

Undergraduates' Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Academic Dishonesty

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Abstract

Academic dishonesty such as cheating and plagiarism are manifestations of the desire to get good grades among students. This problem is becoming one of the important issues at all university campuses. This study looks at the impact of organizational citizenship behavior on students' academic dishonesty. The data were taken from 217 undergraduate business and accounting students from a public university of Peninsular Malaysia. The findings of this study revealed that academic cheating is not a serious problem among students. Furthermore, OCB dimensions of helping behavior, conscientiousness, sportsmanship and courtesy were significantly and negatively associated with academic dishonesty.

Keywords: Organizational citizenship behaviors, Academic dishonesty, Student

Introduction

Academic dishonesty is rampant in all levels of education. Academic dishonesty such as cheating, fabrication and plagiarism are common and have been reported in most educational institutions. In general, researchers believe that the rates of these damaging behaviors are rising (Vowell & Chen, 2004; Becker et al., 2009). A review of literature on academic cheating by Whitley (1998) involving 46 studies of different samples, found that the percentages of students confessing to cheating ranged from 9% to 95%. This phenomenon signifies a major challenge for institutions of higher learning administrators, teachers, lecturers and employers, since academic dishonesty may forecast successive negative behaviors in the workplace (Lawson, 2004; Zauwiyah et al., 2008). Current literature on academic dishonesty revealed a positive and significant association between academic dishonesty and unethical behavior in the work place (Elmore et al., 2011). There is a growing need to not only encourage students to achieve academic excellence but also to stress on upholding the students' good values and positive work behaviors for their significant future profession. It is generally an established reality that people do not commit unethical actions as soon as they start their career. Since positive values and norms are formulated and inculcate partly in educational setting, study on students' academic dishonesty are

worth pursuing to constantly identify ways to solve this problem (Celik, 2009). Generally, employees at all levels engaged in some of the following behaviors: computer fraud, stealing, vandalism, sabotage, absenteeism and embezzlement. Such incidences have driven many researchers to look for possible factors that influence ethical behaviors (Harper, 1990). Since academic dishonesty is a worldwide phenomenon, continuous research effort to understand this problem is important (Bernadi et al., 2004). Review of the current literature, revealed that a minimal studies on academic dishonesty were conducted in Asia including Malaysia. Since ethical behaviors are formulated partly in educational setting (Celik, 2009), study on students' academic dishonesty are worth pursuing to constantly identify ways to restrain the behavior. It is important for Asian countries to be able to recognize and control student cheating successfully. This study contributes and expands the growing literature on academic dishonesty and organizational citizenship behavior by:

- (1) Examining the academic dishonesty involvement among undergraduates; and
- (2) Investigating organizational citizenship behavior as a possible antecedent of academic dishonesty.

This article is organized into several subsections. First, we presented related review of literature on

academic dishonesty and OCB. Then, we discussed the study's research method and sample selection. Finally, the analyses and results are presented along with discussions and conclusions.

Literature Review

Academic Dishonesty

Claxton (2005) illustrates diversities of academic dishonesty including cheating, plagiarism, deception, fabrication, bribery, and sabotage and not sharing credits. Students' dishonesty also includes looking at other exams papers, telling lies to teachers and using inaccurate bibliography (Sims, 1995). There is a broad range of cheating techniques. Witherspoon et al., (2012) have reported the use of traditional and contemporary cheating methods. There is plentiful fact that the students' academic dishonesty not only took place in the United States but also in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. A large number of students from different parts of the world surveyed approved that there were a variety of acts of academic dishonesty during their college education (Grimes, 2004). According to the General Theory of Crime, perceived opportunity, short of self-control and the interaction between these variables are the most important reasons of all deviant behavior, including academic dishonesty (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). People who lack self-control have personalities that predispose them to commit deviance. When opportunities for deviance exist, people who lack self-control are incapable to resist the inducement (Arneklev et al., 1993).

OCB and academic dishonesty

Specifically, OCB has been defined as, "individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization" (Organ, 1988, p.4). The term discretionary, according to Organ (1988) denotes that the behavior is not a requirement of a formal job description. OCB is a matter of personal preference and failure to exhibit such behavior is not generally considered as reason for penalty. In this study, The Theory of Cognitive Consistency is used to explain why individuals' level of OCB may influence academic dishonesty. The cognitive consistency theory suggests that individuals attempt to sustain agreement between their behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes (Festinger, 1957). There is a propensity for peoples to look for agreement among their cognitions. The term cognition as used by Festinger relates to any knowledge, judgment or belief

about the environment, about oneself, or about one's behavior. Based on the Cognitive Consistency Theory, the contrast nature of OCB and academic dishonesty may explain why OCB may be negatively connected with academic dishonesty. A student with a high level of OCB is the ones who is not only good in performing and attaining formal duties and responsibilities such as being punctual, comply with university's rules and regulation, exert substantial efforts in accomplishing excellence academic achievement but also exhibit positive behaviors for instance by helping other students and lecturers or being good sports by not complaining on minor inconveniences or trivial issues.

Conversely, academic dishonesty is considered as unwelcome behavior and is likely to be detrimental to person who committed such behavior and to the organization. Since, OCB reflect behavior that is useful to universities, whereas academic dishonesty is regarded as an offense that should result in punishment, we would foresee that OCB and academic dishonesty to be negatively associated. The constructive behaviors as reveal through a high level of OCB should be linked and form other attitudes and behaviors, for instance, by having lower intention to engage in academic dishonesty. Since the Cognitive Consistency Theory has gained support across a variety of situations, it is expected that this theory would provide a foundation for the linkage between OCB and students' academic dishonesty. Based on the Cognitive Consistency Theory, we propose that students' academic dishonesty can be predicted by OCBs.

Methodology

Sample

This study used a cross-sectional survey design. The subjects were undergraduates from an institution of higher learning located in the north of Peninsular Malaysia. The undergraduates were from Faculty of Business Management and Faculty of Accountancy. The researchers obtained consent from several lecturers to have access to potential respondents. Using convenience sampling, questionnaires were personally distributed and collected in the classroom after the class ended. The researchers have also explained the objectives of the study and students were guaranteed of confidentiality. In total, 217 students took part in the survey. The actual sample size varies depending on the variables involved in the analyses. Approximately 15.7 percent of participants were males and 84.3 percent females. The mean age is approximately 20.9 years.

Measurement

The dependent variable of the study is academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty was measured using 17 items adopted from Iyer and Eastman (2008). Finn and Frone (2004) stated that student self-report is the most common method for assessing cheating and has been shown to provide reasonably accurate estimates. The independent variable is OCB, which contained five common dimensions-altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, conscientiousness and civic virtue. Each dimension included four items depicting precise citizenship behaviors. Overall, there were 20 items adapted from Podsakoff and MacKenzie (as cited in Niehoff & Moorman, 1993). The wording of the items was adapted to accommodate the context of the present study. The measure was reported to have sufficient levels of reliability and validity (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1994). All items were rated on five-point Likert scales. Multiple regression was used to test the relationship between the study variables.

Data Analysis and Results

A principal component factor analysis using varimax rotation was conducted on the initial 20 OCB items. These analyses resulted in a six-factor solution. The six-factor solution was labeled as helping behavior, participation, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, civic

virtue and courtesy. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measures of sampling adequacy (KMO) for the six-factor solution is .89, with a significant Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity (Sig=.000). The variance is explained by 64.56% with extracted factors eigenvalue of more than 1. Descriptive statistics such as maximum, minimum, means, standard deviations, and variance were obtained for interval-scaled independent and dependent variables. The results are shown in Table 1. From the result, it may be seen that the mean on the academic dishonesty domains was rather low (1.88). The mean on participation (3.12), conscientiousness (3.18), sportsmanship (3.20) and civic virtue (3.15) are about average whereas the means on helping behavior (3.43) and courtesy (3.75) are observed as somewhat enriched. The minimum of 1 indicates that there are some who do not engage in academic dishonesty domains and OCBs at all and the maximum of 5 indicates that some are seriously engage in academic dishonesty domains and exhibit high level of OCBs. The standard deviation for all variables is not high indicating that most respondent are very close to the mean on all variables.

Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations for the 17 items measuring the academic dishonesty domains. Overall, all the item means are below the mid-point of 3. The highest means were 2.56 (Copied a few sentences of material from a published source without footnoting it) and 2.54 (Helped someone cheat on a test).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Study Variables

Variables	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Deviation
Helping behavior	212	1.00	5.00	3.43	.58
Participation	214	1.00	5.00	3.12	.76
Conscientiousness	212	1.00	5.00	3.18	.69
Sportsmanship	211	1.00	5.00	3.20	.69
Civic virtue	214	1.00	5.00	3.15	.74
Courtesy	215	1.00	5.00	3.75	.72
Academic dishonesty	262	1.00	5.00	1.88	.53

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviations for Academic Dishonesty Items

No	Question	Mean	SD
1	Use crib notes on a test	1.98	1.07
2	Copied from another student on the test	2.48	0.99
3	Helped someone cheat on a test	2.54	1.01
4	Cheated on a test in any other way	1.79	0.93
5	Manually passed answers in an exam	1.54	0.88
6	Have someone check over paper before turning it in	1.44	0.84
7	Asked someone about the content of an exam from someone who has taken it	2.40	1.06
8	Give information about the content of an exam to someone who has not yet taken it	2.01	0.99
9	Worked with others on an individual project	2.37	1.14
10	Visited a lecturer to influence grade	1.51	0.83
11	Taken credit for full participation in a group project without doing a fair share of the work	1.52	0.86
12	Received substantial, unprecedented help on an assignment	1.95	0.99
13	Copied a few sentences of material from a published source without footnoting it	2.56	1.05
14	Fabricated or falsified a bibliography	1.67	0.86
15	Purchased or found a paper off the internet to submit as your own work	1.50	0.88
16	Used a cell phone to text message for help during an exam	1.33	0.73
17	Used a cell phone or another device to photograph an exam	1.34	0.81

The intercorrelations of the variables are shown in Table 3. Internal consistency is stated in parentheses. The Cronbach-alpha range from .73 to .85, which suggested the specified indicators are sufficient for use (Nunnally, 1978). As can be seen from Table 3, the measure of helping behavior ($r = -.18, p < .05$), conscientiousness ($r = -.18, p < .05$), sportsmanship ($r = .19, p < .01$) and courtesy ($r = -.23, p < .01$) were significantly and negatively correlated with academic

dishonesty. The negative relationship indicates that high levels of helping behavior, conscientiousness, sportsmanship and courtesy were likely to result in low academic dishonesty among students. The intercorrelations were also inspected for multicollinearity. All correlation coefficients were below .70. Therefore, variable redundancy did not appear to be of concern (Nunnally, 1978).

Table 3. Intercorrelation between Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Academic dishonesty	(.78)						
2. Helping behavior	-.18*	(.81)					
3. Participation	-.09	.35**	(.83)				
4. Conscientiousness	-.18*	.22**	.28**	(.73)			
5. Sportsmanship	-.19**	-.15*	-.023	-.11	(.85)		
6. Civic virtue	-.09	.19**	.32**	.30**	-.04	(.82)	
7. Courtesy	-.23**	-.34**	.16*	.18*	.05	.04	(.73)

** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

Cronbach alphas in parentheses

To test whether OCB dimensions influence academic dishonesty, a multiple regression analysis was done. Linear regression rests on four assumptions: normality,

linearity, independence and homoscedasticity (Hair et al., 1998). Evaluation of assumptions of linearity, normality, independence of error terms and

homoscedasticity revealed no significant violation of assumptions was found. The results of regressing the six independent variables against the academic dishonesty can be seen in Table 4. As can be seen, helping behavior ($\beta=-.15$, $p<.05$), conscientiousness

($\beta=-.16$, $p<.05$), sportsmanship ($\beta=-.17$, $p<.05$) and courtesy ($\beta=-.22$, $p<.01$) were significant predictors of academic dishonesty. However, participation ($\beta=-.05$, n.s.) and civic virtue ($\beta=-.05$, n.s.) were not significant predictors of academic dishonesty.

Table 4. Regressions of OCB Dimensions and EI on Academic Dishonesty

Variables	Cheating	
	β	Sig.
Helping behavior	-.15	.04
Participation	-.05	.45
Conscientiousness	-.16	.04
Sportsmanship	-.17	.02
Civic virtue	-.05	.46
Courtesy	-.22	.00
R ²	.12	
Adjusted R ²	.09	
F value	4.09**	

Discussion and Conclusions

The main objective of the present study was to examine the relationship between various facets of OCB on students' academic dishonesty. The present study found that academic dishonesty is not a serious problem among respondents. The mean values for all 17 items were below the midpoint of 3 on a 5-point scale. Additionally, the practice of OCBs among respondents was rather high above the midpoint of 3 on a 5-point scale. OCB facets of helping behavior, conscientiousness, sportsmanship and courtesy significantly and negatively related to academic dishonesty. The results show a clear tendency for students' academic dishonesty to be decreased when OCB dimensions were high. These findings were consistent with the study's predictions. Student's who exhibit low level of helping behavior, conscientiousness, sportsmanship and courtesy is more likely to engage in academic dishonesty. Theoretically, OCB dimensions of sportsmanship and conscientiousness are OCB facets that benefit the general organization, whereas, helping behavior and courtesy are OCB facets that benefits individual (Organ, 1988). The implication is that a student's who displays helping behavior (e.g., help others who have heavy work load and willingly give their time to help others with study-related problems); good sportsmanship (e.g., not finding fault with what university is doing and not focusing on what is wrong with his/her condition); exhibit high level of conscientiousness and courtesy (e.g., always punctual at class, never take long break, do not abuse the rights of

others and take steps to prevent problems with other students) is more likely to have lower tendency to engage in academic dishonesty than those who do not demonstrate these behaviors. These findings were also consistent with the Cognitive Consistency Theory that states that individuals attempt to sustain harmony between their behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes. High levels of OCBs are not consistent with high tendency to engage in academic dishonesty. This study contributes to the academic dishonesty literature by providing a new evidence of the effect of OCB on academic dishonesty. The present study institute no support for the effect of other OCB dimensions on academic dishonesty. It is possible to contemplate that since the bivariate analysis showed a weak correlation between these variables and academic dishonesty, this relationship is not strong enough to hold up in the multivariate analysis. However, future research needs to reconfirm the present findings before we can accomplish a solid conclusion. What makes the present findings especially appealing is the nature of the variables, which concerned behaviors of 'real-world' significance. If academic dishonesty can be tackled in advance, we may be able to shaped graduates with improved values and norms. The findings of this study suggest that to curb academic dishonesty, facets of OCB should be strengthened among undergraduates. This can be done partly by assessing undergraduate level of OCB and designing related intervention programs to inculcate good values among students. The intervention program such training can be design

and implemented to encourage and uphold positive behaviors such as helping behavior, conscientiousness, sportsmanship and courtesy. Unethical behavior is a widespread problem in organizations. Ethical values should be given attention earlier in the educational setting. Universities should seriously look into introducing courses related to business ethics as one of the ways to inculcate positive values among students. It is possible to include OCB as part of a curriculum. Ethical values and behaviors are universal and should be internalized through the educational process. Moreover, character building should be supported by guides and norms within appropriate learning environment. In this context, educators, administrators and parents should also play their roles effectively. They can instill and uphold positive behaviors among youngsters by continuously advising and act as role models. The content of business management courses may also be enhanced by adding such topics as religiosity, ethic and philosophy to prepare the students to deal with the complex future working situations. This

study intensifies the important role that OCB may have in alleviating academic dishonesty among students. Several limitations constrain the interpretation and application of the study's findings. The aim of this study to explore the academic dishonesty among students from one university is also a weakness. Future studies may be benefited from an exploration of a wider range of students at different universities. The reader is cautioned to recognize the restrictions of relying on self-reported data, which may carry a bias of general method variance. In this study, limitation about costs prevented the used of larger size of sample. An interesting area of future research is the role play by some demographics factors such as gender and age as moderators. Researchers may also go beyond cross-sectional research design by conducting longitudinal study to provide robust verification of the linkage between present academic dishonesty and future workplace misconduct or wrongdoing of same group of respondents.

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