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Student's Attitudes toward Academic Dishonesty: An Exploration

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ABSTRACT

Academic dishonesty in college/university classrooms is widely recognized as a serious problem (Offstein and Chory 2017). Studies indicate that academic dishonesty is pervasive. Klein, Levenburg, McKendall, and Mothersell (2007), report 40-80 percent of college students are involved in academic dishonesty, whereas McCabe, Butterfield, and Treviño (2012), report 65-87 percent involvement. Studies also report that cheating activity is increasing (Forsha 2017; Pérez-Peña 2012), facilitated by increasing levels of tolerance (where instances of academic dishonesty are overlooked by classroom instructors (Coren 2011)), and advances in technology (Best and Shirley 2018). Consequently, academic dishonesty has become an increasingly important area of concern and, likewise, an important area of study (Robinson and Glanzer 2017).

Academic dishonesty is not a victimless activity. With the growth of cheating activity, the integrity of higher education is increasingly being questioned (Drye, Lomo-David, and Snyder 2018). Pervasive academic dishonesty prevents academic institutions from being able to certify that graduates have gained a specific level of knowledge and ability from their education (Yu, Glanzer, Johnson, Sriram, and Moore 2018). Academic dishonesty has also been connected with a number of other undesirable activities (Biswas 2014), including unethical work behaviors (Harding, Carpenter, Finelli, and Passow 2004). Several studies suggest that academic dishonesty primes students for continuing dishonesty in their subsequent employment (e.g., Harding, Carpenter, Finelli, and Passow 2004; Hsiao and Yang 2011; Nonis and Swift 2001; Yang, Huang, and Chen 2013). Consequently, recent highly publicized business scandals have focused renewed attention on cheating activities in the classroom (Rakovski and Levy 2007).

Past ethics research has explored many important issues involving academic dishonesty, including the effectiveness of various tactics to reduce the incidence of academic dishonesty. Examples of these tactics include the implementation/enforcement of honor codes (McCabe, Treviño, and Butterfield 2001; Tatum and Schwartz 2017), required ethics courses

(Medeiros et al. 2017), ethics instruction integrated into discipline-specific coursework (Desplaces, Melchar, Beauvais, and Bosco 2007), campus climate (Molar 2015), and the activities of faculty to fight dishonesty (Coalter, Lim, and Wanorie 2007). The attitudes of students toward academic dishonesty have also received a significant amount of research attention (e.g., Johns and Strand 2007).

An area that has not received the same level of research attention involves the effects that students' perceptions of the ethicality of their academic environment have on their attitudes toward academic dishonesty. Specifically, do students' perceptions of the ethicality of their college/university, their faculty, and their student body affect their attitudes toward academic dishonesty? This is an important area of study since if students' attitudes toward academic dishonesty are affected by their perceptions of the ethicality of their institution and their colleagues, it may be possible to affect students' participation in academic dishonesty by affecting their perceptions of their school environment.

To explore this issue, first, student academic dishonesty in higher education is examined. Second, hypotheses are developed and tested. Finally, conclusions are drawn.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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