

Academic Dishonesty: Methods and the Influence of Psychological Gender

Dahlia Fernandez, Husniyati Amin, Musawa Mubarak, Evi Soraya, Aini Aman, Siti Sarah Omar

Abstract: *The research seeks to investigate students rating of various forms of academic dishonesty and also examined the impact of psychological gender on cheating behavior among undergraduates in a Malaysian university. Primary data were sourced through the distribution of 363 questionnaires. Statistical analysis of the data revealed that the following cheating techniques have widely used them a. Using published materials without reference, copying the assignments, using unfair means for presenting data, getting unauthorized help for assignment completion and presenting others work. On the other hand, regression analysis on the psychological gender revealed that the instrumental traits tend to influence male to engage in academic dishonesty.*

Keywords: *Academic dishonesty; psychological gender; expressive traits; instrumental traits.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Academic dishonesty has remained to be an issue that is of great concern throughout the last few decades. Although students have commonly agreed that it is wrong to cheat, it has become a recurrent problem in the academic and on the rise globally (Sasongko, Hasyim and Fernandez, 2019; McCabe, 2001; Becker and Ulstad, 2007). Some researchers have attributed the cheating behavior of student due to competition in securing limited future job, lack of academic integrity policies in schools, crowded classes (Davis et al., 1992), others have ascribed such act to influence of peer pressure on student even though such student distaste the act of cheating (McCabe, 2001). In other studies, the male gender has been pointed to have high tendency of engaging in the act more than the other gender (Baird, 1980; Mc Ternan, 2014). Moreover, convincing evidence has implied that the current sophistication in information technology and the innovation of different electronic devices have made cheating to be simple and easy to carry out (Witherspoon et

al., 2012).

This issue has become more serious when it is proved that these dishonest students have a higher probability of repeating the same unethical and fraudulent behaviors at the place of work. The foulest scandals which involved world leading companies of WorldCom, Enron, E-toys and Adelphia have motivated the scholars to emphasis on the moral training of the students in the college and universities to prepare them for tomorrow's business leaders (McCabe et al., 2006). Other preventive measures have been proffered, such as the enforcement of punishment on perpetrators and focusing on learning rather than grades (McCabe, 2001). However, this behavior will likely continue due to the escalation in the low academic integrity of students (Bernardi et al., 2008). Thus, it is essential to determine what are the most prevalent methods used in academic dishonesty and does the psychological gender has an influence on the male and female sex in engaging in such behavior. In answering these questions, the study highlighted the most used methods of cheating and the effects of the instrumental and expressive traits on cheating behavior.

Most of the prior literature have discussed the influence of biological gender on cheating behavior. However, the contribution of this research is that it tries to observe the influence of the psychological gender in cheating behavior. It is due to the reason that a person's biological sex cannot give a definite prediction about how a person will act on moral issues (Skoe et al., 2002). This argument is supported by McCabe et al., (2006) who found that treating gender as a multidimensional construct states a more composite and informative story regarding ethical perceptions". Thus, the investigation of psychological gender influence on academic dishonesty is essential. there is a limited study accompanied in institutions of higher learning, particularly in Malaysia with regards to academic fraudulence. Additionally, it is important to realize the issue of educational dishonesty issue in the institution, as these students are the prospect employees and leaders in the community.

After this; this paper is organized into five sections s. The literature review is presented in section 2, to get comprehensive information on academic dishonesty, while Section 3 proposes the hypothesis from the theoretical framework. The methodology of the research is presented in section 4, to describe the techniques used to get sample, data collection, and finally analysis procedures. The results and findings are presented in section 5, and the conclusion

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Dahlia Fernandez, Faculty of Economics and Management, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia. Faculty of Technology Management and Business, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, 86400 Batu Pahat, Johor, Malaysia. dahliafernandez111@gmail.com.

Husniyati Amin, Kuliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences, Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia, 53100 Selangor, Malaysia.

Musawa Mubarak, Kuliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences, Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia, 53100 Selangor, Malaysia.

Evi Soraya, Kuliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences, Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia, 53100 Selangor, Malaysia.

Aini Aman, Faculty of Economics and Management, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia.

Siti Sarah Omar, Faculty of Technology Management and Business, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, 86400 Batu Pahat, Johor, Malaysia.

of this study is discussed in section 6.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature have discovered various issues concerning the increased frequency of academic dishonesty (Sasongko et al., 2019; Murdiansyah, 2017; McCabe and Drinn, 1999). According to Rakovski and Levy (2007), many researches have researched the students' ethics in higher education. In the 1960s, the research conducted by William and Bowers, has revealed this research, which was discovered more by McCabe in 1990s. Longitudinal research conducted by Bower showed that the cheating is increasing among students in higher institutions. Formerly, Bower (1964) examined multiple students from various colleges, and the results indicated that more than 50% were involved in academic dishonesty. Then, in 1994, McCabe and Bowers studied nine other institutes and determined that 52% of the students have been reported of "copying in the examination from another student", wherein 1964 it was only 26%. The study continued in 2002 by McCabe and Trevino, where they found that the amount of students "using cheating material in the exam" has increased tremendously.

Schrimsher et al. (2011) have conducted a study at Samford University to obtain attitudes and perspectives of the students on cheating. Surprisingly, the outcomes exposed that there was a low cheating behavior at Samford University. 97% of the students agreed that "submitting a written paper prepared by others" and "directly pasting information from the internet without stating references" are deemed as plagiarism and not acceptable. In contrast, Bernardi et al. (2008) completed a comparative study between students from developed nations to understand their perspective on cheating behavior. They established that 51% of the samples confessed to involve in cheating. Other findings from the study reveal that the two most frequent ways of cheating are "copying from other students in the examinations" and "crib notes". Also, Witherspoon et al. (2012) examined the methods of cheating in the form of traditional and modern approaches. Usually cheating techniques include cheating inside and outside the lecture hall, and plagiarism. Whereas, contemporary cheating methods involve the use of technological tools such as computers, the internet and cell phones. Their findings stated that the contemporary cheating method is more chosen rather than the traditional method. Moreover, traditional cheating happened typically, and contemporary cheating happened within the classroom.

Research has discovered diverse results of the gender influence on the, moral principles of students. Formerly studies conducted by Thoma (1986) showed inconclusive results on gender differences and academic cheating. Nonetheless, later studies have indicated that there is a link among gender and academic cheating (Cohen and David, 1998; Sweeney, 1995; Shaub, 1994). A study by Cohen and David (1998) which examined the ethical assessment and purpose of truthful behaviors indicated that both male and female have a different perception ethical behavior. Furthermore, some other research shas found that male

students are mostly involve in educational dishonesty relative to female students (Bower, 1964; McCabe and Trevino, 1997; Whitley et al., 1999). Additionally, these findings are supported by Crown and Spiller (1998) in their literature review paper, which indicated that higher participation of cheating by male students compared to female.

There have also been some researches on personality traits to the cheating behavior. For example, McTernan et al. (2014) examined specific personality characteristics, and 'their relationship to cheating behavior. They found that a person with "sensation seeking" and "impulsive" personality tends to cheat more. Nonetheless, "the ability to accept other person's perspective" can influence their tendency in cheating behavior. The same study on personality influence was also done by Giluk and Postlethwaite (2014). They analyzed five dominant types of student behavior, namely "neuroticism", "extraversion", "openness to experience", "agreeableness" and "conscientiousness". Their findings indicated that only "agreeableness" and "conscientiousness" have a negative relationship with cheating behavior.

Besides that, research conducted by Sasongko et al. (2019) found that there are two primary factors contributing to the student academic fraud. The first factor is arrogance, which caused by the ego to display excellent academic status to their friends and do not want to drop off their reputa or position to be respected or valued. The second factor is opportunity, which is the chances that occur because of weak management, creating it simpler for them to do educational cheating. Another researcher, Murdiansyah (2017) stated that opportunity happens due to a weak administration lack of control and the application of strict sanctions. Academic dishonesty frequently occurs due to the supervisor of the exam fails to perform his or her responsibilities. For instance, the supervisor does not monitor the examination well, and he/she does not provide a severe action to students who caught cheating. However, Sasongko et al. (2019) found that the other upersonality features that is greed, competence, rationalisation, pressure, exposure and need does not affect student academic fraud.

In finding a solution to academic cheating, Bernardi et al. (2008), among their objective of the study, examined the methods to discourage cheating. Most of the respondents agreed that cheating behavior be reduced by using "different tests questions" and "writing type examinations" whenever possible. They also found that the attitude of the instructors who are not taking this negative behavior seriously has led to more cheating behavior.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Generally, society influences the socialization processes of the gender, which will automatically affect the decision-making process of both sexes (McCabe, 2001). Though literature have shown that the female sex is more ethical than the male sex due to their risk aversion nature (McCabe et al., 2006), yet other studies have revealed a

conflicting argument. For instance, (Whitely, 1999; Becker, 2007) is of the view that the female sex has been oriented to achieve desired outcomes at the cost of ethical actions as they have been trained as emotional and to take actions that gain endorsement of others. While the male sex has been oriented as an individualistic, competitive and a risk taker to achieve the desirable actions without due regards to ethical considerations.

Therefore, due to the conflicting attitude of the gender, the gender identity theory has been adopted to investigate the relation among the psychological gender and academic behavior, which is the second objective of this study. This theory proposes that the gender development process consists of biological sex, expressive and instrumental traits and gender role attitude (McCabe et al., 2006).. Hence based on this theory, this study proposes the following alternative hypothesis:

H1: Psychological gender an influences cheating behavior.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The study adapted the questionnaire survey developed by Becker and Ulstad (2007) with some modification. The rationale for adapting similar items in the questionnaires is because the proxies used in their questionnaire are in line with our research objectives and research questions. The questionnaire comprises of two sections that relate to cheating behavior. The first section is on academic dishonesty, which comprises of 14 factors (Table 1), and the second section is about personal attributes, which comprises of 16 items (Table 2), as follows:

Table 2 explains personal attributes which will be used to analyze the psychological gender influence on cheating behavior. Psychological gender consists of instrumental and expressiveness strengths. The instrumental scale measures the strength of assertiveness traits (normally male features). On the other hand, the expressiveness scale measures the strength of desirable, socially-oriented traits (normally reflected to be female features). (Becker and Ulstad, 2007). Items are shown in asterisk (*) represent instrumental scale while the remaining represent expressive scale.

Table 1. Academic Dishonesty

Items	Scale
1 Eager to get the information of the test before it is delivered	1 2 3 4 5
2 Copy the stuff material and submit it as your work	1 2 3 4 5
3 Utilize the published material without mentioning the author	1 2 3 4 5
4 Helping others during a test	1 2 3 4 5
5 Cooperate to an assignment when it is prohibited	1 2 3 4 5
6 Copy from the other on a test	1 2 3 4 5
7 Getting support in a project without teacher's permission	1 2 3 4 5
8 Cheat on a test in any way	1 2 3 4 5
9 Use a textbook or notes on a test without your instructor's permission	1 2 3 4 5

Table 2. Personal Attributes

Items	Scale	Items
1 Not at all independent	1 2 3 4 5	Very Independent
2 Very passive	1 2 3 4 5	Very active*
3 Able to devote self completely to others	1 2 3 4 5	Not at all able to devote self
4 Very rough	1 2 3 4 5	Very gentle
5 Not at all helpful to others	1 2 3 4 5	Very helpful to others
6 Not at all competitive	1 2 3 4 5	Very competitive*
7 Not at all kind	1 2 3 4 5	Very kind
8 Not at all aware of the feelings of others	1 2 3 4 5	Very aware of the feelings of others
9 Has difficulty making decisions	1 2 3 4 5	Can make decisions easily*
10 Gives up very easily	1 2 3 4 5	Never gives up easily*
11 Not at all self-confident	1 2 3 4 5	Very self-confident*
12 Feels very inferior	1 2 3 4 5	Feels very superior*
13 Not at all understanding of others	1 2 3 4 5	Very understanding of others
14 Very unfriendly	1 2 3 4 5	Very friendly
15 Goes to pieces under pressure	1 2 3 4 5	Stands up well under pressure*

449 questionnaires were given to students in a Malaysian public university. The respondents were approached by the researchers during the classes to request their participation in answering the questionnaires. A cover letter along with the questionnaire were given to each respondent. The cover letter clarified the objective of the study and assured the confidentiality of the answers given by respondents. The time that the respondents took to answer the questionnaires is 15 minutes on average. Total 449 questionnaires were collected. However, 36 questionnaires were omitted because they were found incomplete. From the remaining useable questionnaires, only 363 were used for this study as it represents our sample.

Version 21 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. Likert scale with 5-points (1 – completely dishonest and 5 – completely honest) was used to find the mean score of the descriptive statistic. It describes the importance of each item for the first objective of the study. For the second objective, simple regression analysis was used to determine the influence of psychological gender towards cheating behavior.

V. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

A. Demographic Information

The total numbers of respondents were 363 undergraduate students. Table 3 illustrates that there are 123 male (33.9 per cent) and 240 female (66.1 per cent) respondents.



Table 3. Gender

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	123	33.9	33.9	33.9
Female	240	66.1	66.1	100.0
Total	363	100.0	100.0	

B. Methods of Cheating

Table 4 demonstrate the mean scores and the rank of the most frequently used methods for cheating. The result indicates that perceive nine methods of cheating as either “completely dishonest” or “completely honest” since the mean score range from 1.68 to 2.33. The result shows that the following are the top five cheating techniques:

- Utilize the published material without mentioning the author.
- Cooperate to an assignment when it is prohibited
- Getting support in a project without teacher’s permission
- Eager to get the information of the test before it is delivered
- Copy the stuff and submit it is as your work “Utilize the published material without mentioning the author” is the most frequent method that has been used by student for cheating. It is due to the condition that the students are more confident to commit this unethical behavior when there is less observation from the relevant instructors. This finding indicates that the lower the control environment, the higher the tendency to cheat. If the instructors are not taking cheating as a negative behavior seriously, it will encourage cheating behavior to persist (Bernardi et al., 2008).

Besides, “copy from another student during a test” is the least method that students used. However, a study by Bernardi et al. (2008) found that this method is the most frequently used by students for cheating.

Table 4. Method of Cheating

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank
Utilize the published material without mentioning the author	360	1	5	2.33	1.209	1
Cooperate to an assignment when it is prohibited	359	1	5	2.32	1.206	2
Getting support in a project	363	1	5	2.31	1.088	3

without the teacher’s permission

Eager to get the information of the test before it is delivered

Copy the stuff and submit it is as your work

Copy material and turn it is as your own work Use a textbook or note on a test without your instructor’s

permission Helping others during a test

Help someone else cheat on a test

Cheat on a test in any way Copy from other student on a test Valid N (listwise)

360	1	5	2.16	1.218	4
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361	1	5	2.07	1.200	5
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363	1	5	1.85	1.246	6
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362	1	5	1.81	1.199	7
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363	1	5	1.70	1.191	8
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362	1	5	1.68	1.237	9
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C. Psychological Gender Influence on Cheating Behavior

Table 5 demonstrates the result of both instrumental and expressive traits influence on cheating behavior. The instrumental traits have been straight linked to the probability of cheating with the coefficient of 0.227 and significance of 0.033. On the other hand, expressive has a coefficient of -0.245 and



significance of 0.035. Thus, instrumental (which is referring to male) has a higher probability of cheating as compared to expressive (which is referring to female). The relation between psychological gender (independent variable) and cheating behavior (dependent variable) in the current research is presented in table 5:

Table 5. Psychological Gender

	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R Square	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Significance
Cheating	2.0242	.91516	345		2.157	.397	.000
Instrumental	3.3004	.52685	345	.017	.227	.106	.333
Expressive	3.6094	.48504	345		-.245	.116	.035

- Dependent Variable: Cheating
- Independent Variable: Instrumental and expressive traits (Psychological gender)

Table 5 indicates that the alternative hypothesis (H1) is accepted as psychological gender influences cheating behavior. Instrumental traits tend to engage in cheating than expressive traits. Expressive traits have an association with a person's ability to recognize unethical behaviors rather than instrumental traits (McCabe et al., 2006). Female characteristics (expressive) may be more ethical because they are more risk averse and sensitive to issues. In contrast, the male characteristics (instrumental) may be less ethical as they have been trained to be more aggressive and competitive (McCabe et al., 2006).

VI. CONCLUSION

Ethics and academic dishonesty issues have continuously been an alarming issue in the education sector. The increasing academic demands for better grades and high competition to secure a job have resulted in some students to conduct the academic dishonesty. These matters need to be examined as well as suitable strategies and approaches should be planned to cover these matters. The condition develops more worst when the students practice the similar deceitful behaviors and having the same ethical issues throughout their professional career which consequently contributes to the negative culture in a workplace that affecting their performance in the organization. This research tried to explore the aspects of this problem by investigating students rating of various forms of academic dishonesty and by exploring the students' influence of psychological gender on cheating behavior. A self-explanatory questionnaire was distributed in 363 undergraduate students in one of the Malaysian public university. The results reported that the five most used methods of cheating are using published materials without reference, copying the assignments, using unfair means for presenting data, getting unauthorized help for assignment completion and presenting others work. On the other hand, regression analysis on the psychological gender revealed

that the instrumental traits tend to influence male to involve in educational dishonesty.

The results demonstrated that there is a need, for the academicians and institutions, to have a better insight on the ethical and moral values of graduate level students. Additionally, it is also mandatory to develop a better control procedure to supervise them during examination and assignments. Educational institutions must define some effective strategies to prevent, detect and respect. Furthermore, this shows the necessity to comprise the subject of ethics in the undergraduate curriculum.

This study was completed with the following limitations. Most importantly, it was supposed that the students would give answer honestly, without any influence and according to their character. However, normally, the respondents may provide false answers to veil their true feelings, and ethics area personal matter, and respondents possibly do not want anybody to know that they would take unethical actions to attain desired outcomes (Becker and Ulstad, 2007). Secondly, these results are derived from a small number of respondents. Hence, these results may not represent the whole Malaysia university's student. Hence, to make the study more meaningful, the future research should make a larger sample size from different Malaysian universities. Different subject major and specializations, and other various demographical differences can be conducted for future research to provide better insights on the issue of academic dishonesty. Besides, a different source of collecting data should be used, such as an interview with the students to gain more detail reasons why they engage in such behavior.

APPENDIX

Respondent Profile

Gender

Male Female

Academic Dishonesty

Please circle the most appropriate number according to the items scale below:

1-Completely Dishonest 2-Dishonest 3-Neutral
4-Honest 5-Completely Honest

Items	Scale
1 Collaborate on solutions to an assignment when collaboration is specifically prohibited	1 2 3 4 5
2 Receive substantial help on an individual assignment without your instructor's permission	1 2 3 4 5
3 Copy from another student during a test	1 2 3 4 5
4 Help someone else cheat on a test	1 2 3 4 5
5 Use unfair methods to learn what was on a test before it is given	1 2 3 4 5



6	Use a textbook or notes on a test without your instructor's permission	1 2 3 4 5
7	Copy material and turn it in as your own work	1 2 3 4 5
8	Use material from a published source in a paper without giving the author credit	1 2 3 4 5
9	Cheat on a test in any way	1 2 3 4 5

Personal Attributes

Please circle the most appropriate number according to the items scale below:

Items	Scale	Items
1 Not at all independent	1 2 3 4 5	Very Independent
2 Very passive	1 2 3 4 5	Very active
3 Able to devote self completely to others	1 2 3 4 5	Not at all able to devote self
4 Very rough	1 2 3 4 5	Very gentle
5 Not at all helpful to others	1 2 3 4 5	Very helpful to others
6 Not at all competitive	1 2 3 4 5	Very competitive
7 Not at all kind	1 2 3 4 5	Very kind
8 Not at all aware of feelings of others	1 2 3 4 5	Very aware of feelings of others
9 Has difficulty making decisions	1 2 3 4 5	Can make decisions easily
10 Gives up very easily	1 2 3 4 5	Never gives up easily
11 Not at all self-confident	1 2 3 4 5	Very self-confident
12 Feels very inferior	1 2 3 4 5	Feels very superior
13 Not at all understanding of others	1 2 3 4 5	Very understanding of others
14 Very unfriendly	1 2 3 4 5	Very friendly
15 Goes to pieces under pressure	1 2 3 4 5	Stands up well under pressure

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AUTHORS PROFILE

I am **Dahlia Fernandez**, currently I am affiliated with Faculty of Economics and Management, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia. Faculty of Technology Management and Business, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, 86400 Batu Pahat, Johor, Malaysia. My area of research social sciences.

I am **Husniyati Amin**, currently I am affiliated with Kuliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences, Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia, 53100 Selangor, Malaysia. My area of research is social sciences.



I am **Musawa Mubarak**, currently I am affiliated with Kuliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences, Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia, 53100 Selangor, Malaysia. My area research is social sciences.

I am **Evi Soraya**, currently I am associated with Kuliyyah of Economics and Management Sciences, Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia, 53100 Selangor, Malaysia. My area of research is social science.

Aini Aman, Faculty of Economics and Management, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia.

I am **Siti Sarah Omar**, currently I am affiliated with Faculty of Technology Management and Business, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, 86400 Batu Pahat, Johor, Malaysia. My area of research is social sciences.