

Predicting the Underlying Factors of Academic Dishonesty by University Students: A Case Study

by

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Abstract

Cheating in examinations, course work and assignments usually called academic dishonesty, is a macro level problem in education system around the globe. There is no doubt that academic dishonesty is increasing in Pakistan. There are many factors behind why one prefers academic dishonesty over academic integrity. The present study was conducted to look at the underlying factor of academic dishonesty in Pakistan and specifically in University of the Punjab. The present study employed quantitative research methods and used survey technique for data collection. Consequently, the researchers composed structured questionnaire to collect data from targeted respondents. The data was collected from 395 respondents by using the stratified random technique of choosing sample. The method of proportional allocation was used to distribute the total sample size between three strata the relevant formula used for this purpose is $n_h = n \cdot \frac{N_h}{N}$. Factor analysis and multiple linear regressions were used to analyze data. Findings of this study reveal that there is a significant relationship between the variables like gender, peer acceptance, high self-efficacy, fear of exam, fear of failure and academic cheating. While, variables like age, schooling, education system and family systems are insignificant.

Key Words: University, Students, Academic, Cheating, Dishonesty

Introduction

Sociology is a scientific and systematic study of society. Sociology tells us that society is composed of different institutions like family, education, religion, health and economics. These institutions are interrelated with each other. If there is, a problem in one institution others are also affected. Cheating is a problem, which directly related with education and it is a meso level problem and over the last few decades it has become a large problem of educational community and it is very important to discuss this phenomenon with the help of sociology.

This habilitation thesis is presenting the comprehensive study to investigate the answer of the questions “why students cheat?”. It also presents the study of underlying factors of cheating among Punjab university students with the help of Bandera’s social learning theory, self-efficacy theory and strain theory by Robert k Merton .The reason behind using these theories is that in western countries already use these theories to study the same phenomena and provide support for further research.

Society has generated the concept that student need to acquire a degree for future employment, financial security and personal reasons. Students often believe they will receive higher salaries if they have good grades throughout their academic careers. Society thinks that

grades are important, significantly affecting the lives of students that is why students are under pressure and are extremely concerned about the grades they receive. For this purpose, sometimes they go for cheating. Plagiarism and cheating are reflection of need to get good grades at any cost, and this wrong approach will continue to become serious problem in their academia.

Academic dishonesty is concerned to the educational community. This problem is damaging our educational system like octopus. Academic dishonesty consists of any attempts to falsifying, fabricate or tempering with data, information, record or any other material that is relevant to the student's perception in any course, laboratory or other academic exercise or function.

In today's academic environment, the epidemic of academic dishonesty among students cannot be ignore. The implications for the academic world are serious. When students cheat, the campus culture is impacted. Rather than being a learning environment, the campus could be one full of "back room" and Internet deals for term papers and test answers. Unfortunately, whether cheating continues to be on the rise or a problem that has reached plateau is as debatable as the reasons why students cheat? Therefore, we need further explanation for the reasons behind students cheating behaviors, or academic dishonesty. Literature on academic dishonesty, cheating, or academic integrity among students is voluminous, and the published studies have focused on descriptions of students who cheat.ⁱ Institutions of higher education that create an environment of academic integrity can better prepare students to become ethically involved citizens of the worldⁱⁱ by requiring students to participate in a community of ethical accountability. Hamiltonⁱⁱⁱ advised that institutions of higher education and their faculty should assume shared responsibility for the ethical conduct and training of their students. Hamilton further stated that little is known about ethical leadership in the creation of a collective conscience within an institution. Callahan and Bok^{iv} suggested that, "Ethical problems arise at all stages of life, and are part of all professions, disciplines, and jobs, consideration of them is as appropriate and necessary at the advanced graduate and professional level as it is at the undergraduate level" (p. 62). To ensure ethical stability within future generations, the academy must create an environment of academic integrity and instill an understanding of professional principles and ethical know-how in today's students.^v Friedman^{vi} provided a discussion of the ethical use of information and both the benefits of, and challenges arising from, the information age. One of these challenges is an increased incidence of academic dishonesty. During the last thirty years, there has been an increased focus on this issue, coincides with the emergence of the information age.^{vii} In response to this growing trend in unethical conduct, McCabe, Trevino, and Butterfield^{viii} suggested that students at all levels, from freshmen to graduate students, fail to familiarize themselves with campus policies regarding academic integrity. They proposed that institutions should not take ethical knowledge for granted and should discuss and review institutional policies, even with returning students, to clarify those policies and to foster a climate of academic integrity. An understanding of academic integrity may be the first step in addressing the problem of unethical conduct by students.^{ix}

Definition of Academic Cheating:

Cheating is a major ethical problem facing by students in educational institutions. That behavior diverges from ethical norms and involves violating rules deceptively in an effort to gain something. Cheating causes serious problems in academic setting because it distorts the process of assessments. Cheating is to deprive of something valuable by the use of deceit or fraud.^x In educational institutions, cheating is violation of prescribed rules of standard condition for

completing assignment and test, ranges from unauthorized collaboration on an assignment to falsifying a bibliography to using crib notes.

Academically Dishonest acts Conducted by Students in Educational Institutions:

- **Plagiarism:** The adoption, or reproduction of, original creations of another author without due acknowledgment.^{xi}
- **Fabrication:** The falsification of, data, information, or citations in any formal academic exercise.^{xii}
- **Deception:** Providing false information to an instructor concerning a formal academic exercise. *e.g.* Giving a false excuse for missing a deadline or falsely claiming to have submitted work.^{xiii}
- **Cheating:** Any attempt to give or obtain assistance in a formal academic exercise such as examination, without due acknowledgment.^{xiv}
- **Bribery:** or paid services. Giving assignment answers or test answers for money.^{xv}
- **Sabotage:** Acting to prevent others from completing their work, this includes cutting pages out of library books or willfully disrupting the experiments of others.^{xvi}
- **Professorial misconduct:** Professorial acts that are academically fraudulent equate to academic fraud and/or grade fraud.^{xvii}
- **Impersonation:** Assuming a student's identity with intent to provide an advantage for the student.^{xviii}

Methodology:

In this research stratified sampling as a sampling technique has been applied. The different education levels (BS, M.A and above MA), are considered as strata because students of different education level have different age groups. Because of different age groups students have different choice. The target population of this survey consists of all the students of university of the Punjab. Total population for this research was 29604 and the formula provided by T. Yamane^{xix} to determine the sample size where;

N =total target population.

α = level of significances.

n = sample size

N = 29604

α = 0.05

After the calculation of this formula, a random sample of size 395 was selected for this study using random numbers. Survey questionnaire was used as a tool for data collection in the field. For the accuracy of data all the questions were close ended. The questionnaire consisted of 48 questions including demographic information. The questionnaire was divided into five interrelated parts:

- Demographic information
- Cheating Behavior learned
- Self-efficacy

- Academic Stress
- Measure of academic cheating

Data Collection

In order to conduct a survey, to move in the field in order to get responses different departments were selected. Visits were conducted of these departments and permission was sought from the gatekeepers of the respective departments as well. According to the demand of certain departments authority letter was issued to fulfill the requirement. Questionnaire contained 49 questions and was prepared in understandable English language. The questionnaire was given to the respondents personally and assurance was given that the information will be kept confidential. The questionnaire was collected at the spot.

For the current study, the data was collected almost in one month in the form of visit of all departments of University of Punjab. Face to face survey was used for data collection. The respondents' behavior was very good. Some respondents refused to fill up the questionnaire but after explaining the objective of the study, they agreed to cooperate. Some of the respondents wished to get the copy of survey report after its completion. The research work was carrying certain difficulties in which the most common factor involved was that people were unable to return the questionnaire after completion in drop out method. Another factor was prominent during study that female respondents showed more cooperation in data gathering. During collection of data another problem faced was to find the students due to summer vacation in the university. Only those students were available who joined the summer camps. It also involved the barrier of non-friendly weather due to which the population was no available and unwilling to respond happily. It was a good experience on the whole.

Factor Analysis:

Table 1 Factor Analysis

Cheating behavior learned		
Underlying theme	A	Factor loading
Peer Acceptance		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If I cheated on a class test/exam, most people who are important to me (e.g., parent, siblings, friends, peers, teachers, etc.) would approve of my behavior. • The people in my life whose opinions I value (e.g., parent, siblings, friends, peers, teachers, etc.) would be willing to cheat on a class test/exam if they were in my situation. • People whose opinions I value (e.g., parent, siblings, friends, peers, teachers, etc.) expect me to cheat on a class test/exam 	.645	.736 .825 .733
Cheating Engagement		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think that you should allow your friends to copy your academic works before submitting to the professor? • Do you think that you will cheat after a successful experience of escape of your friend? • Do you think that you should copy another student's homework when it is not permitted by instructor? • Is it right to engage someone else to write some of your academic work on your class assignment 	.666	.664 .736 .719 .708
Academic Self-efficacy		
Underlying theme	α	Factor loading
High self-efficacy		.742

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are your parents satisfied with your grades/results? • Do you always succeed in passing exams? • Do you think that if you work hard enough you can solve any problem? 	.658	.824 .746
Academic Stress		
Underlying Theme	α	Factor loading
Fear of Assessment		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you ever felt the fear of failure in exams? • Do you think that burden of assignments, test and quizzes leads towards academic stress? • Do you ever feel short of time for your class wok? • Do you think that the poor result of previous terms leads you to academic stress? 	.665	.741 .756 .674 .651
Fear of Failure		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You get worried when you think that your results are not as good as those of your classmates? • Do you think that your misunderstanding of teacher’s teaching style can lead you to academic stress? 	.580	.839 .839
Academic Cheating		
Underlying Theme	α	Factor loading
Copying Material		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think that student copy exam sheet during exam? • Students copy during exam from cheating material that they take with in exam? 	.660	.864 .864

After factor analysis, results the values in the table reflect how strongly the associated items load on their respective factors or components. The questionnaire constructed on three themes. Every theme was further divided into factors to measure the variable accurately. All the other items settled onto their respective factors with loadings greater than 0.65. The first factor was characterized as “peer acceptance.” The second factor was better represented as “cheating engagement.” The third factor was labeled “high self-efficacy.” The forth factor was represented as “fear of assessment.” And the fifth factor was loaded as “fear of assessment.” And one dependent factor loaded as copying material. The values with membership in the respective factor are underlined. The internal consistencies for each of the five new neutralization categories were estimated using Cronbach’s α . Peer acceptance yielded an internal consistency of 0.645. Cheating engagement demonstrated an internal consistency score of 0.666. High self-efficacy represented an internal consistency of 0.658. Fear of assessment yielded an internal consistency of .665 and fear of failure represented an internal consistency of 0.580. And the dependent variable demonstrated an internal consistency score of 0.660. The value of Cronbach α is quite acceptable not good. The reason behind this the questionnaire of present study was modified adapted from western’s studies. Either it was not fully applicable in Pakistani context or the numbers of variable were not enough to measure the results.

Table 2 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

	B	SEB	B	P
(Constant)	-.983	1.296		.449
Age	.022	.058	.020	.706
Gender ^a	.512	.212	.118*	.017
Schooling ^b	.130	.207	.031	.530
Education System ^c	.152	.219	.036	.487
Family System ^d	-.188	.208	-.044	.367
Peer Acceptance	.088	.037	.118*	.019
Cheating Engagement	.089	.030	.146	.063

High Self-efficacy	.125	.044	.147**	.005
Fear of Assessment	.071	.033	.110*	.034

Regression analysis of all independent variable and Academic Cheating (dependent variable) shows Beta coefficient (B), Standard error of commuted value of B (SE_B) and standardized β

Adjusted $R^2 = 0.149$, $R = 0.386$

Test of the full model: $F = 6.712$

Model Demonstrates significance at $\alpha = 0.05$

Dependent Variable : Academic cheating

Note: Standardized Regression Coefficients are reported.

^a0 = female; 1 = male

^b0 = English medium; 1 = Urdu medium.

^c0 = MSc; 1 = above MSc.

^d0 = Joint; 1 = Nuclear.

Adjusted R-square:

Measures the proportion of the **variance** in the dependent variable (academic cheating) that was explained by variations in the independent variables. In the analysis, the “Adjusted R Square” shows that 14.9% of the variance was explained.

R-square:

Measures the proportion of the **variation** in the dependent variable (*academic cheating*) that was explained by variations in the independent variables. In our analysis, the "R-Square" shows that 38.6% of the variation was explained.

Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error:

This is the standard error for the coefficient. It is used in the calculation of significance. If the Std. Error is more than 10% of the mean, it is high.

P-value:

In the analysis the last column shows that the p-value of gender, peer acceptance, high self-efficacy, fear of exam and fear of failure are less than 0.05 which is significant. There is a significant relationship between gender, peer acceptance, high self-efficacy, fear of exam, fear of failure and academic cheating. While age, schooling, education system, family system are insignificant means there is no significant relationship between age, schooling, education system, family system, cheating engagement and academic cheating.

The overall model proved significant in that adjusted $R^2 = 0.149$, $R = 0.386$, $F = 6.712$.

Age:

In the regression, age was the independent variable and academic cheating was the dependent variable. The results showed that $B = 0.022$ suggesting that 1 unit of change in age increased 0.022 units of change in an academic cheating. Table 2 shows P value (0.706) is greater than level of significance showing that there exists a no significant relationship between age and

academic cheating, which shows that both these variables have insignificant impact on each other. Age was insignificantly and positive related to cheating.

Gender:

In our analysis regression, gender was the independent variable and academic cheating was the dependent variable. The results showed that $B = 0.512$ suggesting that 1 unit of change in gender increased 0.512 units of change in an academic cheating. Gender was significantly and positive related to cheating.

Schooling:

In the next regression, schooling was the independent variable and academic cheating was the dependent variable. The results showed that $B = 0.130$ suggesting that 1 unit of change in gender increased 0.130 units of change in an academic cheating. Gender was statistically insignificantly and positive related to cheating.

Education System:

In this analysis of regression, education system was the independent variable and academic cheating was the dependent variable. The results showed that $B = 0.152$ suggesting that 1 unit of change in education system increased 0.152 units of change in an academic cheating. Education system was insignificantly and positive related to cheating.

Family System:

In the next regression, family system was the independent variable and academic cheating was the dependent variable. The results showed that $B = -0.188$ suggesting that 1 unit of change in family system increased -0.188 units of change in an academic cheating. Family system was insignificantly and negatively related to cheating.

Peer Acceptance:

In the regression, peer acceptance was the independent variable and academic cheating was the dependent variable. The results showed that $B = 0.088$ suggesting that 1 unit of change in peer acceptance increased 0.512 units of change in an academic cheating. Peer acceptance was significantly and positive related to cheating because P value (0.019) is greater than level of significance showing that there exists a significant relationship between peer acceptance and academic cheating, which shows that both these variables have significant impact on each other.

Cheating Engagement:

In our analysis, cheating engagement was the independent variable and academic cheating was the dependent variable. The results showed that $B = 0.089$ suggesting that 1 unit of change in cheating engagement increased 0.089 units of change in an academic cheating. Cheating engagement was insignificantly and positive related to cheating.

High Self-efficacy:

In next analysis, high self-efficacy was the independent variable and academic cheating was the dependent variable. The results showed that $B = 0.125$ suggesting that 1 unit of change in high self-efficacy increased 0.125 units of change in an academic cheating. High self-efficacy was significantly and positive related to cheating.

Fear of Assessment:

In the analysis, fear of assessment was the independent variable and academic cheating was the dependent variable. The results showed that $B = 0.074$ suggesting that 1 unit of change in fear of assessment increased 0.074 units of change in an academic cheating. Fear of assessment was statistically significantly and positive related to cheating.

Fear of Failure:

In analysis fear of failure was the independent variable and academic cheating was the dependent variable. The results showed that $B = 0.194$ suggesting that 1 unit of change in fear of failure increased 0.194 units of change in an academic cheating. Fear of failure was statistically significantly and positive related to cheating.

Discussion:

Gender was found to be significantly and positive related to cheating it means gender has impact on cheating. This finding is consistent with the gender literature that has shown that gender increases involvement in cheating behavior. As per Malone,^{xx} attitude of male and female students differs on some dishonest acts but for most of the issues of dishonesty, they behave in same way. Peer acceptance was significantly and positively related to cheating this finding shows that peer acceptance has the great impact on the student's cheating behavior and finding support the literature, Empirical research^{xxi} has supported this view, suggesting that peer cheating behavior promotes vicarious learning, which increases the likelihood of cheating on the part of the observer. Peer effects have also been the focus in academic achievement across classrooms and schools.^{xxii} However, due to difficulties in measuring peer influence, there is a relatively small body of direct credible evidence of peer effects.^{xxiii} High self- efficacy was significantly and positive related to cheating has found to show that the self-concept is highly related to cheating literature support the finding as General self-efficacy measures were not found to be predictive of any college outcomes,^{xxiv} while academic self-efficacy has been consistently shown to predict grades and persistence in college. Researchers^{xxv} report that high academic self-efficacy is protective factor to decrease cheating. Student who perform well and believe that they have ability to perform well are less likely to cheat. On the other hand high self-efficacy student are found more likely to cheat when their performance is low. High self-efficacy student believe that they have ability to perform well they cheat to increase their grades, when faced with the objective evidence that they are not performing well. On the other hand, work has been done on impact of anti-intellectualism attitude and academic self-efficacy on student perception of cheating.^{xxvi} Fear of assessment and Fear of failure was statistically significantly and positive related to cheating, these findings shows that fear of assessment and cheating has strong correlation literature found that study from the Center for Academic Integrity shows that "to get good grades" was a primary motive for cheating among high school students.^{xxvii} Science has long recognized that some level of stress can be adaptive and even healthy;^{xxviii} however, chronic student stress has been consistently associated with negative outcomes.^{xxix}

Schooling was statistically insignificantly and positive related to cheating this finding show that there is no impact of schooling in student's cheating behavior whether the students are from Urdu medium or English medium they cheat equally. Education system was insignificantly and positive related to cheating. Age was insignificantly and positive related to cheating. This finding shows that age factor has no impact on cheating behavior of student.

The result shows that no matter students are from what educational system or majors' cheating is common in all educational systems. Family system was insignificantly and negatively related to cheating found that there is no impact of family system on cheating whether the students are from nuclear or joint families their cheating behavior is same. Cheating engagement was insignificantly and positive related to cheating shows that cheating engagement has no impact on cheating behavior but literature show the correlation between them. The present study not found correlation between these two variables, statistics generate this result, and either sample was too small or plagued by measurement error.

Under certain conditions peer acceptance cheating, self-efficacy, and fear of assessment made significant contributions to the multiple regression model for the Independent variables. Overall, the hypothesis received high support. Among the Individually significant predictors of the multiple regression models, peer acceptance, student's self-efficacy, and fear of assessment predicted the probability of cheating. The significant results suggest that students' lack of confidence in themselves and their social relationships impacted their decisions to cheat.

Since all of these factors are intercorrelated, it was essential to use regression to determine that they all uniquely contribute to the best predictive model of cheating behavior.

Conclusion:

The findings of this research indicated that cheating behavior can be reduced through employing social learning and self-efficacy theories. It is concluded that social learning theory has strong positive relation with student's perception about academic dishonesty and academic performance. It is also proved that academic self-efficacy has a strong positive effect on Student's grades and credits; In fact, self-efficacy is the strongest predictor of academic performance. Stress has generally been found to have a negative influence on academic performance and on staying enrolled. To some extent, stress plays positive role in academics but if the academic stress increased, it will cause more cheating behavior among students. It is concluded that the association between peer acceptance, high self-efficacy, fear of failure and academic cheating is proved. All these factors collectively or separately affect the academic performance of the students.

Recommendations:

After conducting this research, the researchers have the following recommendations for future research. The recommendations are as follows:

- It is recommended that data must be collected from the students of other universities of Pakistan as results may be differing in these universities.
- A larger sample size must be taken for more accurate results. Some other sampling technique rather than stratum random sampling can also be employed.
- Narrowed, future research needs to explore the nature of relationships between academic dishonesty. Future studies needed to consider the roles moderator variables, which might include cultural background or gender, for example, and establish empirically verifiable models for examining those factors that predict the

likelihood of cheating. Close study of students' observations of cheating within their peers is necessary in order to discover if the frequency of observed cheating identified in the present study is accurate.

- It is vital for the educators and educational institutions to pay extra attention in planning extracurricular activities in schools, colleges and universities. Educators must do every effort to engage students in these activities. Extra curriculum may act as a buffer to neutralize the academic stressors of the students. Extracurricular activities can enhance self-esteem of those students who may be average but may hold different talents in them. This will not only allow students to be relieved of stress and enhance their self-esteem but will also allow maintaining good physical, psychological and social health.
- Additional research is needed regarding student's cheating, comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions of academic integrity policies and practices, observations and reporting of cheating, engagement in cheating behaviors, and perceptions of the seriousness of academic dishonesty must be gained. Research identifying correlations between departmental culture and perceptions of academic integrity policies and practices in specific programs

ⁱ Arvidson, 2004

ⁱⁱ Cole & Conklin, 1996; McCabe, Trevino & Butterfield, 2001

ⁱⁱⁱ Hamilton, 2002

^{iv} Callahan and Bok, 1980

^v Langlais, 2006

^{vi} Friedman, 2005

^{vii} Burnett, Rudolph, & Clifford, 1988; Institute of Medicine, 2002; McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2001

^{viii} McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2001

^{ix} Cizek, 1999; Roberts & Toombs, 1993

^x Intellstudent. (2010). *Academic Cheating*. Retrieved 24 June 2016 from <https://www.writework.com/essay/academic-cheating>

^{xi} Ibid.

^{xii} *Academic Dishonesty*. (n.d.). Retrieved 24 June 2016 from <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/styleguide/chapter/academic-dishonesty/>

xiii Ibid.

xiv *What is academic dishonesty?* (n.d.). Retrieved 24 June 2016 from <http://spiegel.cs.rit.edu/~hpb/FAQ/Academic%20Dishonesty%20Student%20View.htm>

xv Ibid.

xvi Ibid.

xvii Ibid.

xviii Ibid.

xix Yamane, 1967

xx Malone, 2006

xxi Jordan, 2001; Lim & See, 2001; McCabe et al., 2002

xxii Graham, 2006; Hanushek, et al., 2003; Hoxby & Weingarth, 2006; Lefgren, 2004

xxiii Sacerdote, 2001; Zimmerman, 2003; Stinebrickner & Stinebrickner, 2006; Hoxby & Weingarth, 2006

xxiv Lindley & Borgen, 2002

xxv Finn & Frone, 2004

xxvi Elias, 2009

xxvii McCabe, 2001

xxviii Seyle, 1956

xxix Grant, et al., 2004; Kaplan, et al., 2005

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