

**Impact of individual and cultural factors on passive cheating:
A middle east study**

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Abstract:

There is an overlooked area in current literature dealing with the aspect of cheating where students are not actively indulging in cheating themselves but are helping other students to cheat (Anitsal, Anitsal, & Elmore, 2009). Sparse literature discussing this aspect of cheating calls it “passive cheating” (e.g. McMahan, 2015). “It is a form of cheating where a higher percentage of people are likely to convince themselves that it is not really wrong” (Turnley & Mudrack, 2014, p. 25) and may be perceived by the students as an act of benevolence, making it more difficult to detect and correct. As highlighted by Ogilvie and Stewart (2010), research exploring causes of academic misconduct in higher education “has largely overlooked the values of integrating individual and situational perspectives to structure empirical examinations” (p. 130). In this research therefore, we propose and quantitatively verify a detailed model for understanding the dynamics of academically dishonesty actions by examining student academic misconduct manifested through passive cheating at both individual and contextual levels using the frameworks of big five personality traits (conscientiousness, emotional stability and agreeableness), Hofstede cultural variables (collectivism) and academic integrity culture. Using a mixed method design, we first conducted focus groups and in-depth interviews as explorative tools. Based on the data collected from this stage and extensive literature review, a survey instrument having 32 items was finalized. This was administered as an online survey to collect data from the students. 1325 students from different schools (medical, engineering and business) responded, resulting in usable sample of 1192. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) will be conducted to categorize the distinct factors involved and the resulting factor structure will be validated by Confirmatory Factor Analysis. The study hypotheses below will be tested by structural equation modelling. Initial analysis indicates a significant relationship between the study variables however surprisingly the directions of correlation are not as theory indicates. Therefore, a more detailed analysis is being conducted to test moderation / mediation effects, if any.

Keywords: Academic integrity culture, agreeableness, collectivism, conscientiousness, emotional stability, passive cheating.