

The Relationship between Self-control, Self-effectiveness, Academic Performance and Tendency towards Academic Cheating: A Case Report of a University Survey in Iran

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Abstract

The tendency towards academic cheating is a universal concern and every year much research has been carried out on this matter. The tendency towards academic cheating occurs in public and private educational institution. Even universities and higher education faculties are concern on this matter. Research shows that self-control is related to tendency academic cheating. The research regarding tendency academic cheating in Iran is not well developed, so there is an essential need to investigate the tendency towards academic cheating in universities as well as to determine the relationship between self-control, self-effectiveness and academic performance with tendency academic cheating amongst the students of a university in Iran. A randomly selected group of students (N = 286: 211 female and 75 male) participated in the survey in 2008. The survey tools consisted of academic cheating tendency scale, self-control, self-effectiveness scale and an academic performance based on average mark of the previous semester. Regression analysis revealed that there was a significant multiple correlation between predictor variables (self-control, self-effectiveness and academic performance with tendency academic cheating ($R = 0/400$, $P \leq 0/0001$). These predictors explained 160% standard variable variance. Self-control, self-effectiveness and academic performance also significantly explained the variance of tendency towards academic cheating. A negative correlation was found between self-control, self-effectiveness and academic achievement. Thus, in order to decrease the act of cheating amongst university students, measures should be taken into account by selecting suitable teaching methods and learning activities, so that self-control and self-effectiveness will be promoted.

Keyword: self-control, self-effectiveness, academic performance, tendency academic cheating.

Abstrak

Kecenderungan ke arah penipuan akademik menjadi kebimbangan sejagat dan setiap tahun banyak penyelidikan telah dijalankan mengenai perkara ini. Kecenderungan ke arah penipuan akademik berlaku di institusi pendidikan awam dan swasta. Malah universiti dan fakulti pengajian tinggi juga bimbang mengenai perkara ini. Kajian menunjukkan bahawa kawalan sendiri berkaitan dengan kecenderungan penipuan akademik. Kajian mengenai kecenderungan menipu dalam kalangan akademik di Iran tidak disempurnakan dengan baik, jadi amatlah perlu untuk menyelidik kecenderungan penipuan akademik di universiti serta menentukan hubungan antara kawalan sendiri, prestasi akademik dan keberkesanan sendiri dengan kecenderungan penipuan akademik dalam kalangan pelajar sebuah universiti di Iran. Sekumpulan pelajar yang dipilih secara rawak ($N = 286$: 211 wanita dan 75 lelaki) menyertai kaji selidik ini pada tahun 2008. Alat bantu kaji selidik terdiri daripada skala kecenderungan penipuan akademik, kawalan sendiri, skala keberkesanan sendiri dan pencapaian akademik yang berdasarkan markah purata bagi semester sebelumnya. Analisis regresi mendedahkan bahawa terdapat korelasi berganda yang ketara antara pemboleh ubah peramal (kawalan sendiri, prestasi akademik dan keberkesanan sendiri dengan kecenderungan penipuan akademik ($R = 0/400$, $P \leq 0/0001$). Peramal ini menjelaskan 160% varians pemboleh ubah piawai. Kawalan sendiri, keberkesanan sendiri dan pencapaian akademik juga nyata sekali menjelaskan varians bagi kecenderungan ke arah penipuan akademik. Satu perkaitan negatif telah ditemui antara kawalan sendiri, pencapaian akademik dan keberkesanan sendiri. Oleh itu, bagi mengurangkan perbuatan menipu dalam kalangan pelajar universiti, langkah harus diambil kira dengan memilih kaedah pengajaran dan aktiviti pembelajaran yang sesuai supaya kawalan sendiri dan keberkesanan sendiri dapat dipertingkatkan.

Kata kunci: kawalan sendiri, keberkesanan sendiri, pencapaian akademik, kecenderungan penipuan akademik.

Introduction

Cheating is concerned as a major global matter and annually much research has been done in this connection (Blankenship and Whitley, 2000). Cheating occurs at all levels of public education and not to a particular institution (Hardigan, 2004). In this respect, Callahan (2004) reported that cheating is expanded in schools and universities all over the world. Moreover, Gulli, Kohler and Patriquin (2007) conducted a study and concluded that the phenomenon of cheating changed into an epidemiology in Canada and became a significant threat to the economy of the country. According to research evidence, self-control including variables that have a relationship with cheating in exams. Jackson et al. (2002) showed that there is a negative correlation between self-control and academic cheating. Bolin (2004) concluded that there is a positive correlation between weak self-control, cheating opportunities and cheating. According to the general theory of crime and criminal Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) stated that lack of control, perceived opportunity and consequent interaction are the most important causes of deviant behavior including academic cheating.

Evidence and surveys suggest that self-efficacy is the other variable that affects the test cheating. In this regard, Murdock, Hale and Weber (2001), Finn and Frone (2004) showed that there is a negative correlation between cheating and academic self-efficacy. Ángell (2006) showed that self-efficacy is also associated with cheating behavior. Murdock and Anderman (2006), in another study showed that there is a negative correlation between cheating and academic self-efficacy.

Academic performance is the other effective factor of the individuals' tendency to cheat in the exam. In this regard, studies showed that men, youth, persons with low ability and low scores are more likely to cheat than women and the elders having high scores (Dawkins, 2004). Finn and Frone (2004) concluded that there is a negative correlation between academic performance and cheating. Klein et al. (2007) concluded that dishonest individuals were amongst the young ones who had low grade average.

Research hypotheses are:

1. There is a negative relationship between self-control and tendency to cheat in the exam.
2. There is a negative relationship between self-efficacy and tendency to cheat in the exam.
3. There is a negative correlation between average grade and a tendency to cheat in the exam.
4. There are multiple relationships between self-control, self-efficacy, average grade and a tendency to cheat in exams.

Statistical society and sampling method

All students of the Payam Noor Ahvaz University of engineering technology who were in the academic year 2008, formed the statistical community. Sampling method for this case was stratified amongst the students and 286 students (211 girls and 75 boys) were randomly selected.

Tools collecting information and data

The tools being used in this study are:

Tendency to cheat on tests: For measuring the tendency to cheat in exams, the research questions (eleven questions: made by Sevari 2008) were used based on the Likert scale for measuring the response level rated from 1 to 4: I agree (4) agree (3) disagree (2) and I disagree (1). Cronbach's Alpha was used to check the reliability and the amount of it was estimated 0/70. In addition, the formal validity of expert opinion was used.

Self-control: For controlling of a scale to measure, self-control of Grasmick et al. (1993) was used and translated into Persian language for the first time by Sevari (2008). The scale consists of 24 questions and six subscales (risk, simplicity and ease, anger, self-centering, physical, and immediate gratification), which each one on a scale of four questions has been formed. The style questions are based on a scale of four degree: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), I agree with (3) and strongly agree (4).

In this study the Cronbach's Alpha is 0/83, in order to investigate the criterion validity of the questionnaire, the correlation of self-efficacy of this questionnaire and Schwarzer and Jerusalem (2000) was used and the amount of 0/64 was calculated.

Self-efficacy: The scale of self-efficacy was made by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (2000). It consists of ten questions translated in Persian and were executed in Azad University of Ahwaz by Sevari and Borna (2007). The grading method is not correct as to form a four-degree: absolutely not correct (1), rarely is true (2), approximately true (3) and (4) is absolutely correct. In this study the Cronbach's Alpha 0/69 was calculated. The validity of this questionnaire was achieved by correlating it with the Rosenberg Self-Esteem (1965) 0/63.

Educational performance: Academic performance was achieved by the average number of educational units which students have spent.

Research Findings

In this section the main findings of the research hypotheses are mentioned in the tables below.

Table 1 The correlation coefficients between self-control, self-efficacy, and academic performance with a tendency to cheat in exams

Predictive variables	Criterion variable (the tendency to cheat in exams)		
	r	p	n
Self-control	-0/282	0/0001	286
Self-efficacy	-0/288	0/0001	286
Academic performance	-0/141	0/017	286

The above table shows that there is a negative correlation between self-control, self-efficacy, academic performance and the tendency to cheat in exams. According to Table 1, hypothesis 1, 2 and 3 are confirmed.

Table 2 Results of regression analysis of predictive variables (self-control, self-efficacy, and educational average) with a tendency to cheat in exams to enter method

Predictive variables	R	RS	FP	Regression coefficients		
				1	2	3
Educational average	0/141	0/02	5/78 0/017	B = -0/141 b = -0/309 T = -2/40 P = 0/017		
Self-control	0/314	0/09	15/5 0/0001	B = -0/139 b = -0/304 T = -2/46 P = 0/014	B = -0/281 b = -0/08 T = -4/97 P = 0/0001	
Self-efficacy	0/400	0/160	18/14 0/0001	B = -0/138 b = -0/302 T = -2/5 P = 0/012	B = -0/246 b = -0/07 T = -4/46 P = 0/0001	B = -0/254 b = -0/107 T = -4/46 P = 0/0001

Results of regression analysis with the log indicate that the predictive variables (educational average, self-control and self-efficacy) have multiple correlation with the tendency to cheat in exams ($R = 0/400$) that is meaningful at $p < /0001$ level. In sum, these three predictive variables are the 160% variance in the criterion variable that can explain the tendency to cheat in exams. The results related to regression coefficients mentioned in the last line of the table shows that the educational average, self-control and self-efficacy can explain a meaningful variance tendency to cheat in the exam. It also confirmed with reference to the table theory IV.

Discussion and Conclusion

As mentioned before, this research was aimed to examine the relationship between self-control, self-efficacy and the educational average effectiveness with a tendency to cheat in the exam amongst the Ahwaz Payam Noor University students.

The present study shows that there is a relationship between self-control and the tendency to cheat in the exam. The result of this research is consistent with Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990), Jackson et al. (2002) and Bolin (2004). Why some people resort to cheating are largely rooted in several factors including self-control weakness, because the negative correlation exists between self-control and tendency to cheat in the exam. In highlighting this finding, it must be said that one of the characteristics of moderate and normal persons is the ability of control over their behavior. It means they have control over their behavior in any conditions. On the contrary, those who have less ability to control the behavior are better prepared to do more wrongdoing conducts.

The current findings of this study show that there are negative correlations between self-efficacy and the tendency to cheat in the exam and are in consistent with the findings of Murdock, Hale and Weber (2001), Finn and Frone (2004) and Ángell (2006). In other words, self-efficacy can greatly affect the tendency of people to be cheating in exams. In explaining these findings must be said that the high self-efficacy lessen the misconducts in individuals.

There is negative correlation between educational average and a tendency to cheat in exams. This investigation is in consistent with the findings of Jackson et al. (2002), Bolin (2004), Dawkins (2004), Finn and Frone (2004) and Klein et al. (2007). It is natural to have high grades and try to learn the indicators of academic success, so the expectation of high average lesson increases educational motivation and lessens the exam cheat. The results of the regression analysis with log show that the average educational, self-control and self-efficacy explain a meaningful variance tendency to cheat in the exam.

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