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AN INVESTIGATION OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITY, OYE -EKITI, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigate the incidence of academic dishonesty among undergraduate students in Federal University, Oye -Ekiti. A descriptive research design of correlational type was utilized to examine the influence of the attendant variables. Five (5) research questions were raised and analyzed. Two hundred (200) undergraduate students were randomly selected from five faculties in the school. Standardized instruments were administered to the participants. Descriptive statistics and Pearson product moment correlation, t-test and ANOVA was used to analyze the data. The study revealed a positive significant relationship between academic pressure and academic dishonesty among undergraduates; a significant relationship between peer influence and academic dishonesty among undergraduates; a significant relationship between digital resources and academic dishonesty among undergraduates; no significant relationship between religious beliefs and academic dishonesty and a significant difference in academic dishonest among male and female undergraduate student. Based on these results it was recommended that education stakeholders and school management strive to create forums for teachers, students and even parents in order to improve self- discipline, self- management and competence on the part of learners to understand the risk of academic dishonesty among others

Keywords: Academic Dishonesty, Academic Pressure, Peer Pressure, Digital Resources Religious Beliefs,

Introduction

There has been a growing concern in Nigeria's education institutions as regarding academic dishonesty. Students in higher education are tasked with behaving in honest and upstanding ways to achieve academic goals. Part of that task includes making choices about behaviors that reside in the hazy space between honesty and dishonesty. How do students make decisions when faced with choices that lead to academic success yet possibly cross moral boundaries?

Academic dishonesty among university undergraduates is so pervasive with significant implications for the integrity of higher education. The practice of academic dishonesty is not new and had been a major concern for educational institutions for centuries. It has been recorded in various forms and methods and it represents a significant challenge in higher education, undermining the core value of scholarship and intellectual integrity.

Academic dishonesty – i.e., plagiarism in written papers or copying from

unauthorised sources on exams is widespread in universities across the world. These practices may negatively impact students, universities, and society. Academic dishonesty makes student assessment intrinsically unfair and reduces students' incentives to study diligently (Heyneman 2011; Gallant, Stephens 2020). Researchers and policymakers are concerned about the high prevalence of academic dishonesty among students and seek to find ways to prevent or reduce it. They explore the reasons for students to cheat, the conditions under which cheating occurs, and what measures can be effective to affect its prevalence. Researchers find the links between academic dishonesty and student psychological characteristics, such as conscientiousness and agreeableness (Giluk, Postlethwaite 2015), moral development (Harding et al. 2007; Manly and Leonard 2017; Mayhew et al. 2009), tendency to rationalise behaviour (Stephens 2017; Rettinger 2017; Lee et al. 2020), self-efficacy (Ogilvie, Stewart 2010; Krou et al. 2020), and academic motivation (Anderman, Murdock 2011;Krou et al. 2020).

Academic integrity is a university value that directly connects to the university's core mission, though institutions vary to the extent in which they communicate and embed this value in their culture. An increasing deviance from this value of integrity has developed over the last twenty years that has strengthened with the escalating use of the Internet (Szabo & Underwood, 2004). Recent statistics identify cheating on college campuses to be as high as two-thirds of the student population with some identifying it as an epidemic (Angell, 2006; Hughes & McCabe 2006; McCabe, 2007; McCabe & Trevino, 1997; Nathanson, Paulhus & Williams, 2006; Whitley, 1998;). Influencing this trend is the fact that nearly 40% of faculty fail to report incidences of academic dishonesty (McCabe, 2007). Some research has asserted that the problem of cheating is surfacing as early as middle school with roughly 1/3 of middle school and high school students indicating they would be willing to cheat if it increased their chance of attending college (Finn & Frone, 2006; Levy & Rakovski, 2006).

When the value of academic integrity is compromised, it deceives not just the college or university but those outside the institution who rely on the knowledge and integrity of its graduates as well as the research produced by the institution. Institutions of higher learning have long been held in society's eye as having "…an essential role to play in the creation of a learning society, including the development of citizenship behaviours." (Hughes & McCabe, 2006, p 51). The failure of the institution to stem academically dishonest behaviors plays an influential role in fostering a culture where cheating occurs which potentially may lead to more serious forms of dishonesty in the future (Callahan, 2004; Crown & Spiller, 1998).

Students today are under a high degree of perceived pressure which often correlates with cheating behaviors (Anderman, 2007). While efforts at reducing the frequency of cheating behaviors is critical, equally important is helping students, once a transgression has occurred, make sense of that experience. Further, since it is unlikely that a student's perceived pressure is limited to their undergraduate experience, helping students make meaning out of their behavioral choices through reflection and open dialogue can build moral capacity and the presence of mind to avoid potential

immoral pitfalls in future graduate school and career experiences. Reducing the instances of academic dishonesty has to be an institutional imperative, supported by all members of the academic community and reflected through conduct policies and procedures. Colleges and universities can proactively approach academic integrity by embedding a culture of integrity through mission statements, core values, and the organization of the institution. Academic dishonesty among academic undergraduates is a pervasive phenomenon that has been undermining and eroding the integrity and trust of education within and out of the academic communities. This is the concern of this current study. Hence this paper examines the incidence of academic dishonesty among undergraduates in Federal University, Oye – Ekiti.

Research questions

1. Is there significant relationship between academic pressure and academic dishonesty among undergraduates?
2. Is there significant relationship between peer pressure and academic dishonesty among undergraduates?
3. Is there significant relationship between digital resources and academic dishonesty among undergraduates?
4. Is there significant relationship between religious belief and academic dishonesty among undergraduates?
5. Is there a significant difference in academic dishonesty among male and female undergraduate students.

Research Method

Research Design: This study adopted a descriptive research design of the correlational type in which a questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. This seeks to establish relationships among variables under investigation, over which the researcher has no control over the variables of interest and therefore cannot manipulate them. It is judged that the sample used would be a true representation of the whole population of the study.

Population: The population comprises all undergraduate in in Federal University, Oye-ekiti.

which were purposively selected for the study.

Sample and Sampling technique: The sample for this study consisted of 200 undergraduate students that were randomly selected from four faculties at the Federal University, Oye- Ekiti. In each of the four fifty (50) students were randomly selected to make a total of two hundred (200) students representing each of the five faculties.

Participants: The sample for this study consists of 200 students randomly selected from five (5) faculties in Federal University, Oye -Ekiti, Nigeria. The biodata information summary from the participants revealed that 32 (16.o%) were male and 168 (84%) were female. A further breakdown showed that 67 (33.5%), 123 (61.5%), and 10 (5.1%) of those that filled out the survey fell under the age brackets of under 16, 16-21, and above 26 years, respectively. With respect to religion, 168 respondents (80.0%) were Christians, and 38 respondents (19.0%) were Muslims, while 2 respondents (1.0%) practice other religion.

Instrumentation: The instrument used for the collection of data for this study is a questionnaire which was designed by the researcher titled ‘’Incidence of academic dishonesty among undergraduates. ’’The questionnaire consists of five sections; Section A will contain the personal data of the respondents, Section B will contain items on perceived academic stress, C will

contain items on academic dishonesty, D on peer pressure and academic dishonesty, E on digital resources and academic dishonesty F on religious beliefs and academic dishonesty.

The instrument will be a close–ended structured questionnaire (a closed-ended questionnaire refers to any question for which the researcher provides research participants with options from which to choose a response). The questionnaire was developed in line with the 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agreed (SA) Agreed (A) Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD) in accordance with the five research questions raised for the study. To determine the reliability of the questionnaire, it was administered to 20 undergraduate students who will not take part in the study. A two-week test re-test reliability method was carried out to determine its reliability of 0.79 which is considered to be adequate.

Data Analysis: Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics, T-tests, and Pearson product-moment correlation and ANOVA at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and correlation between academic pressure and academic dishonesty among undergraduate students.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	Sig
Academic pressure	200	2.48	.575	.153	.031
Academic dishonesty	200	1.41	.658		

Table 1 contains descriptive statistics and correlation between academic pressure and academic dishonesty. As shown in table 1 academic pressure is significantly correlated with academic dishonesty (r =.153; p<.05). This indicates that the relationship between academic pressure and academic dishonesty is significant. This implies that those students who has high academic pressure also have high in academic dishonesty and vice versa. Hence there is a positive significant relationship between academic pressure and academic dishonesty among undergraduates.

Research question Two: Is there significant relationship between peer influence and academic dishonesty among undergraduate students.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and correlation between peer influence and academic dishonesty among undergraduate students

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	Sig
Peer influence	200	1.96	.633	.442	.000
Academic dishonesty	200	1.41	.658		

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics and correlation between peer influence and academic dishonesty. As shown in the table 2, peer influence is significantly correlated with academic dishonesty (r = .442; p<.05). This means that majority of the students influenced by their peer are more likely to practice academic dishonesty and vice versa. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between peer influence and academic dishonesty among undergraduates.

Research question three: Is there significant relationship between digital resources and Academic dishonesty among undergraduate students.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and correlation between digital resources and academic dishonesty among undergraduate students

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	Sig
Digital resources	200	1.56	.713	.456*	.000
Academic dishonesty	200	1.41	.658		

Table 3 reveals the descriptive statistics and correlation between digital resources and academic dishonesty. As shown in the table 3, digital resources are significantly correlated with academic dishonesty (r = .456; p<.05). This means that there is a significant relationship between digital resources and academic dishonesty among undergraduates.

Research question four: There is no significant relationship between religious beliefs and academic dishonesty among undergraduate students.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics and correlation between religious beliefs and academic dishonesty among undergraduate students

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	Sig
Religious beliefs	200	2.5	.551	.050	.482
Academic dishonesty	200	1.4	.658		

Table 4 reveals the descriptive statistics and correlation between religious beliefs and academic dishonesty. As shown in the table 4, religious belief does not significantly correlated with academic dishonesty (r = .050; p>.05). This implies that whether one is religious or not does not determine the practices of academic dishonesty. Hence there is no significant relationship between religious beliefs and academic dishonesty.

Research Question five: Is there significant difference in academic dishonesty among male and female undergraduate students?

Table 5: T-test showing the significant difference in academic dishonesty among male and female undergraduate students

Variable	N	X	SD	T	Df	P	Remark
Male	32	1.87	.900	26.599	197	.000	S
Female	168	1.33	.574				

The result from table 5 above shows that, the value of (t = 26.599 df = 197, p<0.05). Since p<0.05, therefore, there is significant difference in academic dishonest among male and female undergraduate students. This result indicates that gender is a factor affecting academic dishonest as male mean score is higher than female mean. Male seems to engage in academic dishonest than female.

Discussion

The study investigated the incidence of academic dishonesty among undergraduates in Federal University, Oye Ekiti. The result shows that that academic pressure is significantly correlated with academic dishonesty (r =.153; p<.05). This indicates that the relationship between academic pressure and academic dishonesty is significant This is in line with the submission of Joseck et al (2015) who said that it is probable that when candidates

experience pressure , they simply become dishonest in exams, for instance in an environment where students see their peers cheat without been caught , they likewise may generate feeling of not caring since everyone else is doing the same thing, Also the finding is similar to the findings of Boehm et al (2019) in their investigation of academic pressure and academic deceitfulness, it was established that there were significantly correlated.

Th study also revealed that there is significant relationship between peer influence and academic dishonesty among undergraduate. The descriptive statistics and correlation between peer influence and academic dishonesty shows that peer influence is significantly correlated with academic dishonesty ($r = .442$; $p<.05$). This means that majority of the students are influenced by their peer are more likely to engage in academic dishonesty and vice versa. Therefore, the null hypothesis three is rejected. This is in line with Van Zantvliet et al. (2020) argued that whereas examines deliberately got involved in academic dishonesty other learners found themselves indulged in the vice owing to peer norms, ignorance, not being careful or forgetting to apply protocols. The study findings were that learners would develop a custom of dishonesty by observing colleagues perform dishonest activities. Munachonga (2015) in an investigation in Zambia, established that peers' pressure in the community and in the institution and likewise from parent led to academic dishonesty. Consequently, learners who believed that their colleagues condemned dishonesty were less probable to be dishonest.

The study further revealed that there is significant relationship between digital resources and academic dishonesty among undergraduate students. The descriptive statistics and correlation between digital resources and academic dishonesty shows that digital resources are significantly correlated with academic dishonesty ($r = .456$; $p<.05$). This means that there is significant relationship between digital resources and academic dishonesty. The finding aligns with the opinion of Evering et al ,2012) who said with rapid growth in technologies, new forms of homework avoidance such as copying and plagiarism are developing. The findings of the 2006 U.S surveys of the Josephson Institute of Ethics with the conclusion that the internet has led to a deterioration of ethics among students. In 2006, one-third of high school students had copied an internet document in the past 12monthhs and 60% had cheated on a test. In 2012, these numbers were updated to 32% and 51% respectively. (Josephson institute of Ethics, 2012).
The study also revealed that there is no significant relationship between academic dishonesty and religious beliefs. This study is in agreement with claim of Onu et al. 2021 that said that religious commitment negatively affects students' cheating. Similarly empirical research related to academic fraud is conducted by Hadjar (2017) using 239 students from the Islamic religious education study programme and study programme of daw'ah from one of the leading universities in Indonesia. The results present that 98% of the respondents claim to involve in one or several forms of academic cheating which conclude that religion (belief and behaviour) does not influence the fraudulent behaviour of students.

Lastly, the study shows that there is a significant difference in academic dishonesty among male and female

undergraduate students. This result indicates that gender is a factor affecting academic dishonest as male mean score is higher than female mean. Male seems to engage in academic dishonest than female. Whereas the question as to whether gender predicts academic integrity remains inconclusive (Williams and Aremu, 2019)., It is pertinent to note that most studies reported that males have more tendency to engage in academic dishonesty than females (Salleh et al. 2023). Similarly, the study by Emmerton and colleagues used by hypothetical scenarios to assess perceptions of academically dishonest behaviour between male and female. In the study, no perception differences between males and females were seen for sharing details of an examination, copying another student's examination, copying another student's coursework and using another student's work as their own. While Emmerson did not assess perceptions of a stolen examination, the current study revealed that males were less likely to perceive a male student as an examination theft accomplice and distributing the examination to his peers as cheating compared to females.

Recommendations

Based on the findings the following recommendations were suggested:

The Ministry of Education should assist in hiring, promoting, training and developing qualified teacher and counsellors to assist in inculcating virtuous behaviour in students to deter academic dishonesty. It is critical for education stakeholders and school management strive to create forums for teachers, students and even parents in order to improve self- discipline, self-management and competence on the part of learners to understand the risk of academic dishonesty. There should be the implementation of schoolbased interventions by way of given stiffer and firmmer penalties for those caught in engaging in academic dishonesty, this will act as a deterant to other to desist fro all acts of academic dishonesty. Counselling services, mentorship programs, and support groups can also provide a home grown interventions for defaulters who can be better equipped with diverse ways and methods of achieving academic excellent rather than condescending to academic dishonesty.

Conclusion

The findings of this study shows that academic pressure, peer influence, digital resources have a significant relationship with academic dishonesty among undergraduate students. It is important for all stakeholders especially parents, teachers and counsellors to find a way in between these factors as to be able to mitigate their influences on undergraduates as it concerns academic dishonesty. The study further strengthens again that there is a significant difference in academic dishonesty among male and female undergraduate students. However, it revealed that religious beliefs does not have any significant relationship on academi dishonesty among undergraduates.

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