

INDIVIDUALISTIC VS. SOCIAL EXAM DISHONESTY: INTRODUCTION OF TWO-FACTOR MODEL

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Abstract

Exam dishonesty—defined as any dishonest act taken during or related to an exam (e.g., using cribs, stealing questions, impersonating, or even bribing the lecturer)—is one of the most prevalent types of academic misconduct worldwide (Hendy et al., 2021, Odongo, 2021). The negative consequences of these practices affect both students (formation of immoral habits) and organizations (massive losses of intellectual property) (Wu et al., 2020; Cizek, 2003, pp. 31-39).

Of most instruments measuring academic dishonesty in the broadest sense, only a few scales focus on the problem of exam dishonesty (Ossai et al., 2014; Roberts & Toombs, 1993). This is a particular niche in academic research, as exam dishonesty undoubtedly has a different background than, for example, plagiarism and therefore requires specific research assumptions.

Moreover, it may be questionable to view academic dishonesty a unidimensional

construct (as in the studies cited above). All academic misconduct is undoubtedly multidimensional in nature (Iyer, Eastman, 2006; Marsden et al., 2005), which should be considered in research. The purpose of this presentation, therefore, is to propose a new two-factor model of exam dishonesty, consisting of *individualistic dishonesty* (focused on the pursuit of one's own goals) and *social dishonesty* (collective participation in deception aimed at achieving common goals) (Cicognani, 2019). We present the Examination Dishonesty Intention Scale (EDIS): a new, brief tool to measure propensity for both types of exam cheating. Preliminary results highlight the distinct nomological networks of individual and social dishonesty by examining their relationships with Dark Triad traits (Jonason & Webster, 2010), human values (Schwartz, 2003), and interest orientation (Gerbası & Prentice, 2013).

Method

We collected data from 398 students from Poland (studying at many different universities). They answered 26 questions about their willingness to behave unethically in hypothetical situations during exams and completed a series

of psychological questionnaires. Confirmatory factor analysis revealed that eight items among the scenarios used formed a two-factor model that fit the data well and accounted for two distinct dimensions: individualistic vs. social.

Results

Correlational analyzes revealed that the general measure of prior involvement in academic dishonesty (Sanecka & Baran, 2015) was strongly related to both EDIS factors. However, we found distinct patterns of relationships of the EDIS subscales with other measured variables. The individualistic factor correlated positively with all traits in the Dark Triad model (most strongly with Machiavellianism) and with self-interest focus, whereas the social facet of EDIS correlated positively with other-interest Focus, self-interest focus, and (weakly) with Machiavellianism.

The most interesting results were obtained when analyzing the relationship between

academic dishonesty and human values in Shalom Schwartz's model. Individualistic dishonesty correlates positively with the values of Self-Enhancement and Openness to Change and negatively with Conservation and Self-Transcendence - while socially motivated deception correlates only with Openness to Change (positively) and with Conservation (negatively). The nature of the Benevolence lower-order value most clearly shows the differences between the two EDIS factors: it is negatively correlated with the individualistic EDIS dimension and positively correlated with a social dimension.

Discussion

Our results confirm that the students' exam dishonesty is not a completely homogenous phenomenon. At least two types of dishonesty can be distinguished: individualistic and social. Although these two factors are strongly correlated, a thorough analysis reveals that they differ in their psychological determinants. The individualistic dimension has its roots in "dark" personality traits (Machiavellianism, narcissism, psychopathy), self-interest orientation, and values such as hedonism or power. The social dimension, on the other hand, has a weak connection with the Dark Triad, but it is linked to a focus on the interest of others and high scores on the value of Benevolence.

Another interesting finding is the positive correlation between the focus on self-interest focus and the social dimension of academic dishonesty. It suggests the reciprocal nature of student cheating: individuals who "help" others with academic dishonesty may be motivated by

personal benefits, such as the chance to receive equivalent help in the future.

Among the limitations of the study, is its self-descriptive nature. All data collected in this manner are subject to errors resulting from social desirability bias (the reluctance to admit to behaviors that do not conform to social ethical norms). Moreover, the proposed questionnaire items refer to hypothetical and imagined behaviors, which are not always good predictors of actual behaviors.

Despite the previously mentioned shortcomings of the present study, the practical applicability of the proposed instrument should be emphasized. It is the first scale based on a two-factor model of academic dishonesty that allows examining students' tendency to engage in different types of dishonest behaviors. In addition, it looks at the propensity to dishonesty *here and now* – what makes it useful in experimental manipulations (as opposed to tools based on the declaration of past behavior).

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