

**THE IMPACT OF MORAL META-COGNITION, ON THE ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**Ammara Javaid\*<sup>1</sup>, Sidra Shoab<sup>2</sup>

Original Article

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**Abstract**

*It has been known through several researches that Academic Dishonesty is increasing rapidly over the world research will investigate the impact of moral meta-cognition, on academic dishonesty of university students using a quantitative correlation survey design. A purposive convenient sampling technique was used to approach N= 303 (Male n = 184; Female n=119) undergraduate university students, age ranging from (M=22.47; SD=2.79). Data will be collected from the departments of Business Administration and Social Sciences of Public (n=153) and Private (n=150) Universities of Karachi. Data will be collected through questionnaires; Moral Meta-Cognition Scale, Academic Dishonesty Questionnaire and the Demographic Information Sheet. The result indicates that there is a weak positive relationship between the academic dishonesty and moral meta-cognition hence, it can be seen that the moral values of the students have been changed with the cultural variation. Moral values of the society are changing; another reason for choosing cheating and go for Academic Dishonesty is envy. Research findings have shown that cheating is associated with peer-to-peer behavior, as well as perceived confidence in peer reporting and understanding and acceptance of student loyalty and technology policies.*

**Keywords:** Academic dishonesty, Moral meta-cognition, University students, Prevalence

**Introduction**

Dishonesty is a word, which is commonly used, and can be defined as an act or act without dishonesty. It is used to describe a lack of goodness, dishonesty, lying or deliberate deception or a lack of integrity. Dishonesty is the basic basis for many cases related to acquisitions (Whitley, 1998). There are five things in Dishonesty Cheating in Examination, Plagiarism, outside help, Cheating and Falsification.

Academic dishonesty among college students has reached epidemic proportions (Arvidson, 2004; Butterfield, McCabe & Trevino, 2001). In fact, according to the Center for Academic Integrity (2007), about 85% of students surveyed admitted to cheating at least once. Similarly, a national survey published in Education Week showed that 54% admitted to cheating online, 74% admitted to committing at least dishonesty once in the past school year, and 47% of student's believe that their teachers chose to ignore when they saw students plagiarism.

In today's world of education, the scourge of academic infidelity/dishonesty is widespread among college and university students that cannot be ignored. The consequences of academic dishonesty in the business industry are enormous as those college students graduate while doing so, entering the business world, and continue to behave dishonestly in the workplace (Nonis & Swift, 2001).

As Young (2001) pointed out that in recent years, scholars have become increasingly frustrated with the way more and more students are using the Internet to cheat on other students' work, to copy material from online sources, to buy paper papers from online paper companies, and so on. On the other hand, college and university library records reflect a negative image of student lending through their academic and research work. This is an indication that many readers are relying on web-based information. While this alone does not indicate that such information is being misused, it does indicate an improved capacity.

With rates of infidelity up to 75% to 87% (Baird, 1980; Jendreck, 1989) and low adoption rates of up to 130% (Haines, 1986) academic dishonesty is reinforced, not punished. Despite dishonesty, prompt and appropriate punishment may follow. Singhal (1982) suggested that many college education units do not adequately address dishonesty and in addition do not have strategies to deal with dishonesty when it is discovered.

According to (Narvaez, 2010) moral learning is basically about meta-cognition which is a common skill for monitoring and controlling thinking. Understanding behavioral metrics is the way a person know, monitors, demonstrates, and controls thinking in a particular context of moral thinking and has been described as a critical factor in sound decision-making. Meta cognitive knowledge is the extent to understanding how much a person knows their skills and ability and how to use it.

Behavioral development has often been investigated in literature for academic infidelity (Diggins, Huba, Ryan & Smith, 1972), but mental development has not. While age has been shown to be associated with incidents of infidelity, going to college has been shown to improve critical thinking skills for college students (Pascarella, 1999) and critical thinking reflects intellectual development. It makes sense, then, to investigate dishonesty as a problem of mental development.

As per (Allport, 1955; Adler, 2006; Barkan, 2012; Dunning, 2007; Jordan and Monin, 2008; Mazar, 2008; Steele, 1988; Shalvi, 2015) individuals endeavor to keep up an uplifting demeanor freely and secretly. Actually, individuals wish to consider themselves to be ethically upstanding individuals and find a way to keep up this conviction when they get rowdy - regardless of whether these measures include yielding benefits or critical speculations assets (Sachdeva et al., 2009; Jordan et al., 2011). Many students even feel justified in being dishonest under certain circumstances, such as when students do not believe that their dishonesty will affect others (Diekhoff, LaBeff & Vandehey, 2007).

Some students may not care much about what others think of them and may be more inclined to stick to an inner set of moral guidelines that help define who they are as a person (that is, their moral character). Research studies also examined the problem of academic infidelity / act by measuring the relative magnitude (i.e., value) of a college student's ethical behavior, described here as a psychological framework that incorporates established and global principles of justice and benefit into your self-concept (Blasi, 1984; Colby & Damon, 1992; Carlo & Hardy, 2005; Kohlberg, 1969; Narvaez, 2004; Smith, 1976). Blasi's (1983; 1984) self-theory of moral performance introduces a psychological mechanism — the nature of behavior — to explain why people tend to do things they believe are morally wrong. Definitions of moral character are numerous, as is the clear theory of self-reliance as an ethical agent that provides an existing motivation (Moshman, 2004). In the sense of morality, the equal value of human behavior determines the breadth of thought/action (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2004).

Students with basic morality seem to be concerned about the internal audience's ethical assessment - ethics. Students who are of peripheral morality appear to have no significant internal moral audience—superego (Freud, 1930; 1989) or conscience (Mowrer, 1976)—that prevents them from engaging in illegal activities such as academic dishonesty. In short, the ethical view of academic infidelity predicts that students with basic morality will remember very few academic contexts dishonesty related to a student with peripheral moral identity.

### **Problem Statement**

It is evident that students engage in academic dishonesty in a number of ways where pressure on student performance can cause some students to cheat on academic activities. Students may be dishonest in order to avoid failing the course or getting bad grades. Some students may use academic infidelity as a way to deal with poor test skills. One of the causes of academic infidelity is the context of peer pressure and therefore students who believe that their peers are resistant to dishonesty are less likely to be dishonest academically. The effort of any student to present as his or her non-productive work is considered by the faculty and management as a serious offense. Students are considered dishonest in their studies when they copy someone else's work during a test or respond to a paper or assignment written, in whole or in part, by another person. Students are responsible for copying, intentionally or unintentionally, if they copy the contents of books, magazines, or other sources without identifying and accepting those sources or if they express their views on those sources without their consent. Therefore, the current study aims to identify ways to eliminate academic infidelity.

### **Significance and Rationale of the Study**

The prevalence of academic infidelity is increasing rapidly which is why a concerted effort is needed to eradicate that. The findings of this study will help to understand how self-consciousness and meta-cognition behavior are important during University students. This time is very important for university students as they face a variety of situations and want to get high marks. When they do not get good marks they therefore try different kinds of academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty as a form of dishonesty has always been a major problem for higher education teachers. With the advancement of technology, the situation will only get worse if the problem remains unresolved. There are many factors that can explain why a student cheats on a test. At the personal level, students with low learning ideas can have low confidence in getting good marks and dishonesty is a way to increase the chances of getting high marks.

### **Objectives of the study**

- To find out prevalence of academic dishonesty among university students
- To find out the predicting role of moral meta-cognition in developing academic dishonesty among university students.

### **Research Questions**

- What is the prevalence of academic dishonesty among university students?
- What is the predicting role of moral meta-cognition in developing academic dishonesty among university students?

### **Theoretical Framework**

Encouraged by the work of Piaget's (1932) moral development in children, Kohlberg (1969) linked Cognitive Moral Development (CMD) with behavioral action in the mindset written in subsequent sections of behavioral thinking. Encouraged by the work of Piaget's (1932) moral development in children, Kohlberg (1969) linked Cognitive Moral Development (CMD) with behavioral action in the mindset written in subsequent sections of behavioral thinking. Kohlberg

(1969) made up of three levels consisting of two sections each, first level (egocentric) depends on the need to obey the rules to avoid punishment as the child obeys the adult.

According to Lawrence Kohlberg (1958) this view suggests that at the level of general morality, most people are moving away from their moral values in the environment around them. Kohlberg also suggested that this level of general ethics (including individual judgment and ethical thinking based on personal superiority and justice) is entirely attainable by only a few people. Social learning theory focuses on learning that takes place within the context of society.

The CMD vision became the basis for fans to develop models and revised tests based on the pioneering practice of Kohlberg management. Also discussed are the Person-Situation Interaction model of the Issue-Contingency Model, the Deontological (norms and environment) or Teleological (affiliates, results, human characteristics) Action-based modeling model and Moral Judgment Judgment Test. This leads to very few people with strong Meta-Cognition behaviors, self-awareness and self-esteem as well as many people with positive behavioral development and a sense of independence who may be involved in ethically unacceptable academic dishonesty. Therefore, we are seeing a high increase in the infidelity of education in our society.

### Hypothesis

- Moral meta-cognition negatively predicts Academic Dishonesty.
- Weak positive relationship between the academic dishonesty and moral meta-cognition.

### Method

Quantitative correlation survey research design was used in this research. In which self-report measure were used to study variables. Participant ed 303 (Male  $n=184$ ; Female  $n=119$ ) who were approached through purposive convenience sampling.

Inclusion criteria

- Minimum 14 years education
- Social Sciences and Business Administration Departments
- Maximum education MS/M.phil and PhD
- Students of public and private Universities of Karachi
- Students do not have Psychological Disorder

**Table 1**

#### ***Demographic Characteristics of the study Sample N=303.***

Characteristics	<i>f</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Age		22.47 (2.79)
CGPA		3.06 (0.45)
Gender		
Female	119	
Male	184	
Marital-Status		
Single	276	
Married	27	
Religion		
Muslim	299	
Non-Muslim	4	

Department	
Social-Sciences	111
Business Administration	114
Arts	37
Other	41
Current level of study	
BS Honors	204
MS/M.Phil	86
Phd	4
Others	9
Satisfaction with CGPA	
Completely Satisfied	71
Somewhat Satisfied	87
Satisfied	106
Somewhat Dissatisfied	33
Completely Dissatisfied	6
Marks/Grades matter for you	
Matters a lot	143
Somewhat matters	112
Doesn't Matters	33
Not at all Matters	15
Pressure about your studies	
A lot of Pressure	91
Somewhat Pressure	117
Pressure	77
No Pressure	17
Not at all Pressure	1

Table 1 depicts main demographic variables of the present study. It shows that distribution of the demographic variables into sub categories on the basis of distribution of demographic information of participants of the study (N=303).

### Measures

Following measures were used in the current study:

- **Informed Consents**
- **Academic Dishonesty Scale**
- **Moral Meta-Cognition Scale**
- **Procedure**

Research was carried out by first getting permission from education institutions. Permission letter was signed from Educational institutions as well as from the institute of Professional Psychology, Bahria University. Participants was request to fill demographic sheet and informed consent from after they was given the questionnaire one by one and was understanding the questionnaires, was help to provided by the researcher.

## Results

Descriptive Statistics and Alpha Reliability Coefficient, Univariate Normality of Study Variables. (N=303).

Variable	Items	$\alpha$	$M$	$SD$	$SK$	$K$	95%CI	
							Range	
							Actual Potential	
AD	23	.92	98.32	15.05	-1.58	2.16	46-115	23-115
CHEAT	5	.81	21.4	3.84	-1.64	2.37	7-25	5-25
PLAG	4	.60	15.41	3.13	-0.699	.18	5-20	4-20
OH	4	.65	16.68	3.13	-1.42	1.90	5-20	4-20
PCHEAT	3	.68	13.39	2.37	-1.58	1.54	4-15	3-15
LINK	4	.78	17.83	3.02	-1.87	3.76	4-20	4-20
FALS	3	.78	13.59	2.43	-1.20	4.47	4-15	3-15
MMC	20	.91	84.46	15.40	-0.49	.86	28-120	20-120
RCOG	6	.70	24.94	5.03	-0.31	.15	9-36	6-36
KNOW-DEC	6	.80	25.65	5.20	-0.58	.98	6-36	6-36
KNOW-PRO	4	.69	16.91	3.44	-0.50	.35	6-24	4-24
KNOW-CON	4	.70	16.89	3.58	-0.56	.86	4-24	4-24

Note. AD=Academic Dishonesty, Cheating=Cheating of Examination, Plagiarism=Plagiarism, OH=Outside Help, PCheating=Prior Cheating, Link=Lying about Academic Assignments, Fals=Falsification, MMC=Moral Meta-Cognition, Rec-Cog=Regulation of Cognition, Know-Dec=Knowledge of Declarative, Know-Pro=Knowledge of Procedural, Know-Con= Knowledge of Conditional.

**Table 3.** Correlation of Moral Meta-Cognition with Academic Dishonesty among University Students (N=303).

Variables	AD	CHEA	PLAG	OSH	P CHEAT	LINK	FALS
MMC	.36**	.27**	.31**	.35**	.30**	.30**	.27**
R-C	.36**	.24**	.34**	.36**	.32**	.28**	.29**
DEC	.30**	.22**	.25**	.30**	.24**	.27**	.21**
PRO	.29**	.23**	.26**	.27**	.24**	.32**	.19**
CON	.35**	.27**	.27**	.34**	.31**	.29**	.29**

Note. AD=Academic Dishonesty, Cheat=Cheating of Examination, Plag=Plagiarism, OH=OSH=Outside help, PCheating=P Cheat, LAA=Lying about Academic Assignments, False=Falsification, MMC=Moral Meta-Cognition, Rec-Cog=Regulation of Cognition, Know-Dec=Knowledge of Declarative, Know-Pro=Knowledge of Procedural, Know-Con= Knowledge of Conditional.

**Table 4.** Correlations between Age, Study-Level, CGPA, Satisfaction of CGPA, Marks Matter for you, Study-Pressure, Moral Meta-Cognition and Academic Dishonesty (N=303)

	Age	Stu-lev	CGPA	Sat-CPGA	Marks-Matter	Stu-pre	MMC	AD
Age	-	-	-.07	.01	.25**	.18*	.04	-.02
Stu-Level		.59**	.02	-.06	0.19**	0.17**	.06	-.07
CGPA			-	-.27	-.01	.02	.07	.02
Sat-CPGA				-	-.03	-.14*	-.09	-.04
Marks-Matter					-	0.35**	-.05	-.09
Stu-Pressure						-	-.09	-.06
MMC							-	0.36*
AD								-
AC								

Note. Stu Lev=Study-Level, Sat CGPA= Satisfaction of CGPA, Marks Matter=Marks Matter for you, Stu-Pre=Study-Pressure, MMC=Moral Meta-Cognition, AD=Academic Dishonesty

**Table 5.** Independent sample t-test of Moral Meta-Cognition and Academic Dishonesty, between genders (N=303)

Variables	Gender	N	SD	M	M	T	Df	95%CI		
								S	L	U
<i>g</i>										
MMC	Female	15	15.38	84.90	.59	.32	243.94	.74	-	4.21
	Male	15	15.48	84.30					3.02	
AD	Female	12	14.07	100.00	2.43	1.39	249.04	.16	-	5.87
									1.00	

**Table 6.** Independent sample t-test of Moral Meta-Cognition and Academic Dishonest between religion (N=303).

Variable	Religion	N	SD	M	MD	T	Df	Sig	95%CI	
									LL	UL
MMC	Muslim	294	15.38	84.52	4.02	.41	3.05	.70	-	34.3
	Non-Muslim	4	19.15	80.50					26.29	3
AD	Muslim	290	15.13	98.28	-	-	3.28	.52	-	9.84
	Non-Muslim	4	8.26	101.25					2.96	15.77

**Table 7.** Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Moral Meta-Cognition and Academic Dishonesty based on Department (N=303).

Variables	Social Sciences (108)		Business Adm (112)		Arts (37)		Others (41)		F	Sig
	M	SD	M	S D	M	S D	M	S D		
Moral Meta Cognition	84.82	13.56	84. 58	1 6. 2 6	7 8 . . 7 5 8	1 7 . . 5 2	8 8. 3 1	14 .6 3 1	2 . . 5 9	. 0 5
Academic- Dishonesty	101.00	11.95	98. 51	1 5. 2 6	9 4 . . 1 1 4	1 8 . . 1 5	9 4. 2 5	17 .6 7 5	3 . . 0 7	. 0 2

Table 8 shows the results of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for Department on Academic Dishonesty and Moral Meta-Cognition. The results revealed that no significant differences were found in Moral meta-Cognition based on Department (Arts and Others). Additionally, Academic Dishonesty did not have a relationship with department.

### Discussion

The aim of the present study was to see the predictors of academic dishonesty in university student's i.e. Moral Meta-Cognition.

The findings of the current study also revealed that there is a weak positive relationship between Moral Meta-Cognition and Academic Dishonesty. Hence, it can be seen that the moral values of the students have been changed with the cultural variation (Asila, Amena & Kiran, 2020).

In a drama named as "Zindagi Gulzar Hai" the real face of society is portrayed. Our society's moral value is disturbed and one of the examples from this drama is extracted. In one of the scene it is shown that the child gets 2<sup>nd</sup> division and mother of child announced in her neighborhood that the child got 1<sup>st</sup> division. She also stated that in order to distribute sweets in whole neighbor she

had to make sure she fit in the criteria of society that is getting 1<sup>st</sup> division. Which shows that the moral values of the society are changing particularly with reference to Academic Dishonesty?

In addition research findings have shown that cheating is associated with peer-to-peer behavior, as well as perceived confidence in peer reporting and understanding and acceptance of student loyalty and technology policies. During childhood and adolescence, academic success is important because in today's society academic achievement and failure determine one's future learning and job opportunities (DiGeronimo & Kadison, 2004). However, the results of the Regression analysis suggest that perceived peer pressure has a greater impact.

Another reason for choosing cheating and go for Academic Dishonesty is envy. Students see other students getting good grades and acceptance in society. They also want the same kind of acknowledgment and acceptance which can only be gain through getting good grades.

Another study (Avital, Chenault, Darby & Haglund, 2013) investigated the relationship between stress and academic performance among government-sponsored students graduating from the University of Nairobi in Kenya. The mediation roles of student age, gender, control area, level and course of study in the relationship between stress and academic performance were also examined. The sample had 319 female and 265 male students. The results showed that the majority of students (64.4%) reported experiencing moderate to high levels of stress while more than one-third (35.6%) reported low levels of stress. The relationship between stress and academic performance was statistically significant.

A recently research of Akbasl & Ercetin (2019) shows that Academic dishonest and Gender to find out a relationship between the gender. Women in our culture are under a lot of pressure from society, parents as they have to prove themselves should send them to universities to study, like Asian countries, yet in many parts women are allowed to study further and those allowed to study are under so much pressure to meet their parents expectations. The study aims to determine the attitudes and tendencies of academic dishonesty of a sample of prospective teachers.

Academic-Dishonesty and Moral Meta-Cognition have no significant differences with department. As the research shows that the results of a study that applied the theory of reasoned action and partial least squares methodology to analyze the responses of 144 students to a survey on cheating behavior. Approximately 60% of the business students and 64% of the non-business students admitted to such behavior. Among cheaters, a "desire to get ahead" was the most important motivating factor—a surprising result given the comprehensive set of factors tested in the study (Mcleod & Simkin, 2010).

In current study Academic Dishonesty, Moral Meta-Cognition, doesn't correlate with the CGPA. High self-concept and moral meta-cognition of a person don't guarantee high CGPA. Positive self-Identity enhances are intellectual development, Students are not satisfied then their positive self-image are decrease. Moral Meta-Cognition, don't have any relationship with marks. For students who are not taking any study pressure, marks don't matter for them.

In current study, there is no correlation between demographic variables (Age, CGPA, Gender and Department) and Moral Meta-Cognition. Which suggest that with age Moral Meta-Cognition don't increase or decrease? Hence there is also no maturity level being obtained.

**Conclusion:**

From the current study, it can be concluded that there is the mean and standard deviation of the Academic Dishonesty shows that Academic Dishonesty is highly prevalent among the students because the mean lies at the upper end, which shows the higher tendency of Academic Dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is a multifaceted construct. The findings of the Mean and Standard Deviation indicated that students are involved in all types of Academic Dishonesty i.e. Cheating ( $M=21.4$ ;  $SD=3.84$ ), Plagiarism ( $M=15.41$ ;  $SD=3.13$ ), Outside Help ( $M=16.68$ ;  $SD=3.13$ ), Prior Cheating ( $M=13.39$ ;  $SD=2.37$ ), Falsification ( $M=13.59$ ;  $SD=2.43$ ) and Lying about academic assignments ( $M=17.83$ ;  $SD=3.02$ ). The means of falsification and cheating are higher (with respect to their potential range) as compare to other types.

While moral meta-cognition plays no role in decreasing academic dishonesty. Age and education level also have no correlation with moral meta-cognition and dishonesty. The role of self-concept and self-identity needs to be indulged in students' lives

**Limitations and future suggestions:**

The data was collected from one public and one private university only. Current study do not highlight the in-depth understanding of the variable qualitative researches need it moreover the current study was limited to three predictors only more predictors needed to be identify like envy and cultural effects. Other predictors need to be identify the study defiantly highlight the severity of issues but less to provide tangible solutions so future researches should action researches should be done to deal with that issues.

However, the anonymity of study participants should address this concern. An online test should be part of the study. One limitation is that the institution of higher education and culture and climate play a major role in how students feel about academic infidelity. Conducting similar studies in other types of higher education institutions will allow researchers to learn how the effects of different types of institutions may or may not be.

**Implications and Recommendations:**

The findings of the study have implication for positive change in individual during their university life. The study, have implications that university should plan intervention for the students so that they are able to recognize their real self. The training of such can become the part of the curriculum; during orientations the students should be provided with such activities which help them finding about their own self, where they are lacking what are their strength. Parents should also be given counseling session in order to help them understand about their child's need.

It is implicated to have Parents counseling session in each school. It is essential for parents to stop comparing their children with others. Also Parents should stop supporting their children in lying or parents lying themselves on the behalf of children.

It recommended that students should be enrolled in intervention program that would help them in building self-concept and self-identity to make them realize the difference between right and wrong.

The current study has discovered few predictors of academic dishonesty the finding of the current study reveals that academic dishonesty is increasing still and in depth understanding of academic dishonesty future researches should consider qualitative exploration this idea and should explore culturally relevant academic honesty possibility (policy) moreover the predictors moral meta-cognition is not playing a vital role in academic dishonesty but still there are distorted

and they need to be develop future researches should focus on increasing these things among students there is dying need future work should be done on the moral values how there are changing and how there infecting how there are changing the belief system.

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