Skewness		0,176	0,133	1,32	Normal
	Kurtosis		-0,278	0,265	-1,05	
Locus of Control- Moral Engagement -Intention to Corruption	Skewness		-0,095	0,135	-0,70	Normal
	Kurtosis		-0,224	0,270	-0,83	

Based on the descriptive statistical output, the Skewness value obtained was 0.176 and the Kurtosis value was -0.278. These values were then converted into Z-scores by dividing each value by its respective standard error. The resulting Z-scores were compared to the critical normality threshold of ±1.96 (Tabachnick dkk., 2019). Since the Z-skewness (1.32) and Z-kurtosis (-1.05) values fall within the acceptable range, the data can be considered normally distributed. Furthermore, the descriptive output showed a Skewness value of -0.095 with a Standard Error of 0.135. This produced a Z-skewness of -0.70, which remains within the ±1.96 threshold, indicating that the data do not exhibit significant skewness to the left or right. Additionally, the Kurtosis value of -0.224 with a Standard Error of 0.270 generated a Z-kurtosis of -0.83.

**Table 10. Results of Empirical Mean and Hypothetical Mean Analysis**

Variable	Hypothetical Mean	Empirical Mean	t	p	Empirical Mean Category
Intention to Corruption	25,306	25,813	1,336	0,183	Moderate

Internality Locus of Control	20,704	28,583	40,980	<,001	High
Powerful Others Locus of Control	20,544	22,202	6,356	<,001	High
Chance Locus of Control	21,133	24,969	16,727	<,001	High
Moral Engagement	50,544	59,825	19,533	<,001	High

For the intention to corruption variable, the empirical mean ( $M = 25.813$ ) did not differ significantly from the theoretical mean ( $M = 25.306$ ), with  $t = 1.336$  and  $p = 0.183$  ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating that the level of corrupt intention falls within the moderate category. Meanwhile, the internal locus of control variable had an empirical mean of 28.583, which was significantly higher than its theoretical mean ( $M = 20.704$ ), with  $t = 40.980$  and  $p < 0.001$ . The powerful others locus of control also showed significant results, with an empirical mean of 22.202 compared to the theoretical mean of 20.544 ( $t = 6.356$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that participants hold relatively strong beliefs in the influence of powerful individuals in their lives.

Additionally, for the chance locus of control dimension, there was a significant difference between the empirical mean (24.969) and the theoretical mean (21.133), with  $t = 16.727$  and  $p < 0.001$ , indicating that participants show a strong belief in the role of luck or fate in determining life outcomes. Finally, the moral engagement variable also exhibited a high empirical mean (59.825) compared to the theoretical mean (50.544), with  $t = 19.533$  and  $p < 0.001$ , demonstrating that participants possess a strong level of moral engagement in considering ethical values in their thinking and actions.

Overall, these findings indicate that the majority of participants exhibit high levels of internality, moral engagement, and external beliefs—both in terms of powerful others and chance. Meanwhile, the level of intention to corruption tends to fall within the moderate category, suggesting that although participants possess strong internal control and moral commitment, they still demonstrate a certain degree of potential intention to engage in corrupt behavior.

**Table 11. Hypothesis Testing Results**

Predictor Variable	B	Std. Error	$\beta$ (Beta)	t	p	Keterangan
X1 Internality	0,100	0,079	0,051	1,272	0,204	Not Significant
X2 Powerful Others	0,427	0,080	0,293	5,355	<,001	Significant
X3 Chance	0,266	0,089	0,161	2,991	0,003	Significant
Moral Engagement	-0,0370	0,035	-0,462	-10,442	<,001	Significant negative

The mediation analysis using the Baron and Kenny (1986) approach was conducted through a series of linear regression tests to examine whether the variables Powerful Others ( $X_2$ ) and Chance Locus of Control ( $X_3$ ) had a significant positive effect on Intention to Corruption ( $Y$ ), while Moral Engagement ( $Z$ ) had a significant negative effect on Intention to Corruption. This is indicated by the significance values of each variable, all of which are below 0.05:  $X_2$  ( $p < 0.001$ ),  $X_3$  ( $p = 0.003$ ), and  $Z$  ( $p < 0.001$ ). The  $\beta$  coefficients show that Powerful Others makes the largest contribution ( $\beta = 0.293$ ), followed by Chance ( $\beta = 0.161$ ), and moral engagement with a negative direction ( $\beta = -0.462$ ). Meanwhile, the Internality variable ( $X_1$ ) did not have a significant effect on intention to corruption after the mediator moral engagement was included ( $p = 0.204$ ), indicating the possibility of full mediation. These findings support the notion that external locus of control (powerful others and chance) tends to increase corruptive tendencies, whereas high moral engagement can reduce such tendencies. Thus, moral engagement functions as a significant mediator in the relationship between locus of control and intention to corruption.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that internal locus of control has a negative effect on the intention to engage in corruption, whereas two dimensions of external locus of control powerful others and chance have a significant positive effect on students' corrupt intentions. These findings suggest that students who believe that life outcomes are determined by personal effort tend to have a lower propensity for corrupt behavior. Conversely, students who perceive success as determined by powerful figures or luck are more likely to justify unethical behavior. This finding aligns with the study by (Prameswari, 2023), which demonstrated that an internal locus of control is associated with stronger moral commitment. The results are further supported by (Herianti, 2021), who found that individuals with an internal control orientation are more capable of resisting dishonest behavior, as well as by (Sari & Supriyanto, 2020), who reported that an external control orientation is related to a tendency to rationalize deviant behavior.

Furthermore, this study found that internal locus of control has a positive effect on moral engagement, whereas powerful others and chance have a negative effect on moral engagement. This indicates that individuals with strong self-control are more capable of maintaining consistency in moral values in dilemmas, while individuals with an external control orientation are more prone to moral disengagement or the release of moral justification. This pattern is consistent with the study by (Tanner et al., 2022), which demonstrated that moral engagement is closely related to individuals' ability to uphold moral standards in decision-making.

The main finding of this study is that moral engagement mediates the relationship between locus of control and the intention to engage in corruption. The mediation is full for internal locus of control and partial for external locus of control. Thus, students with an internal control orientation can suppress corrupt intentions through high moral engagement, whereas an external control orientation increases corrupt intentions due to weakened moral mechanisms in regulating behavior. These findings extend previous research by (Ponce-Díaz et al., 2025) which showed that moral reasoning and self-regulation play a crucial role in bridging the relationship between perceptions of personal control and tendencies toward corrupt behavior.

The results of the study indicate that students' intention to engage in corruption falls within the moderate category ( $M = 25.813$ ), with a contrasting distribution, as the proportion of students in the very low category (22.3%) is almost equal to those in the very high category (24.6%). This suggests substantial individual differences despite the mean being at a moderate level. Regarding personality aspects, internal locus of control is in the high category ( $M = 28.583$ ), yet external locus of control through powerful others ( $M = 22.202$ ) and chance ( $M = 24.969$ ) also appears considerably strong, indicating that students rely not only on self-control but also interpret success through influential figures and luck. Meanwhile, moral engagement is in the very high category ( $M = 59.825$ ), reflecting a strong moral commitment.

In examining the relationships between variables, internal locus of control does not significantly influence corruption intention ( $p = 0.204$ ), whereas external locus of control shows significant effects: powerful others ( $\beta = 0.293$ ) and chance ( $\beta = 0.161$ ). Conversely, moral engagement has a strong negative effect ( $\beta = -0.462$ ), indicating that higher moral engagement corresponds to lower corruption intentions among students. Overall, these findings suggest that the tendency toward corruption among Indonesian students is more influenced by external factors and moral mechanisms rather than internal self-control.

From the perspective of the Indonesian context, these results reflect the moral dynamics of students living in a social environment that still presents moral ambiguity—from tolerance of minor violations and permissive cultural norms to academic pressures—which may act as confounding factors in the emergence of corruption intentions. External influences, including social structures and experiences observing unethical practices, lead some students to perceive unethical behavior as “normal” or not entirely within personal control. This explains why corruption intention remains at a moderate level and is not entirely low, despite students having access to anti-corruption education.

Psychologically, these findings indicate that the moral development of Indonesian students is still highly influenced by their environment, including family, campus, and social culture. Strong internal locus of control and moral engagement serve as important buffers against corrupt rationalization, yet both can be weakened when students perceive that unethical behavior often goes unpunished socially. Practically, educational institutions cannot rely solely on anti-corruption content; they must also create a consistent moral ecosystem. Character education, ethics dilemma-based learning, reflective training, and a transparent academic culture are necessary to strengthen moral engagement and foster internal control orientation among students. This approach emphasizes that integrity is not merely knowledge, but the outcome of a combination of self-control, moral values, and a supportive environment.

## CONCLUSION

This study found a significant relationship between locus of control and the intention to engage in corruption among university students in Surabaya. The internal locus of control dimension is negatively associated with corruption intention, whereas the powerful others and chance dimensions of locus of control are positively associated. Mediation analysis indicates that moral engagement fully mediates the relationship between internal locus of control and corruption intention, and partially mediates the relationship between powerful others and chance locus of control and corruption intention. These findings underscore that strengthening

internal control and enhancing moral engagement are crucial strategies to reduce students' corrupt intentions.

The contributions of this study are threefold. Theoretically, it extends the literature on locus of control and moral engagement in the context of corruption intention, particularly among Indonesian university students, and provides empirical evidence that moral engagement plays a differential mediating role across the dimensions of locus of control. Practically, the findings serve as a reference for higher education institutions in designing character education and moral development programs, offer students a reflective basis to strengthen internal control and moral awareness, and provide a foundation for anti-corruption agencies, such as the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), in developing education programs targeting psychological aspects.

Based on these results, it is recommended that future research expand the population scope, incorporate additional psychological variables, and employ longitudinal designs to understand changes in corruption intentions over time. Writing academic articles is a challenging yet rewarding process when the outcomes contribute meaningfully to knowledge development and the prevention of corruption through psychological approaches and value-based education.

#### **LIMITATION**

This study has several limitations. First, the availability of empirical references examining the relationship between moral engagement and corrupt behavior remains limited, particularly in the context of university students in Indonesia, which necessitated referring to studies conducted abroad for part of the discussion. Second, the participants were solely students from Surabaya, meaning that the findings cannot yet be generalized to a broader population with different social and cultural backgrounds. Third, this study did not include other potential influencing variables, such as religious values, social norms, and peer influence, which may affect the intention to engage in corruption. Future research is recommended to incorporate these variables to obtain more comprehensive results.

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