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Original article

The Role of General Self-efficacy on Academic Integrity

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Abstract

The present study firstly, aimed to investigate pre-service teachers' perceptions of general self-efficacy (GSE hereafter) and academic integrity (AI hereafter). Secondly examined whether there was a relationship between general self-efficacy and academic integrity in the Turkish pre-service teacher education context through descriptive statistics and correlation analysis. The study was conducted at an English Language Teaching (ELT) Department at a state university with the participation of 63 4th year students. The analysis of data revealed that the group of pre-service teachers have a moderate mean value related to GSE. As for AI the group scores revealed that mostly tendency to dishonesty in references took place. Positive low correlation was found between GSE and tendency to dishonesty in references. The study was carried out with a small number of participants. Further studies may be carried out with number of participants to make generalizations. Findings of the study reflect the case at a state university ELT department. The study may be repeated with qualitative study to enhance the findings of the quantitative data.

Keywords: General Self-Efficacy, Pre-Service Teachers, Academic Integrity.

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INTRODUCTION

There are different definitions of AI "The Centre for Academic Integrity (2014), defines academic integrity as a commitment to five fundamental values which are; honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility". These five components are the cornerstones of AI. Fishman (2016) definition specifies that academic integrity is "acting in accordance with values and principles consistent with ethical teaching, learning, and scholarship" (p. 8). So, for students, this means learning the content by doing the work required by their professors, honestly and fairly, without engaging in plagiarism (Adam et al., 2017). Academic ethics and integrity are necessary elements of a quality education as a result there is growing interest in issues connected with AI. This is partly because of the increasing number of reported cases about academic fraud worldwide, and also unexpected pandemic that resulted in distance education. Murdoch and Anderman (2006) named personal characteristics and contextual factors as two important components of AI. Personal factors included, demographic variables, gender, prior achievement, personality, motivational factors such including self-efficacy, goal orientation and moral development. Contextual factors included, difficulty of task, student workload, the level of instructor proctoring and new learning environment. Pavela (1978) categorized academic dishonesty as; cheating, fabrication, plagiarism and facilitating academic dishonesty.

As can be seen integrity is a multifaceted concept. A growing number of studies attempt to investigate AI such as students perceptions of AI (Ekahitanond, 2020; Fishman, 2016; Newton, 2015) contract cheating including looking at the nature of contract cheating, estimating the prevalence of the problem, uncovering contributory factors or reasons as to why a student may outsource their assignment to a third party, and exploring how higher education institutions can effectively respond by enhancing both academic integrity policy and educational approaches (Bretag & Harper, 2017; Bretag et al., 2018; Curtis & Clare, 2017; Harper et al., 2018; Lancaster & Clarke, 2016; Morris, 2016; Newton & Lang, 2016). The studies report increasing number of misconduct and contract cheating cases related to AI. The severity of the condition resulted in taking some precautions to decrease contract cheating and several text matching software such as iThenticate, Turnitin have been developed to enhance AI. Since the scope of this study is higher education the concept will be limited to higher education setting.

Higher education institutions and academic community is built on shared values and norms of behaviour, including honesty, fairness and responsibility. Academic integrity means putting those values into practise by being honest in the academic work you do at university, being fair to others, and taking responsibility for learning, and following the conventions of scholarship. Higher education institutions have become aware of the importance of establishing AI culture and are preparing their AI principles. For example; McCabe and Pavela, (2004; 10-15) stated 10 principles of academic integrity as follows;

1. Recognize and affirm academic integrity as a core institutional value.

2. Foster a lifelong commitment to learning.
3. Affirm the role of teacher as guide and mentor.
4. Help students understand the potential of the Internet--and how that potential can be lost if online resources are used for fraud, theft, and deception.
5. Encourage student responsibility for academic integrity.
6. Clarify expectations for students.
7. Develop fair and creative forms of assessment.
8. Reduce opportunities to engage in academic dishonesty.
9. Respond to academic dishonesty when it occurs.
10. Help define and support campus-wide academic integrity standards.

Exams and projects are inevitable parts of education to evaluate the progress done by pre-service teachers (hereafter PST). Because of technological advancements or unexpected situations like Covid-19 PSTs may violate AI. This may have various sources such as; distance learning, accessing technology and internet easily, not being motivated to do the tasks for lacking self-efficacy or not having responsibility. This study takes self-efficacy under observation. As can be seen from the examples above, most of the research studied contextual factors ignoring the personal characteristics. This study aims to accomplish to emphasize the importance of personal characteristics involved in AI and gathered data from pre-service teachers in teacher education process.

Self-efficacy

Bandura defines self-efficacy as "individuals' judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required for achieving designated types of performances" (1986, p. 391). People often acquire information about their own self-efficacy by observing the successes and failures of other individuals, especially those who appear to be similar to themselves (Schunk & Pajares, 2005). Success and failure seem to be the two key words here. Students with a strong sense of efficacy are more likely to challenge themselves with difficult tasks and be intrinsically motivated. These students will put forth a high degree of effort in order to meet their commitments, and attribute failure to things which are in their control, rather than blaming external factors. Self-efficacious PSTs also recover quickly from setbacks, and ultimately are likely to achieve their personal goals. PSTs with low self-efficacy, on the other hand, believe they cannot be successful and thus are less likely to make a concerted, extended effort and may consider challenging tasks as threats that are to be avoided. Thus, PSTs with poor self-efficacy have low aspirations which may result in disappointing academic performances becoming part of a self-fulfilling feedback cycle (Margolis and McCabe, 2006).

Of course, success and failure on their own are not sufficient enough to highlight self-efficacy. Under the umbrella of Self-efficacy Theory, Bandura (1977) proposed efficacy and outcome expectancies, to explain the motivation in behaviour changes. Efficacy expectancy relates the individual's own belief about his ability on the effort desired to spend and the choice of activities or settings desired to participate whereas outcome expectancy relates the changes in behaviour as depending on an individual's estimation of effort required by the outcome. Bandura (1977) argued that simply identifying the behaviour required by the desired outcome is not sufficient. One should reach the understanding and confidence of the ability respond to this behaviour. In conclusion self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief /confidence about his or her capabilities to execute a specific task within a given context thus; negative or positive beliefs about a behaviour before it is undertaken can affect one's course of action.

As a concept self-efficacy attracted many researchers' attention in the fields of education, business and health. For example; in education mostly the effects of self-efficacy on academic achievement (Bryant, 2017; Domenech-Betoret, Abellan-Rosello & Gomez-Artiga 2017; Köseoğlu, 2015; Triantoro, 2013; Wilde & Hsu, 2019) were investigated. As for business entrepreneurial self-efficacy and business start-up (Drnovsek, Wincent & Cardon, 2010; Nweman, Obschonka, Schwarz, Cohen, & Nielsen, 2019), impact of self-efficacy on motivation and performance of employees (Cherian & Jacob, 2013), self-efficacy in the work place (Lunenburg, 2011), impact of self-efficacy on leadership (Niyogi & John, 2017) were studied. In the field of health studies related to, self-efficacy and health-related quality of life, (Peters, Potter, Kelly & Fitzpatrick, 2019), mental health and self-efficacy (Grotan, Sund & Bjerkeset, 2019), self-efficacy for health-related behaviour change (Brouwer-Goossensen et.al.,2018) were carried out. This study aims to focus on self-efficacy as a construct of AI. The present study aims to investigate the following research questions;

RQ1: What is the general self-efficacy perception of ELT pre-service teachers'?

RQ2: What is the academic integrity perception of ELT pre-service teachers'?

RQ3: Is there a relationship between general self-efficacy and academic integrity?

The Study

In this study descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were run. To find out pre-service teachers' perceptions of GSE General Self-efficacy scale developed by Jerusalem & Schwarzer, 1981 and for AI, Academic Integrity Scale developed by Eminoğlu and Nartgün, 2009 were used. To interpret the perceptions of GSE and AI of PST's descriptive statistics were run. To find out whether there is a relationship between GSE and AI correlation analysis were used.

Setting and participants

The study was conducted in the English Language Teaching Department of the Faculty of Education at a state university. A total of 63 4th year (45 female, 18 male) PSTs participated in the present study voluntarily. The data were collected cross-sectionally in Spring semester.

All participants were native Turkish speakers with an advanced proficiency level of English. Since the department is female-dominant, a vast majority of the participants were females (45).

Table 1. Demographics of Participants

Participants	*f*	%
Female	45	71
Male	18	29
Total	63	100

Instruments

To collect data on GSE, General self-efficacy scale developed by Jerusalem and Schwarzer, (1981) was used. The scale is composed of 10 items. It was first written German and translated into different languages including Turkish (Scholtz et al., 2002) and used to measure beliefs in one's capability of different tasks in a variety of different situations. The items on the original scale were rated on a 4-point scale with the anchors not at all true to exactly true. Cronbach's alphas were between .76 and .90.

To collect data on the perceptions of PST's on AI Academic Efficacy Scale developed by Eminoğlu and Nartgün (2009) was used. The scale included 22 items and 4 subscales which were;

1. Tendency to cheating in the exams
2. Tendency to dishonesty in tasks and projects
3. Tendency to dishonesty in research and report process
4. Tendency to dishonesty in references

Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients of four factor and whole scale was .71; .82; .79; .78 and .90 respectively. Test-re test reliability coefficient was .88.

Procedures for data collection

Since the researcher was a member of staff it was easy to reach the participants for the study. 4th year PSTs participated the study voluntarily. It took 30-35 minutes to fill in the General self-efficacy and Academic Integrity scales.

Data Analysis

Data gathered to measure perceptions of GSE and AI of PSTs were and entered to SPSS programme, and descriptive statistics was conducted. To find out whether there was a relationship between GSE and AI correlation analysis were run.

Findings

RQ1: What is the general self-efficacy perception of ELT pre-service teachers'?

To find the GSE perceptions of PSTs descriptive statistics were run. Table 2 below gives the descriptive statistics of GSE perception of ELT PSTs.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of GSE perception of ELT PSTs

GSE TOT	*N*	Mean	SD
	63	2.76	.55

The group scored a moderate mean value. It means they have the ability to overcome unexpected situations or find solutions to problems. In general, they need more practice to feel more efficient.

RQ2: What is the academic integrity perception of ELT pre-service teachers'?

To highlight the perceptions of PSTs on AI descriptive statistics were run. Table 3 below gives the descriptive statistics of AI perceptions of PSTs.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of AI perceptions of ELT PSTs

	N	*M*	*SD*
Tendency to dishonesty in references	63	4.30	0.59
Tendency to dishonesty in tasks and projects	63	4.24	0.61
Tendency to dishonesty in research and report processes	63	4.18	0.56
Tendency to dishonesty in the exams	63	3.93	0.89

The group seemed least sensitive to dishonesty in the exams and most cautious on dishonesty in references.

RQ3: Is there a relationship between general self-efficacy and academic integrity?

To find out whether a relationship existed between GSE and AI correlation analysis were run.

Table 4 below gives the correlation analysis between GSE and AI.

Table 4. Correlations between GSE and AI

Tendency to cheat in exams	Pearson Correlaltion Sig. (2-tailed)	1				
	N	63				
Tendency to dishonesty in tasks and projects	Pearson Correlaltion Sig. (2-tailed)	.400**	1			
	N	.001	63			
Tendency to dishonesty in research and report process	Pearson Correlaltion Sig. (2-tailed)	.430**	.671**	1		
	N	.000	.000	63		
Tendency to dishonesty in references	Pearson Correlaltion Sig. (2-tailed)	.434	.735	.620	1	
	N	.000	.000	.000	1	
General self-efficacy	Pearson Correlaltion Sig. (2-tailed)	.347	.278	.143	.328	1
	N	.005	.027	.264	.009	1
		63	63	63	63	63

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Positive low correlation was found between GSE and tendency to dishonesty in references.

DISCUSSION

GSE perceptions of PSTs

The study investigated the GSE perceptions of PSTs. The group scored a moderate mean value which means they may overcome unexpected situations or find solutions to problems in general. It seems that they need to feel more efficient about overcoming problems, unexpected events, unforeseen

situations, remain calm when faced problems related to exams and projects they prepare. By the help of the 4 sources of self-efficacy (Mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and emotional and physiological states) PSTs may be made aware of their own self-efficacy and they may not tend to academic dishonesty. As a result,

in this cohort PSTs need to be given the chance to practice more in the courses, to meet good role models, given more feedback on exams, research studies and projects so they may have a better psychological state and follow the principles of AI. By the help of feedback given by the lecturers PSTs may have higher GS, they can be motivated better (Dimotakis et al., 2017; Peifer, Schönfeld, Wolters, Aust & Margraf, 2020) so that they may avoid academic dishonesty.

AI perceptions of PSTs

After GSE the study focused on AI perceptions of PSTs. Cohort of PSTs proved to be least sensitive to cheating, (the possibility of being detected cheating may be low), followed by dishonesty in research and report process, dishonesty in tasks and projects and the highest score is gained by dishonesty in references.

The group seemed to be mostly cautious on tendency to dishonesty in references. Here, we may talk about lecturer control (Mahaber & Pirtheepal, 2019; Sariasih & Tisnawijaya, 2018). Due to the course "Academic Writing Skills" the students receive on the first year for two semesters PSTs learn to write references in detail. The lecturer teaches the ethics and reasons of honesty in academic writing skills. Furthermore; the lecturer assigns different tasks on the subject so the pre-service teachers may become aware of the importance of the issue. This may be reason why tendency to dishonesty in refences gained the highest score. It is evident that, lecturers play a crucial role on student motivation (Kusumajati, Ruman, & Oktriono, 2017; Noori et al., 2020; Trivena & Harisno, 2014). As a lecturer, one needs to be well equipped with professional knowledge and follow and implement the principles of AI.

Relationship between GSE and AI

Correlation analysis revealed positive low correlation between GSE and tendency to dishonesty in references. This may be due to "academic writing skills" course and the tasks performed. The students seem to be aware of the suitable use of references. The course seems to be contributing much to the pre-service teachers. The students seem to have the highest self-efficacy in the use of refences so they think they may attempt dishonesty less. The importance of GSE and lecturers' contribution on AI is emphasized by this study (Mahaber & Pirtheepal, 2019; Peters, Boies, & Morin 2019).

Conclusion and Pedagogical Implications

The findings of the study revealed that the PSTs' GSE was of moderate value which needs to be augmented by motivation in the form of positive feedback from lecturers. As for AI PSTs have sensitivity due to their "Academic writing skills" courses and the lecturers painstakingly focusing on the outcomes of dishonesty in the classes. Realistic feedback may help students understand the potential of the Internet and how that potential can be lost if online resources are used for fraud, theft, and deception. Pre-service teachers may be given more research tasks and projects, which may encourage student responsibility for academic integrity. As a result, it may be tentatively concluded that; it is the lecturers' duty to clarify the details and the expectations of the course content and related evaluation criteria. They need to develop fair and creative forms of assessment. Most importantly lecturers need to introduce academic ethics to PSTs. PSTs need to be supported with good models and given more feedback about exams or projects they are responsible. If they are guided by efficiently by lecturers they may resort dishonesty less because of having confidence in themselves.

The study was carried out with a small number of participants. Further studies may be carried out with number of participants to make generalizations. Findings of the study reflect the case at a state university ELT department. The study may be repeated with qualitative study to enhance the findings of the quantitative data.

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