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ACADEMIC CHEATING AMONG GRADUATES IN RELATION TO THEIR PERSONALITY

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ABSTRACT:

Cheating is widespread phenomenon which we come across in all walks of life. The majority of students cheat at some point in their academic careers. Studies that examine the personal characteristics of students who engage in cheating behaviours represent a large portion of the research on academic cheating. Most of the research in this area has focused on students' individual factors including gender, GPA, competition, self esteem and work ethics (Miller et al., 2007). Few studies have tried to explore students' reasons for engaging in cheating behaviours from psychological perspectives also but these are not enough to understand and generalize complexity associated with academic cheating and individual's behaviour. In this study the researcher studied the personality characteristics of students with respect to their academic cheating behavior. 240 Graduate students from two districts of Telangana were included in this descriptive study. Data was collected using suitable measures to find out the Personality characteristics and academic cheating behavior. The results would help the teachers and academic fraternity to understand the cheating behavior so that necessary academic decisions can be taken.



KEYWORDS: Academic Cheating, Academic Dishonesty, Personality, Graduate students.

INTRODUCTION

Cheating is word known to everyone. People betray, lie, betray, defraud and use tricks to gain or to get their tasks done, attain their goals or for fulfillment of their individual interests by evolving countless ways across the world. It is reasonably believed that cheating is not instinctive, that individuals are not born with the intrinsic traits of cheating; rather, some of them acquire it with their socialization by

getting affected from the society and the environment they live in through observation and imitation. Cheating can be seen in simple actions among children when they try to hide the things that are proscribed for them or among young boys and girls lying for absenting from schools or among adolescents as well as adult people when they use unfair means to overcome difficulties in life. In fact cheating is neither age specific nor field specific rather it is widely spread

across the sphere in different shapes and known by different names. The field of education has also not remained untouched by its grip. Since time immemorial, discussions have been heard about academic cheating hollowing the very base of education. It affects the evaluation system adversely. Conclusion of proposal by Educational Testing services has been cited by Newberger et al. (2003) by mentioning that "Cheating undermines integrity

and fairness at all levels. It leads to weak life performance and corrodes the merit basis of our society." Since it is such an important issue, cheating in academic institutions can not be ignored or left unattended.

ACADEMIC CHEATING: MEANING AND SCOPE

One of the major problems in discussing academic dishonesty lies in the lack of a clear definition of the kind of behaviours that are associated with academic dishonesty (Nuss, 1984). Extensive paper work has been done to understand the meaning of academic cheating, a term which has diverse meanings for different persons. Broadly speaking, any intentional fraudulent action or attempt to use unauthorized or unacceptable means in any academic work is considered as academic cheating or academic dishonesty. Cheating or dishonesty may have different shades of meaning, but for the purpose of the present study both the terms are exchangeable. The incidents of cheating in educational institutions have such a wide range that they may vary from person to person.

The Oxford English Reference Dictionary (Pearsall and Trumble, 1996, page 249) defines cheating as "to deceive or trick, deprive of, or to gain unfair advantage by deception or breaking rules, especially in a game or examination." Academic cheating may be defined in many ways. According to some of the definitions, academic cheating includes the intentions of the person engaged in the dishonest behaviour (Tibbetts, 1998, 1999). Von Dran, Callahan and Taylor (2001) termed it as "intentionally unethical behaviour". McCabe & Bowers (1994) and McCabe & Trevino (1993) based the definition of academic dishonesty upon particular violation of normative behaviour, such as cheating on a test or plagiarism. Weaver, Davis, Cook, Buzzanga and Neal (1991) presented a behaviour based definition that academic dishonesty is "a violation of an institution's policy on honesty."

Academic dishonesty arises from a deterioration of moral values as documented over the past decade by the Josephson Institute (Kolanko et al. 2006). Increasing levels of student dishonesty is the reflection of the value system which is being internalized by today's young people who are exposed to media almost daily reporting about fraud, bribery, insider trading and other forms of unethical behaviour in the 'real world' (Lawson, 2004; Grimes, 2004). Cheating is prevalent among students who perceive that their peers cheat and are not penalized (Bowers, 1964; McCabe & Trevino, 1993, 1997).

Scanning of empirical literature on academic cheating revealed its nature and following areas in which students are involved.

- Cheating by using unauthorized materials on any academic activity such as assignments tests etc.
- Fabrication of information, references, or results.
- Plagiarism
- Facilitating other students engage in academic dishonesty.
- Creating an improper academic disadvantage to another student.
- Interference with courses of instruction.
- Theft of, or damage to, intellectual property.
- Selling course lecture notes, handouts, or readers or other information.
- Copying someones' homework, lab report, study project, paper.

ACADEMIC CHEATING AND PERSONALITY

A number of demographic and personal variables are related to academic dishonesty. Specifically, men, younger students, students with lower grades and ability, and students who live in residences are more likely to engage in dishonest academic behaviour than women, older students, students with better grades and ability, and students who do not live in residences (Bolin, 2004). Peer approval of dishonesty and peer cheating are also positively related to academic dishonesty (McCabe & Trevino, 1997; McCabe et al 2001). Personality variables implicated as deciding factors of cheating range from irresponsibility, lack of dependability, and disregard for rules and social norms to extraversion, neuroticism, and conscientiousness (Bushway & Nash, 1977). After examining the relationship between personality and cheating, Hetherington and Feldman (1964) described the personality of student cheaters as dependent on four different types of cheating behaviour. 1.

Individualistic opportunistic: Cheating by impulsive and unplanned people. 2. Individualistic planned: Cheating is preconceived. 3. Social-active: When more than two people cooperate to cheat and both parties actively investigate the cheating possibilities. 4. Social passive: Cheating occurs when the individual's role is passive. Several personality traits have been explored having their impact on academic cheating. Bolin (2004) drew on general theory of crime (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990) to shed light on the relationship between personality and academic dishonesty.

NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Beyond any doubt, cheating is occurring at alarming rates (Harding et al. 2001). The real problem arises when it is found that cheating prevailing in educational institution is not an end in itself. It is an indication of a larger problem. From the seemingly small beginnings of such cheating ultimately grow the white collar criminals of the future as well as the dishonest behaviour regarding money and wealth (Tamari, 2004). The study by Nonis and Swift (2001) has shown a strong positive correlation between academic dishonesty and work place dishonesty. These correlations suggest that dishonesty is a relatively stable characteristic that manifests in behaviour of an individual. Moreover, cheating is deeply unfair to the majority of test takers who behave honourably and play by the rules.

Present study

"Academic Cheating among Graduates in relation to their Personality"

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF THE TERMS:

Academic Cheating: The definition given by Firm and Frone (2004) is taken as an operational definition academic cheating, "Cheating represents the extent to which students engaged in academic dishonesty during the past years." (cited by Kalia, 2006).

Personality: The definition given by Eysenck and Eysenck (1975) is taken as the operational definition of the term personality which states, "Personality is more or less stable and enduring organization of person's character, temperament, intellect and physique which determine his unique adjustment to the environment"

Graduates: In the present study the Graduates are those students who pursue a three year regular Undergraduate programme in the Degree colleges such as B.A, B.Sc and B.Com.

OBJECTIVES:

The present study aims at achieving the following objectives:

1. To compare Neurotic and Stable students on academic cheating.
2. To compare Extrovert and Introvert students on academic cheating.

METHOD

Procedure

In the Present study the descriptive survey method was used. Descriptive survey method provides the opportunity in describing, studying and interpreting the today's situation and in concerned with conditions, relationships, practices, beliefs, attitudes that provide the processes and the trends that are rising.

Descriptive research is not mere gathering of data and tabulate on data but significance of what is described. Besides describing, it often compares and contrasts the existing evidence thereby involving measurements, classifications and interpretations and evaluations.

The present study utilized the descriptive survey method endeavors to survey academic cheating among Graduates and their personality.

Participants

A sample is a small proportion of the population that is selected for observation and analysis. By observing the characteristics of the sample, certain inferences can be made about the characteristics of the population from which it drawn (Best, 2008).

Keeping in view of expenses, time, utility and suitability, the target population comprised of 240 students in the age group of 18 to 21 years old studying in Graduation in English medium degree Colleges of Telangana.

Thus the students equally divided into sex and residence (60 urban male + 60 rural male +60 urban female + 60 rural female) of Degree was collected randomly from two districts (Jagtiyal and Nizamabad) of Telangana State.

MEASURES

Academic Cheating Scale: Academic Cheating Scale was constructed and standardized by Kiran Deep. With the following five dimensions 1. Cheating in Examination 2. Plagiarism 3. Lying about Academic Assignments 4. Interference during Instructions 5. Damaging Intellectual Property. Total 50 items are there in the scale. Each item is followed by five alternatives ranging from 'Always' to 'Never' depicting degree of respondents' involvement in different types of academic cheating. The options Always, Frequently, Sometimes, Hardly Ever and Never carries scores 4, 3, 2, 1, 0 respectively.

Maudsley Personality Inventory (MPI): Maudsley Personality inventory by Jalota and Kapoor (1975) was used for assessing the extroversion and neuroticism among students.

It is design to access Neuroticism-stability and Extroversion-introversion dimensions of personality among Indian adults particularly in the age group of 16 years and above. It takes hardly 15 to 20 minutes to respond all the items. The language used is English which is simple and easy to understand. It consists of a short scale (Items 1 to 12 given on the front page of the test booklet) and a long scale consisting of all the 48 items of the test booklet. Each of these items is answerable by making a tick mark into one of the three boxes against each item. The 48 items of the test booklet are distributed among the two personality dimensions. Each item has three response alternatives scored 0,1,2 from lower to higher levels of neuroticism and extroversion, and any single item contributes to only one of the 99 two dimensions. The total composite neuroticism or extroversion score is simply the sum of raw scores on all the 24 items in the two dimensions.

DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected by using the tools mentioned. Instructions were given to each candidate. No personal data about the individual was collected.

DATA ANALYSIS

Mean, Standard Deviation, t-Test, Correlations and Percentage were used to analyze and interpret the data.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Objective1: To compare Neurotic and Stable students on academic cheating.

Hypothesis1: There is no significant difference among Neurotic and Stable students on academic cheating.

Means, SDs, and 't' Ratios of Neurotic and Stable students on Academic Cheating

S.No	Dimensions of Academic Cheating	Personality	Mean	SD	t-Ratio	Level of Significance
1	Cheating in Examination	Neurotic	22.60	5.76	2.80	0.01 level
		Stable	19.65	4.72		
2	Plagiarism	Neurotic	8.60	3.30	1.53	NS
		Stable	7.83	2.85		
3	Lying about academic assignment	Neurotic	32.48	9.03	2.58	0.05 level
		Stable	28.72	8.93		
4	Interference during instruction	Neurotic	7.20	3.05	3.27	0.01 level
		Stable	5.82	2.09		
5	Damaging intellectual Property	Neurotic	2.83	1.33	0.79	NS
		Stable	2.65	1.46		
6	Global Academic Cheating	Neurotic	73.18	18.11	3.10	0.01
		Stable	64.69	15.64		

It is clear from the above Table that on Cheating in Examination, the mean score of Neurotic students ($M=22.06\pm 5.76$) is higher than the mean score of Stable students ($M=19.65\pm 4.72$), 't' ratio being 2.08 is statistically significant at .01 level of significance.

It shows that Neurotics involve in cheating or influence others to use unfair means during examination more than Stable students. The mean score of Neurotics on Lying about Academic Assignment ($M=32.48\pm 9.03$) is higher than that of Stable adolescents ($M=7.83\pm 2.93$), 't' ratio being 2.58 is significant at .05 level of significance. It indicates that Neurotics lie to their teachers about academic assignment being done properly more than Stable students.

The mean score of Neurotic students on Interference during instructions ($M=7.20\pm 3.05$) is higher than that of Stable students ($M=5.82\pm 2.09$), 't' ratio being 3.27, is significant at .01 level of significance. It means Neurotics create disturbance during class room teaching more than Stable students. On Global Academic Cheating, the mean score of Neurotics ($M=73.18\pm 18.11$) is higher than the mean score of Stable students ($M=64.69\pm 15.64$), 't' ratio being 3.10 is significant at .01 level of significance. It points out that Neurotics get involve in Academic cheating more than Stable students. However, no significant difference is observed on rest of the dimensions of Academic Cheating i.e. Plagiarism and Damaging Intellectual Property. It means, Neurotic and Stable students are similar on these dimensions of academic cheating. Thus the hypothesis "There is no significant difference among Neurotic and Stable adolescents on academic cheating", is partly rejected in this study.

Objective2: To compare Extrovert and Introvert students on academic cheating.

Hypothesis2: There is no significant difference among Extrovert and Introvert students on academic cheating.

S.No	Dimensions of Academic Cheating	Personality	Mean	SD	t-Ratio	Level of Significance
1	Cheating in Examination	Extrovert	23.00	6.26	3.13	0.01
		Introvert	20.04	4.56		
2	Plagiarism	Extrovert	8.75	3.56	1.04	N.S
		Introvert	8.15	3.11		
3	Lying about academic assignment	Extrovert	32.50	9.80	1.91	N.S
		Introvert	29.46	8.73		
4	Interference during instruction	Extrovert	7.57	3.52	2.86	0.01
		Introvert	6.16	1.90		
5	Damaging intellectual Property	Extrovert	3.10	1.64	1.73	N.S
		Introvert	2.64	1.46		
6	Global Academic Cheating	Extrovert	74.94	21.18	2.74	0.01
		Introvert	66.16	15.60		

It is evident from the table that the mean score of Extroverts on Cheating in Examination ($M=23.07 \pm 6.26$) is higher than the mean score of Introverts ($M=20.04 \pm 4.56$), 't' ratio being 3.13 is statistically significant at .01 level of significance. It shows that Extrovert adolescents use unfair means during examination more than Introvert students.

On Interference during Instructions, the mean score of Extroverts ($M=7.57 \pm 3.52$) is higher than the mean score of Introverts ($M=6.16 \pm 1.90$), 't' ratio being 2.86 is significant at .01 level of significance. It means, Extrovert adolescents create interference during class room instructions more than that of Introverts.

On Global Academic Cheating, the mean score of Extroverts ($M=74.94 \pm 21.18$) is higher than the mean score of Introverts ($M=66.16 \pm 15.60$), 't' ratio being 2.74 is significant at .01 level of significance. It indicates that Extroverts get involve in Global Academic Cheating more than Introvert adolescents.

On rest of the dimensions of Academic Cheating i.e. Plagiarism, Lying about Academic Assignment and Damaging intellectual property, no significant difference is observed. It means, both the groups of Extrovert and Introvert adolescents are similar on these dimensions of Academic Cheating. Thus the hypothesis, that "There is no significant difference among Extrovert and Introvert adolescents on academic cheating", is partly accepted in this study.

LIMITATIONS

The present study has been confined to limited antecedents of academic cheating. More elaborate studies may be conducted exploring other attributes of academic cheating.

- The present study has been conducted on Under Graduates. To confirm the findings of the present study and to generalize the conclusions, it is desirable to investigate effect of personality on academic cheating among different age groups.
- Similar study can be extended on a larger and more representative sample picked up from larger area and for longer span of time.
- Research can be taken further to explore academic achievement level of cheaters.
- Academic cheating may be studied in relation to other variables such as locus of control, moral values, ethical background and other personality traits.
- The study indirectly indicates the prevalence of cheating among adolescents. Further research is needed to measure the extent of prevalence and perception of academic cheating.

- Future research should generate research pertaining to why students indulge in academic cheating and which are the areas in which cheating is more prevalent.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results in the present study show that they are least involved in academic cheating. Overall, the results of this study in Indian context supported the hypotheses partially. The study revealed the prevalence of academic cheating among graduates from the perspective of personality. The results in the present study indicate some underlying current through personality as a factor. Because students who are more involved in academic cheating are on higher side of neuroticism and extraversion. Whether they are urban or rural or male or female adolescents, similar trend has been found in all the dimensions of academic cheating with an exception here and there. An over view of the results indicates that cheaters are mostly extroverts and neurotic.

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