Annals of Human and Social Sciences
www.ahss.org.pk

RESEARCH PAPER

Academic Dishonesty and Locus of Control in Public and Private Universities: A Comparative Study

[1]Sumbul Azam*, [2] Hira Abbas and [3] Maryam Tariq

1. Lecturer, Department of Psychology, Iqra University, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan
2. Lecturer, Institute of professional psychology, Bahria University, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan
3. Behavioral Therapist, Therapy Coach, Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan

| **Corresponding Author** | Sumbul.azam@iqra.edu.pk |

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to analyze relationship between academic dishonesty and locus of control in public and private universities. The research regarding academic dishonesty and locus of control in Pakistan is not well conducted, so there is an essential need to examine the correlation between these variables. Through purposive sampling technique (N=189) students age ranged between 18-25 years were selected from universities of Karachi. Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (Rotter, 1966) and Academic Dishonesty Scale (Bashir & Bala, 2018) were used to measure the research variables. The results revealed that there is weak positive correlation between these two variables (r=0.38, p<0.05). The findings of research highlighted that there would be a difference between academic dishonesty in public and private university students. Results of our research indicate that academic dishonesty is prevalent in both public and private universities. This study is indicating how grave matter of academic dishonesty is and universities should take measures to ensure that culture of learning should prevail instead of grades.

| **Keywords:** | Academic Dishonesty, Locus of Control |

Introduction

Academic dishonesty is an issue that is prevalent throughout the world (Husain, AL-Shaibani, & Mahfoodh, 2017). However, it changes in character as methods and available technology develop and strategies for control and examination vary. It has been a problem for the education system for quite a long time because it hinders the fair assessment of students and later affects their performance at the workplace (Carpenter, Harding, & Finelli, 2006). We can minimize academic dishonesty if the factors leading to it are identified. One of the factors that has been identified to affect academic dishonesty is Locus of control (Sierra & Hyman, 2006). Academic dishonesty refers to committing or contributing to dishonest acts by those engaged in teaching, learning, research, and related academic activities, and it applies not just to students, but to everyone in the academic environment (Cizek, 2003).

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence regardless of whether it was committed intentionally or not. Academic dishonesty can take place in many forms; Cheating is giving or taking any information or material which will be used to determine academic credit, Plagiarism: is a type of cheating in which a person uses someone ideas, words, design, art, music and other thing without consent, or when necessary, obtaining permission from author, Fabrication or falsification: involves the unauthorized creation or alteration of information in an academic document or activity (Bernard E Whitley, 2002) and Unauthorized collaboration/ collusion is when more than one student work on an assignment originally intended for one person (Fraser, 2014)

Cheating is widespread (Baird, 1980), increasing (Wellborn, 1980, October 20) and considered by many students to be a perfectly acceptable way to get ahead (Baird, 1980). Unfortunately, if 3 students learn to cheat in the classroom, they may continue to cheat when gainfully employed and therein lies a potential source of major societal problems (Harding, Carpenter, Finelli, & Passow, 2004). Hence, it is needed to be studied not only in private sector universities but also in public sector universities.

The main reasons of why cheating is increasing and widespread among students are Instructor competency, pressure to win, and student ignorance (Barnett & Dalton, 1981). Other consequences of academic dishonesty are penalties given by the regarded university on the offended student. Except penalties the students must face moral, social, ethical and educational issues like a person who always cheat and think he can get away with it may continue to cheat at work, family and in other aspect. In the future this attitude of cheating can affect his own life and surroundings (Cizek, 2003). Students who cheat and at first get away with it may, in the long run, suffer from low self-esteem and feel guilty. This loss of self-respect may create many other problems, including difficulties with their careers, families, and other important aspects of life (Cizek, 2003).

The concept of external and internal control was first developed by Julian Rotter (1966). Locus of control according to Rotter is a personality dimension that helps to explain one's behavior. Locus of control is described as a person's tendency to see events as being controlled internally or externally (Rotter, 1966). People either believe that they could control everything that happens to them or they leave everything on luck or fate. People with internal locus of control believe that they can control the way environment affect them while people with internal locus of control submit to environmental factors. People with internal locus of control have power to influence others. On the other hand, people with external locus of control get influenced easily. People with internal locus of control possess more self-control thus have high moral development. On the contrary people having external locus of control are impulsive having relatively low moral development (Rotter, 1966).

Literature Review

Locus of control is found to be an important predictor of academic dishonesty as their relationship was studied in a research done on academic dishonesty, academic self-concept and locus of control (Rinn, Boazman, Jackson, & Barrio, 2014). Findings indicate that locus of control predicts academic dishonesty. Another study was done on learning performance and locus of control which is by Abid, Kanwal, Nasir, Iqbal & Huda (2016), reveals that learning performance of the student with internal locus of control is high and they are more proactive during learning process. On the other hand, ones with external locus of control are more passive and reactive during learning process (Abid, Kanwal, Nasir, Iqbal, & Huda, 2016). Passive and reactive behavior during learning process could be a determinant of academic dishonesty.

Another research done in organizational setting suggests that locus of control have a significant impact on job satisfaction and influence preferences about managerial style. Findings indicate that people with internal locus of control are more satisfied with their jobs and normally in managerial positions than externally controlled employees. People with external locus of control are happier with directive management style than participative style. On the other hand, internally controlled people are happy with participative management style (Terence, Charles, & Stan, 1975). People with relatively high job satisfaction are less likely to be involved in dishonesty of any sort. Another interesting research was done on teenagers to explore relationship of their chances of attending high school and college with locus of control (DeLeire & Coleman, 2002). Findings reveals that teenagers who believe that labor market success depends on human capital investment and luck or fate (external factors) are more likely to not continue their education and teenagers

who believe that future success depends on human capital investment and their efforts (internal factors) are likely to attend high school and attend college.

A research was conducted to examine the relationship of academic dishonesty with lack of effort and excitement seeking behaviour. Academic dishonesty has a positive relationship with these two factors (DeBruin & Rudnick, 2007). Other Studies have found out that procrastination might be one of the factors of academic dishonesty. In this study 115 college undergraduate students were selected to see the relationship of cheating and plagiarism with procrastination. It found out that Students who scored high on procrastination had significantly higher scores for plagiarism than those who scored low on procrastination. (Roig & DeTommaso, 1995). Academic dishonesty does not only include plagiarism and cheating but it also includes collaboration (Donald L. McCabe, 2017). Collaboration means to work jointly with others or together. A research was conducted to examine Academic dishonesty in graduate business programs. The data were collected from 5,000 business (mostly MBA) and nonbusiness graduate students at 32 colleges and universities in the United States and Canada during the 2002–2003 and 2003–2004 academic years. Correlational results showed that cheating is associated with perceived peer behavior. This indicates that external factors affect cheating. (Donald L. McCabe, 2017).

Pakistan is a collectivistic culture which makes the people more aware of their self-respect and self-esteem. (Rehman & Waheed, 2013) Therefore when a friend or a colleague asks for help in an exam or paper they easily help them while engaging in academic dishonesty themselves, just to maintain their image in that environment. (Rehman & Waheed, 2013). However, it was also noted that Pakistani students engage mostly in the forms of academic dishonesty which they perceive to result in less punishment, this shows that the students have an internal motivation because of the avoidance of punishment behavior. There is a great divide between the public and private universities in Pakistan. According to Mallick (2017) the public universities are providing excellent education contrarily according to 7 Awan (2015) the parents perceive the education in private schools to be better than the public schools.

From the above literature review it is found out that one of the factors leading to academic dishonesty is locus of control (Sierra & Hyman, 2006). The current focus of this study is to verify the type of relationship between academic dishonesty and locus of control and to compare it across public and private sector universities in Pakistan. This would highlight the factors that promote or obstruct academic dishonesty. Which could be used by educational institutes to work towards decreasing this problem and its indications.

Materials and Methods

Research Design

The present study is primarily a quantitative study with a correlational survey design. Two self-report structured questionnaires have been utilized to determine the variables.

Participants

All together (N=189) participants were selected for this study. 95 participants were chosen from the private sector universities of Pakistan and 96 participants were chosen from the public-sector universities. From both populations, students between the ages of 18-25 years were recruited through purposive sampling technique. The inclusion criteria for participants includes that Participants should be able to speak and read English language, they should be enrolled only in university of Pakistan and should have given one exam in university (Third year students).

Measures

Informed Consent Participants were given informed consent form to obtain permission to take part in the research. Through this form, participants were provided assurances for their confidentiality, information about foreseeable risks or discomfort, the purpose of the research as well as the participant's right to withdraw or stop participating in the research at any point without penalty. They were told that their participation is voluntary and that their results may be published in a report or journal articles.

Demographic Information Form The demographic form was used to insure only individuals who fit in the research criteria were studied. Information regarding age, gender and academic grades was collected through this form. It would help us to find if there is any age or gender differences that could affect the variables.

Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (I-E Scale) Locus of control was measured using the Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (Rotter, 1966). The I-E Scale consists of 23 forced choice items and 6 fillers items, which were designed to make it more ambiguous to respondents. The response was rated on the basic of agreed or not agreed to the statement. Maximum scores were 23 and minimum score was 0. Higher scores reflect internal locus of control and lower scores reflect external locus of control. It has a strong coefficient alpha reliability value of 0.74.

Academic Dishonesty Scale by Hilal Bashir and Ranjan Bala was used. There are 6 dimensions listed on the survey instrument: (Dimension 1-Cheating in examination (1-5), Dimension 2- Plagiarism (6-9), Dimension 3- Outside help (10-13), Dimension 4- Prior cheating (14-16) Dimension 5- Falsification (17-19) and Dimension 6- Lying about Academic assignments (20-23)) among age students (18-25). The individual responding, indicated one of the listed responses under each item. The scale's coefficient alpha reliability and split half reliability were 0.68. The scale has adequate construct validity (0.7) and good discriminant validity (Bashir & Bala, 2018).

Procedure: For the desired sample of university students, participants were selected with the help of universities authorities by granting permission. First, inform consent forms were given to the participants for their approval, then demographic forms were given to participants to obtain demographic information. They were then provided with the questionnaires and instructions to fill the above-mentioned questionnaires for the measurement of their academic dishonesty and to check their type of locus of control. Both tests were administered within a comfortable setting for the participants. It would take around 10-15 minutes to complete. The administration was done individually. After the participants have completed the questionnaires the examiners would make sure that no item is left unanswered. Later participants were debriefed about the purpose of research. The scoring process of the questionnaires was done in accordance to the instructions provided by the authors of the scales.

Results and Discussion

Table 1
Frequencies and percentages of participant's demographics (N=189)

VARIABLES	*F*	*%*
GENDER		
Male	76	39.8
Female	114	59.7
UNIVERSITY		
Bahria university	95	49.7
Karachi university	96	50.3
CGPA		

2 TO 2.9	35	18.3
3 TO 4	149	78
SEMESTER		
Second	12	6.3
Third	27	14.1
Fourth	55	28.8
Fifth	17	8.9
Sixth	15	7.9
Seventh	32	16.8
Eighth	24	12.6

The above table provides descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages of demographic variables.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics for locus of control and academic dishonesty in public and private universities students.

Variables	Items	*M*	*SD*	*SK*	*K*	actual range	potential range
LOC	29	8.22	5.75	-0.42	-1.26	0-19	0-23
AD	23	50.13	21.94	0.98	0.42	23-115	23-115

Note: LOC= Locus of Control, AD= Academic Dishonesty

Table 2 provides statistics including mean and standard deviation of locus of control and academic dishonesty among the N (189) participants included in the sampling frame. According to the values of the above mentioned table the data of the current study normally distributed.

Table 3
Correlation between Academic dishonesty and Locus of Control among public and private universities student (N= 189).

	LOC	
AD	—	0.388
	—	—

Note: LOC= Locus of Control, AD= Academic Dishonesty

The correlation analysis was done using the SPSS which showed that there is a weak positive correlation between academic dishonesty and locus of control which is shown by spearman value (0.388).

Academic dishonesty has been a pervasive problem throughout the student's communities. Majority of the students are involved in one or other type of academic dishonesty (Ison, 2014). In a study conducted in Taiwan it was found that more than half of the students were involved in academic dishonesty (Lin & Wen, 2007). This behavior is harmful because it increases the probability of unfair evaluation of the students and predicts the dishonest and unethical behavior at the workplace (Carpenter, Harding, & Finelli, 2006). Situational factors are powerful factors that predict academic dishonesty (Henning, et al., Reasons for academic honesty and dishonesty with solutions: a study of pharmacy and medical students in New Zealand, 2014).

The findings of the current research imply that majority of the students are involved in academic dishonesty. The reason for such a result could be because of the awareness of academic dishonesty among students. Because in a lot of cases there is little to no awareness about the types, forms, definitions, and rules and regulations regarding academic dishonesty as supported by the studies conducted by Jordan (2001) and Granitz and Leowy (2007). On the contrary some studies have yielded different results. They show that the matter is not

of whether the students understand the concept of academic cheating but rather that students display academic dishonest behaviors while understanding the illegitimacy of those behaviors. Cognizance of unlawfulness of academic dishonesty did not stop the students from the actual act of academic dishonesty (Ayal & Gino, 2011) (Sidi, Blau, & Alkalai, 2019).

According to the findings there is no significant relationship between locus of control and academic dishonesty but there is a weak positive link between them. In a study conducted by Vowell and Chen (2004) it was also found that there was a very weak link of internal control with academic dishonesty as Individuals with a strong internal locus of control are generally less likely to engage in academic dishonesty because they take personal responsibility for their actions. It was also found that there was a very insignificant link between the external factors on the academic dishonest behavior. In another study Academic dishonest behavior is related to the effect of external factors and internal factors on an individual. In a comparative study done on Lebanese and American students it was found that their academic dishonest behavior was affected by their individual factors in the case of American students and by contextual factors in the case of Lebanese students (Mccabe, Feghali, & Abdullah, 2008). Extrinsic motivation is one of the causes that leads to academic misconduct (Rettinger & Kramer, 2009). The lack of significant relationship between academic dishonesty and locus of control in our findings can be because of a small sample size. With a large sample size and a variety of public and private universities we could be able to establish a significant relationship between academic dishonesty and locus of control.

Societal and family pressures to gain employment and a status in our society push the students towards illegitimate means like plagiarism to get good grades, which in turn would increase their chances of better employment and status (Ramzan, Munir, Siddique, & Asif, 2012). In another study conducted in New Zealand the students responded that the main reasons they engage in academic dishonesty is because of external pressures by the family and peers (Henning, et al., 2014). The environmental pressures on the student promotes anxiety in the students and anxiety of the students is also a major factor in determining the academic dishonest behavior of the students. (Wowra, 2007).

Conclusion

The findings of our research suggest that the problem of academic dishonesty is prevalent throughout Karachi in both public and private universities. More than half of the students were committing one or more type of academic dishonesty. It was also found that academic dishonesty is very weakly correlated with locus of control but no significant relationship between them was found. As there are other psychological and environmental factors (such as personality, ethics, and situational stress) significantly influence behavior towards misconduct and cheating.

Recommendations

It is recommended for the future researcher to have a large sample because small sample does not generate meaningful results. Gender differences in committing academic dishonesty can also be studied by having proportionate sample of both the genders. Apart from differences in public and private sector universities, disciplines could also be studied. There might be significant differences in academic dishonesty of students studying in medical or engineering students in comparison to students studying humanities or arts.

References

Carpenter, D. D., Harding, T. S., & Finelli, C. J. (2006). *The implications of academic dishonesty in Undergraduate Engineering on professional ethical behavior* (Vol. 35, pp. 1–12). https://doi.org/10.1061/40856(200)341

Cizek, G. J. (2003). *Detecting and Preventing Classroom Cheating: Promoting Integrity in Assessment. Experts in Assessment.* https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED476462

Coleman, M., & DeLeire, T. (2003). An economic model of locus of control and the human capital investment decision. *The Journal of Human Resources*, *XXXVIII*(3), 701–721. https://doi.org/10.3368/jhr.xxxviii.3.701

De Bruin, G. P., & Rudnick, H. (2007). Examining the cheats: the role of conscientiousness and excitement seeking in academic dishonesty. *South African Journal of Psychology*, *37*(1), 153–164. https://doi.org/10.1177/008124630703700111

Fraser, R. (2014). Collaboration, collusion and plagiarism in computer science coursework. *Informatics in Education*, *13*(2), 179–195. https://doi.org/10.15388/infedu.2014.10

Granitz, N., & Loewy, D. (2006). Applying Ethical Theories: Interpreting and responding to student plagiarism. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *72*(3), 293–306. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-006-9171-9

Henning, M. A., Ram, S., Malpas, P., Sisley, R., Thompson, A., & Hawken, S. J. (2013). Reasons for academic honesty and dishonesty with solutions: a study of pharmacy and medical students in New Zealand. *Journal of Medical Ethics*, *40*(10), 702–709. https://doi.org/10.1136/medethics-2013-101420

Husain, F. M., Al-Shaibani, G. K. S., & Mahfoodh, O. H. A. (2017). Perceptions of and Attitudes toward Plagiarism and Factors Contributing to Plagiarism: a Review of Studies. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, *15*(2), 167–195. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-017-9274-1

Jordan, A. E. (2001). College Student cheating: the role of motivation, perceived norms, attitudes, and knowledge of institutional policy. *Ethics & Behavior*, *11*(3), 233–247. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327019eb1103_3

Lin, C. S., & Wen, L. M. (2006). Academic dishonesty in higher education—a nationwide study in Taiwan. *Higher Education*, *54*(1), 85–97. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-006-9047-z

Mahmood, U., Ch, M. S., Mahmood, R., & Mahmood, S. (2024). Effects of academic dishonesty on sustainable academic achievements: A study of Higher education Institutions (HEIs) in Punjab. *Research Journal for Societal Issues*, *6*(2), 821–831. https://doi.org/10.56976/rjsi.v6i2.273

McCabe, D. L., Feghali, T., & Abdallah, H. (2008). Academic dishonesty in the Middle East: individual and contextual factors. *Research in Higher Education*, *49*(5), 451–467. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11162-008-9092-9

Mitchell, T. R., Smyser, C. M., & Weed, S. E. (1975). LOCUS OF CONTROL: SUPERVISION AND WORK SATISFACTION. *Academy of Management Journal*, *18*(3), 623–631. https://doi.org/10.2307/255692

Ramzan, M., Munir, M. A., Siddique, N., & Asif, M. (2011). Awareness about plagiarism amongst university students in Pakistan. *Higher Education*, *64*(1), 73–84. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-011-9481-4

Rehman, R., & Waheed, A. (2014). Ethical Perception of University Students about Academic Dishonesty in Pakistan: Identification of Student's Dishonest Acts. *The Qualitative Report*. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2014.1280

Rinn, A., Boazman, J., Jackson, A., & Barrio, B. (2014). Locus of control, academic self-concept, and academic dishonesty among high ability college students. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 88–114. https://doi.org/10.14434/v14i4.12770

Roig, M., & DeTommaso, L. (1995). Are college cheating and plagiarism related to academic procrastination? *Psychological Reports*, *77*(2), 691–698. https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.1995.77.2.691

Rotter, J. B. (1966). Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement. *The Psychological Monographs*, *80*(1), 1–28. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0092976

Sierra, J. J., & Hyman, M. R. (2006). A Dual-Process model of cheating intentions. In *Journal of Marketing Education* (Vol. 28, Issue 3, pp. 193–204). https://doi.org/10.1177/0273475306291464

Simkin, M. G., & McLeod, A. (2009). Why do college students cheat? *Journal of Business Ethics*, *94*(3), 441–453. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-009-0275-x

Whitley, B. E., Jr, & Keith-Spiegel, P. (2001). Academic dishonesty. In *Psychology Press eBooks*. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410604279

Wowra, S. A. (2007). Moral identities, social anxiety, and academic dishonesty among American college students. *Ethics & Behavior*, *17*(3), 303–321. https://doi.org/10.1080/10508420701519312