ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: GENDER WISE TENDENCY IN MIRPUR, AJ&K

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Paper Information

Abstract

QR Code for the Paper:

Academic integrity is critical for improving the quality and prestige of institutions worldwide. This study attempts to explore gender-wise tendencies in academic integrity among undergraduates in Mirpur, AJ&K. In this quantitative study, A descriptive research design is used. Pilot testing is conducted to ensure the validity and reliability of the research instrument. The collected data is subjected to a reliability test, and the value of Cronbach's Alpha is .804. The researcher handed questionnaires to 502 undergraduates from two affiliated colleges and Mirpur University of Science and Technology (MUST). The data was collected and analyzed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings show that plagiarism and prior cheating behaviour exhibit a statistically significant gender variation, whereas other behaviours such as cheating in examinations, falsification, receiving outside assistance, and lying about academic assignments are not significant. The results indicate that gender can affect certain types of academic dishonesty but not academic integrity in general. The findings highlight the lack of awareness about integrity policies and emphasize the need to prompt educators and policymakers to devise effective strategies that promote academic integrity.

Keywords: Academic Integrity, Undergraduate Students, Mirpur, AJ&K, Academic dishonesty.

Introduction

Academic integrity involves adherence to the core values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage (Fishman, 2014). These are vital components of academic integrity because they foster a positive classroom atmosphere and instill confidence in the academic community. There is a growing concern about the rising prevalence of academic dishonesty among undergraduate students. A large proportion of students are probably unaware that they are participating in an unethical activity.

The purpose of this study is to examine gender-related differences in academic integrity practices among undergraduate students. In addition to personal achievement, academic integrity is crucial since it influences academic institutions' reputations. Plagiarism, cheating, and data fabrication are examples of unethical student behaviour that harm the institution's image and reduce the value of the degrees it awards. Graduates from universities with strong academic integrity policies and programs are more likely to acquire employer trust since they are well regarded in their professions (Brown, 2018). Students often name plagiarism and cheating as their motivations for their behaviour; these might include peer help, group projects, and internet resource use (Amjad & Arif, 2014).

Educational institutions work to provide top-notch instruction that will prepare graduates for success. Tests and exams evaluate students' knowledge, information, and abilities gained across their schooling. These tests ascertain a student's course completion status. Academic dishonesty throws off the evaluation process and compromises the validity of findings. Cheating involves fraud and criminal activity and could result in disciplinary actions (Javed, 2020). Within academic environments, plagiarism is recognized as one kind of academic dishonesty (McCabe & Pavela, 2000). A major issue that is facing institutions is academic dishonesty during tests, and Cheating seems to be very common in many different spheres. Student misbehaviour involves actions against the moral and ethical norms as well as the academic integrity values set by a university (Bonsaksen et al. 2017). The researchers in the field of occupational therapy and related disciplines have explored a variety of elements that may impact students' classroom integrity. These elements include learning styles, behavioural profiles, and views about knowledge acquisition, admission requirements, exam anxiety, and peer competition. Documented considerations include students' anxiety about failure, online learning structure, social media engagement, competition among peers, dissatisfaction with classroom environments, lack of awareness about academic integrity policies, exam cheating opportunities, cost-cutting initiatives, and emphasis on credentials in the educational landscape (Bretag & Harper, 2019; Ip et al., 2016). Nonetheless, a persistent topic in this study is students' lack of awareness of academic integrity, which frequently results in inadvertent violations.

Weber (2017) discovered a strong link between a history of cheating and an elevated risk of future academic dishonesty. Technology presents a dual set of difficulties and answers for ensuring academic integrity. Even though digital technologies have the potential to assist plagiarism and cheating, they provide novel approaches for tracking down and decreasing misconduct in education. Digital authentication mechanisms, secure online assessment tools, and plagiarism detection software are critical to maintaining academic integrity. Administrators and educators must keep up with the newest technology breakthroughs and adjust their techniques to protect academic integrity (Sutherland-Smith, 2019).

Research Objectives

To compare gender-based differences in academic integrity practices among undergraduate students.

Literature Review

Academic integrity is all about seeking new ideas but with an open mind, honesty, and accountability. Academic dishonesty is present in all academic fields at academic levels, and though it is prevalent, continuing academic integrity can hurt a person's professional life.

Sefcik et al.'s 2021 research demonstrates that the increase in online content has resulted in improper referencing with more unintended copying. Amid a massive surge in cheating on online tests during the COVID-19 pandemic, Amigud and Lancaster (2022) highlight the need for effective test monitoring. The trend responds to the need for educational institutions may develop students who play an active role in academic integrity. While implementing more stringent monitoring procedures. Technology, as research demonstrates, has two sides: it can support learners in learning, but it also offers opportunities for misbehaviour such as contract cheating and abuse of web-based resources, which undermines academic quality (Sefcik et al., 2021; Amigud & Lancaster, 2022).

To maintain academic integrity, higher education institutions utilize various digital tools such as Turnitin and other AI-based plagiarism detection tools. To foster students' culture of integrity, Bretag et al. (2021) recommend a comprehensive approach that involves ethical pedagogy along with technological interventions (Dawson, 2020; Bretag et al., 2021). In a meta-analysis of 24 studies, the overall rate of academic dishonesty among college students in the United States was 67%. Prevalence rates in individual studies varied from 20% to 95%. In a study by Bukhari et al. in 2019, 83.4% of undergraduate Pakistani students reported academic misconduct. Additionally, a survey in India found that 82.8% of engineering students reported their involvement in dishonest behaviour, mostly plagiarism (Debnath & Thakur, 2019).

This research aims to encourage collaboration in the measurement of the "prevalence of academic integrity among undergraduate students" with contributions from experts from a diverse range of scholarly disciplines and cultures. In the academic community, integrity is measured as compliance with honesty, justice, and ethical conduct. Academic literature cautions against unethical behaviour like plagiarism and falsification of data by emphasizing the preservation of ethical values in the research, educational, and learning environment. Educational institutions adopt universally accepted methods of detection and prevention of academic dishonesty in their efforts to neutralize this dishonesty of this nature. Research also reveals that countries and education systems approach the problem differently, with different ideas and practices towards academic honesty. This led scholars to raise calls for the use of sensitive methods for the application of academic integrity, where perceptions and opinions on plagiarism and cheating vary significantly.

It is however, important to uphold the legitimacy and ethical standards of academic work. The academic integrity models provide a critical account of the determinants of moral or immoral behaviour in the academic setting. In one such views, the neutralization theory, individuals are likely to use defences like denial of injury or responsibility as a means of justifying their wrongdoing. These cognitive processes are important to account for and minimize academic dishonesty and can affect academic dishonesty decisions.

Theoretical Framework

According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour, students' goals, attitudes, and perceptions of social norms all have an impact on the decisions they make. This suggests that students may be more likely to engage in academic dishonesty if they believe it to be a routine practice among their classmates. On the other hand, a strong personal commitment to academic integrity and ethical norms might act as a deterrent to wrongdoing. The intention to decrease academic dishonesty is strongly

influenced by attitudes, subjective ethics, and perceived behavioural control. Interventions suggest that these factors could significantly reduce dishonest behaviour.

According to Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development, individuals develop their moral reasoning throughout time, with higher stages reflecting a deeper commitment to moral principles. Theoretical models of academic integrity offer valuable insights into the motivations for dishonest behaviour, as well as effective strategies for prevention and intervention.
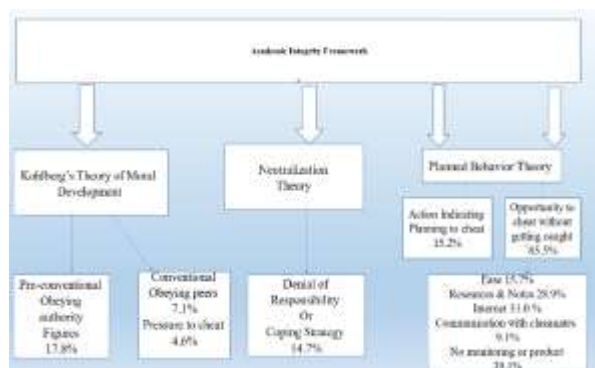
Figure 1: Waish, R. P., Hains-Wesson, R., & Pagram, J. (2021). Academic integrity, student cheating and dishonesty: A review of the three main academic dishonesty theories. International Journal for Educational Integrity, 17(1), 23.

These theoretical models are useful specifically in the analysis of gender-based trends in academic honesty. TPB is useful in understanding how male and female students can differ on the aspects of perception of norms, control, and attitudes towards cheating, while Kohlberg's theory gives a structure to the measurement of differences in moral development that can impact behaviour. This framework not only facilitates the interpretation of the results of this study but also guides the development of educational strategies in encouraging academic integrity among students at all levels.

Research Methodology

A quantitative research design is utilized. The researcher used a descriptive analysis for the nature of the investigation and the evidence. The researcher used a simple random sampling approach to ensure a balanced representation of both male and female students with the study purpose of comparing trends of academic integrity on a gender basis. The data was gathered from Mirpur University of Science and Technology (MUST), AJ&K and two affiliated public sector colleges in Mirpur City. The researcher designed the questionnaire and subjected it to a reliability test through pilot testing with 70 participants. The reliability value (Cronbach's Alpha) was calculated using SPSS for data collection and found to be 0.804, indicating good internal consistency.

The study included 502 participants: 240 males and 262 females, 350 (170 males, 180 females) from MUST and 152 (70 males, 82 females) from affiliated colleges. The researcher intended to explore gender-wise comparison of academic Integrity including cheating in examinations, plagiarism, prior cheating, Falsification, seeking external Assistance and lying about academic assignments. Data was collected using questionnaire and analyzed through SPSS where an Independent Samples t-Test was utilized to compare genders for differences on academic integrity.

The findings from this comprehensive analysis will contribute to a deeper understanding of student dynamics in the region and may inform future educational policies and interventions. Interpreted the results by creating tables that the reader can easily understand. Ethical considerations were taken into account during data collection, and a permission letter was issued by the chairperson Department of Education, MUST.

Results

The analysis reveals the following insights regarding the comparison of academic misconduct behaviours between male and female students:

The examination uncovers the subsequent findings concerning the comparison of

academic misconduct behaviours among male and female students:

1. Cheating: The findings reveal that the p-value for cheating in examinations is .105, showing that there is no substantial difference between males and females.

2. Plagiarism: The p-value is .030, suggesting that the differences between male and female students are statistically significant if $p<0.05$.

3. Prior Cheating: The p-value is .015, indicating that the Results are statistically significant if $p<0.05$.

4. Falsification: The p-value is .307, indicating no statistically significant difference between male and female students.

5. Seeking External Assistance: The p-value is .643, indicating no significant difference between genders.

6. Misrepresentation of Academic Assignments: The p-value is .373, suggesting no significant difference between genders.

These findings highlight that plagiarism and prior cheating behaviour exhibit a statistically significant gender variation, whereas other activities such as cheating in examinations, falsification, receiving outside assistance, and misleading presentation of coursework work are not significant. They indicate that gender can affect certain types of academic dishonesty but not academic integrity in general.

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Cheating in examination	Equal variances assumed	2.644	.105	-.896	500	.924	-.01984
	Equal variances not assumed			-.898	447.588	.922	-.01984
Plagiarism	Equal variances assumed	4.721	.030	-2.704	500	.067	-.42570
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.800	461.336	.085	-.42570
Outside help	Equal variances assumed	.215	.645	1.680	500	.094	.30816
	Equal variances not assumed			1.690	423.731	.092	.30816
Prior cheating	Equal variances assumed	5.979	.015	.429	500	.668	.06918
	Equal variances not assumed			.433	493.683	.646	.06918
falsification	Equal variances assumed	1.046	.307	.838	500	.483	.12828
	Equal variances not assumed			.866	459.555	.387	.12828
Lying about academic assignment	Equal variances assumed	.706	.373	1.564	500	.118	.16095
	Equal variances not assumed			1.577	428.828	.116	.16095

Results show that there are significant gender-based differences in plagiarism and prior cheating, with a significant p-value is 0.030 and 0.015.

Discussion

This study found statistically significant gender-based differences in plagiarism and prior cheating among undergraduate students. However, no significant differences were found in other aspects of academic integrity, such as cheating in examinations, falsification, outside help and lying about academic assignments. This study helps deepen the understanding of academic integrity tendency and the factors that contribute to identifying academic dishonest behaviour, and helps stakeholders with recommendations for strengthening ethical practices.

1. The overall inclination to uphold academic integrity is equally comparable amongst male and female students for all the behaviours under study among undergraduate students. The analysis revealed a substantial difference in plagiarism and prior cheating, suggesting that there is a need for intervention to eliminate gender-wise tendencies towards academic dishonesty.

2. To ensure compliance with integrity norms, Institutions may audit and evaluate academic procedures regularly.

3. Universities may initiate awareness programs emphasizing the importance of integrity and the enduring benefits of academic excellence.

4. The universities may assess all submitted work for originality utilizing advanced plagiarism detection methods.

5. This research may employ a longitudinal design to monitor the progression of undergraduate academic integrity over time.

Conclusion

The research revealed that gender differences exist in some facets of academic honesty, such as plagiarism and prior cheating were shown to have statistically significant gender differences among male and female undergraduates, as shown through p-values below 0.05. No gender differences, however, were found for other behaviours—falsification, seeking outside help, and misrepresentation of academic activities.

These results imply that while gender-based levels of academic integrity as a whole may seem similar, specific types of academic dishonesty are influenced by gender-based factors. Teachers, institutions, and policymakers need to address the root causes of academic dishonesty to foster a more honest and equitable academic climate.

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