



Exploring the relationship between Motivation, Self-efficacy and Students' perception of Academic Dishonesty through the Internet

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Abstract

The Internet facilitates many types of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism, fraudulence, falsification and piracy have become accessible everywhere in the world. In these conditions, individual factors such as motivation and self-efficacy could help us understand the mechanism that leads to academic misconduct. This research explored the relationship between self-efficacy, academic motivation and students' perception of Academic dishonesty through the Internet. The data was collected from a sample of 283 Romanian university students. We used four tools: Internet-Triggered Academic Dishonesty Scale (ITADS), The Work Preference Inventory, Academic Self-Efficacy Scale and Self-efficacy Scale. The results suggested that intrinsic academic motivation correlated negatively and insignificantly with self-efficacy, while extrinsic academic motivation correlated positively but insignificantly with self-efficacy. In our research the mediator role of self-efficacy on the relationship between academic motivation and students' perception of academic dishonesty was not confirmed. We discuss these findings from the perspective of ethics and academic integrity, elements that any student or teacher must be aware of when creating various academic documents. Despite disproving the hypotheses, our research draws attention to the caution of applying research instruments in the case of students who lack the ethical culture and a responsible attitude towards this sensitive area.

Key words: Academic dishonesty; Internet; motivation; self-efficacy

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1. Introduction

We live in the times of storage and rapid exchange of information. In these circumstances, students face a wide range of ethical, cultural and behavioral challenges related to completing written assignments for the faculty (Hensley, Kirkpatrick & Burgoon, 2013; Thomas, 2017). Even if Internet was designed to serve in good ways, these goals were turned sometimes into unethical behaviors (McCabe, Butterfield & Trevino, 2012).

The issue of academic dishonesty is a very serious in all universities. The motivation for this research is a strong one. A constant concern is building strong internal structures for students so that they can successfully resist the temptation of academic fraud. Sense of identity, self-efficacy and motivational structures become extremely important in this endeavour. There are many studies discussing and reviewing the factors of academic dishonesty. The researchers established a set of internal attitudinal factors, with an emphasis on extrinsic or intrinsic motivation, and a range of external pressures and institutional rules, such as codes, can contribute to understanding academic fraud (Kish-Gephart, 2010; Yang et al., 2013; Thomas, 2017). Many papers explore the relationship between motivation and academic dishonesty, but few or no studies have examined the mechanisms that explain this link. The present research examined whether self-efficacy mediates the relationship between motivation and academic dishonesty.

In Romania several studies have highlighted the increased demotivation of students in the last twenty years, which could be a trigger for fraud. For many middle school and high school students, copying from the Internet without citing is something normal. They do not have adequate trainings in which the rules of academic writing are learned in time. Ives et al. (2017) discovered that Romanian students plagiarize more than those from other countries, about 95% were involved in activities contrary to academic integrity. Other triggering factors of the lack of integrity in Romania are: carrying out activities that are not related to learning, the negative influence of colleagues (Andrei et al., 2009; Teodorescu & Andrei, 2009), the degree of increased acceptability of fraud (Ives et al., 2017), low self-esteem (David, 2015). In a recent research Clipa, Balta & Măță (2022) discovered significant relationships between motivational variables and fraud behaviors in the context of the Internet use.

1.1. Internet and Academic dishonesty

There is no consensus among researchers regarding the concept of academic dishonesty. Pavela (1997, pp. 9-10) classified the types of academic dishonesty as cheating, fabrication, plagiarism and facilitation of dishonesty. MacDonald and Carroll (2006, p. 234) define “academic misconduct in respect of assessment, such as plagiarism, collusion, cheating, impersonation, and the use of inadmissible material (including material downloaded from electronic sources such as the internet)”. Benson et al. (2019, p. 1) provides the following definition: “academic misconduct constitutes a participation in acts by which a person gains or attempts to gain an unfair academic advantage“.

Academic dishonesty is a concern for universities more than ever. Internet plagiarism is on the rise. McCabe et al. (2012) demonstrated worrying proportions of cheating in universities. Even if many universities have taken administrative measures (codes, policies), it seems that it is not enough. Fighting fraud caused by the use of the Internet requires new "attack methods". In the educational processes (teaching - learning- assessment) very often the Internet and modern technological resources are used. Unfortunately, both teachers and students are deficient in terms of ethical education in the use of digital technologies (Baum, 2005).

1.2 Motivation and Academic Dishonesty

Motivation is an important individual factor for explaining academic dishonesty behavior. The main theories used for explaining the relationship between motivation and academic dishonesty are *Self-determination theory (SDT)*, Deci and Ryan (1985; 2000) and *Achievement goal theory* (Dweck and Leggett, 1988). Self-determination theory (SDT) refers to the strong links between motivational orientations and the performance of actions. Intrinsically oriented people will engage in academic activities that will lead them to authentic performances, based on committed efforts, without fraud. Unlike extrinsically motivated people.

Achievement goal theory stipulates that all human actions are motivated by the nature of the goals they have. These goals can be of two types (Dweck and Leggett, 1988): mastery or intrinsic goals, focused on understanding the learning material because of personal interest; performance or extrinsic goals, focused on interests that go beyond the material itself (grades, rewards, higher salary, maintaining reputation for others). Many other specialists (Miller, Anderman & Murdock 2007; Newstead et al., 1996) hypothesized that cheating on academic work may be associated with certain motivational orientations. Cheating behaviour is more seen in students who adopt performance goals, and less seen in students who emphasize intrinsic goals. In another study, Jordan (2001) demonstrated that cheaters have a powerful extrinsic motivation.

1.3. Self - efficacy and Academic Dishonesty

Albert Bandura introduced the concept of self-efficacy or "beliefs in one's capacity to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (1997, p. 3). Self-efficacy is a possible factor that intervenes in decision-making. People can have different degrees of self-efficacy, which can influence participation in certain activities and decisions, depending on self- perceived abilities (Onu, 2021). Research has indicated that low self-efficacy is a predictor of academic dishonesty behaviors. Subjects showing a low level of self-efficacy have engaged in activities that involved fraud (Fu, 2021).

1.4. Academic efficacy and Academic Dishonesty

Murdock et al. (2006) concludes that many of the individual and contextual factors can be subsumed to a motivational framework, so the students' decisions to appeal to academic dishonesty can be understood in response to the following questions: "What is my goal?", "Can I do this?", and "What are the costs?". These considerations that concern academic dishonesty, support both didactic practices and theories. Thus, students with low self-efficacy can resort to various deception behaviors, falling into behaviors of academic dishonesty. Than to increase the effort to reach the desired objectives, according to the collected data, students prefer to resort to academic dishonest behaviors. In conclusion, self -efficacy is a relevant factor (Figure 1) that influences behaviors of academic dishonesty (Murdock, 2006).



Figure 1. Relation between self -efficacy, academic motivation and academic dishonesty

1.5. Research questions

The present research aims to identify the mediating role of self-efficacy on the relationship between academic motivation and students' perception of academic dishonesty.

Hypotheses:

1. Correlation hypotheses

1.a. Intrinsic academic motivation will negatively and significantly correlate with students' perception of online academic dishonesty in terms of cheating, plagiarism, falsification, and abuse.

1.b. Extrinsic academic motivation will positively and significantly correlate with students' perception of online academic dishonesty in terms of cheating, plagiarism, falsification, and abuse.

1.c. Self-efficacy will negatively and significantly correlate with students' perceptions of Internet academic dishonesty in terms of cheating, plagiarism, falsification, and abuse.

1.d. Intrinsic academic motivation will positively and significantly correlate with self-efficacy.

1.e. Extrinsic academic motivation will correlate negatively and significantly with self-efficacy.

2. Mediation hypotheses

2.a. Self-efficacy will mediate the relationship between intrinsic academic motivation and students' perceptions of Internet-based academic dishonesty on dimensions cheating, plagiarism, falsification, and abuse.

2.b. Self-efficacy will mediate the relationship between extrinsic academic motivation and students' perceptions of Internet-based academic dishonesty on the dimensions cheating, plagiarism, falsification, and abuse.

2. Methods

2.1 Research participants

The subjects in this study were 283 Romanian university students at two public universities from the North-Eastern region of Romania. There were 242 girls and 41 boys, License (N = 263) and Masters (N = 20) cycles, aged between 18 and 53 years (average age being 20.19). 128 students come from the urban residence, while 154 students with rural residence.

2.2 Research instruments

We have used in this study four instruments: Internet-Triggered Academic Dishonesty Scale ITADS (developed by Abkulut et al, but adapted by Karim et al., 2009); The Work Preference Inventory (Amabile, 1994); Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (Ashraf, 2007); Self-efficacy Scale (Sherer, 1982). *Internet-Triggered Academic Dishonesty Scale* it specifically targets academic dishonesty and includes four dimensions (Fraudulence, Plagiarism, Falsification and Misuse). This instrument contains 26 items, which are found in the form of statements that reveal exactly actions that represent academic dishonesty. *The Work Preference Inventory* describes motivational preferences, motivating factors in work. The work attitude inventory contains 30 items divided into two primary scales (15 items for the intrinsic motivation scale and 15 items for the extrinsic motivation scale). *Academic Self-Efficacy Scale* aims to measure academic self-efficacy. This scale has its origins in Bandura's self-efficacy theory, intended to assess students' academic self-efficacy. This scale includes 40 items. *Self-efficacy Scale* aims to measure both general self-efficacy and social self-efficacy. Thus, the dimension that evaluates general self-efficacy includes 17 items.

2.3 Research design

The online form submission process was carried out through the Internet platform, Google Forms. Each student accessed the link, being informed that the data will be used for research purposes only. Data collected were analyzed using the SPSS – PROCESS v4.0 program, this version of the program also supported mediation analyses. First, we calculated descriptive statistics, Cronbach’s Alpha, and correlations between measures. Next, mediation analyzes were calculated to highlight the direct effect of mediation. The confidence intervals that do not contain zero indicate a significant indirect effect (mediation). For *the Internet Triggered Academic Dishonesty Scale (ITADS)*, the Alpha Cronbach index equaled 0.963, which is a very reliable index. *The Work Preference Inventory* had an Alpha Cronbach index equal to 0.784, which indicates a satisfactory value. The results show that from *Academic Self-Efficacy Scale* and *Self-efficacy Scale* a Cronbach's Alpha index of 0.589 was made, which is shown to be quite reliable.

3. Results

3.1. Results for correlation hypotheses

Intrinsic academic motivation correlated negatively and insignificantly with self-efficacy ($r = -0.09$; $p > 0.05$). Extrinsic motivation correlated positively but not significantly with self-efficacy ($r = 0.08$; $p > 0.05$). According to the results obtained, following the application of the Pearson correlation, the research hypotheses, 1.d. and 1.e. were disproved (Table1).

Table 1. Correlation between Motivation and Self-efficacy

| | Intrinsic motivation | Extrinsic motivation |
|----------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Self -efficacy | $r = -0,09$ $p > 0,05$ | $r = 0,08$ $p > 0,05$ |

Self-efficacy correlated positively but significantly with Fraudulence dimension ($r = 0.08$, $p > 0.05$). Self-efficacy correlated positively but not significantly with Plagiarism dimension ($r = 0.02$, $p > 0.05$). Self-efficacy correlated positively but not significantly with Falsification dimension ($r = 0.03$, $p > 0.05$). Self-efficacy correlated positively but not significantly with the Misuse dimension ($r = 0.08$, $p > 0.05$). According to the results, the research hypothesis, 1.c. was disproved (Table 2).

Table 2. Correlation between Self-efficacy and Academic Dishonesty dimensions

| | Fraudulence | Plagiarism | Falsification | Misuse |
|----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Self- efficacy | $r = 0,08$ $p > 0,15$ | $r = 0,02$ $p > 0,69$ | $r = 0,03$ $p > 0,59$ | $r = 0,08$ $p > 0,15$ |

Intrinsic academic motivation correlated positively but not significantly with Fraudulence and Falsification ($r = 0.008$; $p > 0.05$); ($r = 0.01$; $p > 0.05$). Intrinsic academic motivation correlated negatively and insignificantly with Plagiarism and Misuse ($r = -0.004$; $p > 0.05$); ($r = -0.02$; $p > 0.05$). According to the obtained results, the research hypotheses, 1.a. and 1.b. were disproved.

Table 3. Correlation between Motivation and Academic Dishonesty dimensions

| Academic- Dishonesty dimensions | Extrinsic motivation | Intrinsic motivation |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Fraudulence | $r = 0,07$ $p > 0,22$ | $r = 0,008$ $p > 0,89$ |

| | | |
|---------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| Plagiarism | r = 0,10 p > 0,06 | r = -0,004 p > 0,94 |
| Falsification | r = 0,11 p > 0,05 | r = 0,01 p > 0,86 |
| Misuse | r = 0,08 p > 0,18 | r = -0,02 p > 0,69 |

3.2. Results for mediation hypotheses

To examine whether self-efficacy is a significant mediator of the association between academic motivation and students' perception of online academic dishonesty, we conducted mediation analyzes (see Table 4). The results show that self-efficacy partially mediates the relationship between intrinsic academic motivation and the fraudulence dimension of online academic dishonesty ($B = 0.023$; $p > 0.05$), self-efficacy partially mediates the relationship between intrinsic academic motivation and the falsification dimension ($B = 0.006$; $p > 0.05$). Next, following the application of mediation analysis, the results show that self-efficacy partially mediates the relationship between extrinsic academic motivation and the fraudulence dimension ($B = 0.07$; $p > 0.05$), the relationship between extrinsic academic motivation and the plagiarism dimension ($B = 0.07$; $p > 0.05$), extrinsic academic motivation and the falsification dimension ($B = 0.04$; $p > 0.05$), the relationship between academic motivation and the misuse dimension ($B = 0.07$; $p > 0.05$).

Table 4. Mediation results for Self- efficacy as mediator

| Predictor | Mediator | Dependent Variable | Measure (ITADS) | Direct Effect | Indirect Effect |
|-----------|----------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------------|
| IM | SE | SPADI | Fraudulence | 0.023 | -0.012 (0.013, -0.043) |
| IM | SE | SPADI | Plagiarism | -0.02 | -0.02 (0.006, -0.017) |
| IM | SE | SPADI | Falsification | 0.006 | -0.002 (0.004, -0.010) |
| IM | SE | SPADI | Misuse | -0.018 | -0.009 (0.010, -0.035) |
| EM | SE | SPADI | Fraudulence | 0.078 | 0.008 (0.009, -0.006) |
| EM | SE | SPADI | Plagiarism | 0.075 | 0.001 (0.004, -0.008) |
| EM | SE | SPADI | Falsification | 0.044 | 0.001 (0.003, -0.004) |
| EM | SE | SPADI | Misuse | 0.070 | 0.006 (0.007, -0.005) |

Note: IM = Intrinsic motivation; EM = Extrinsic motivation; F = Fraudulence; P = Plagiarism; F = Falsification; M = Misuse; SE = Self-Efficacy; SPADI = Students' perception of academic dishonesty via the Internet;

Conclusions

This study explored the relationship between academic motivation, self-efficacy (as mediator), and students' perception of Academic dishonesty through the Internet. A first conclusion is that intrinsic academic motivation correlated negatively and insignificantly with self-efficacy, while extrinsic academic motivation correlated positively, but insignificantly with self-efficacy. Contrary to our results, Husain (2014) found that there is a positive and significant correlation between self-efficacy and academic motivation.

A second conclusion is that self-efficacy correlated positively but not significantly with the four dimensions of the academic dishonesty dimension (fraudulence, plagiarism, falsification, misuse). Extrinsic academic motivation correlated positively but insignificantly with all four dimensions of academic dishonesty, while intrinsic academic motivation correlated positively but insignificantly with the dimensions (fraudulence and falsification) and negatively and insignificantly with the dimensions (plagiarism and misuse). Other studies (Khumaeroh et al., 2019) have found that self-efficacy correlates negatively and significantly with academic

dishonesty ($r = -0.131$, $p < 0.05$). Krou et al. (2021) found that intrinsic academic motivation correlated negatively and significantly with academic dishonesty ($r = -0.17$, $p < 0.01$) and extrinsic academic motivation correlated positively and significantly with academic dishonesty ($r = 0.05$, $p < 0.01$), these results being in disagreement with the results of this study.

The third conclusion is that the mediating role of self-efficacy on the relationship between academic motivation and students' perception of academic dishonesty through the Internet was not confirmed, thus the hypotheses of the present study being disproved.

Since our results contradict the international literature, more explanations are needed: the lack of ethical culture for the first year students, as well as the poor understanding of the concepts used in ITADS, could have led to such results. We also believe that the permissive and ironic attitude of this topic, Academic Dishonesty, in the Romanian public discourse led to a superficiality of the answers for participants of our research. For future research directions, the group of participants should be composed of masters and doctoral students who studied Ethics and academic integrity, which could suggest conclusive data. Despite disproving the hypotheses, our research draws attention to the caution of applying research instruments in the case of students who lack the ethical culture and a responsible attitude towards this sensitive area. As future research directions, we propose the use of a more robust instrument on self-efficacy, which could lead to more relevant results, as well as a better selection of participants, possibly master's and doctoral students who understand the concept of academic fraud.

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