

Academic Dishonesty as a Byproduct of Anomie, Sociocultural Pressures, and Conscience: Evidence from Hyderabad Universities

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Abstract

Academic dishonesty is a developing issue in tertiary education institutions across the world, and thus it poses a concern on the usefulness and integrity of academic systems. This paper explores the problem of academic dishonesty among the students in one of the universities in Hyderabad by exploring the role of anomie, sociocultural pressures and moral conscience. The study is based on the sociological and psychological insights to investigate the influence of structural pressures and internal moral regulation on academic behaviour by students. The quantitative survey-based methodology has been taken and 30 undergraduate and postgraduate students have been used to collect data using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was used to assess the self reported practices of academic dishonesty coupled with the perceptions of anomie, sociocultural pressure, and moral conscience. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and regression analysis. The evidence shows that academic dishonesty has a medium level of correlation with the perceptions of anomie and sociocultural pressure, which implies that undermined academic norms and high expectations of academic achievement might lead to immoral behavior. Conversely, moral conscience shows negative correlation with academic dishonesty thus suggesting that students who have high moral conscience are less inclined to commit dishonest behaviours. These findings point out to the fact that the problem of academic misconduct is based on the involvement of social environment, cultural expectations, and individual moral values into a complex interaction. The research is innovative to the expanding literature on academic honesty, as it incorporates the sociological theory and the science of moral psychology into the framework of Indian higher education. It also highlights the importance of having better institutional policies, ethics education and facilitating learning conditions that will foster an academic integrity culture in higher institutions of higher learning.

Keywords: *academic dishonesty, anomie, sociocultural pressure, moral conscience, higher education.*

I. Introduction

The concept of academic integrity is largely considered one of the guiding principles of higher education, which determines the reputation of academic institutions and the moral growth of students. It is not only that universities are expected to give out knowledge but also instill such values like honesty, responsibility, fairness, and respect to the intellectual work. In cases where students follow these principles, the academic system works efficiently and degrees would not lose their significance in society. Nevertheless, in the modern higher learning contexts, where competition levels are high, performance is under pressure, and the digital resources availability grows, the issue of academic integrity has become more difficult. All these have led to an increasing worry regarding the issue of academic dishonesty amongst university students in many parts of the world.

Academic dishonesty is defined as the actions against the rules and ethics of the academic work. The common ones are cheating in examinations, plagiarism in assignments, research papers, falsifying or fabricating data, and unauthorized collaboration. New types of misconducts like contract cheating have also been experienced in the recent years because of the proliferation of online platforms and commercial essay-writing services. Such practices make the academic qualification less acceptable, erode the culture of scholarship and compromise the learning process. With the need to maintain the academic standards in higher education institutions, there has been a need to construct meaning into the reasons behind the occurrence of dishonest behavior by the student population in institutions of higher learning.

Although academic dishonesty can be considered as a moral failure of an individual, most scholars state that it can also be influenced by the more general sociological and psychological factors. Competitive academic conditions, pressure to get good grades, fear of failure, peer influence and institutional culture may

pose to be very influential factors that compel students to make decisions to right into dishonest practices. The study of these factors helps the researcher to avoid the simplistic explanations, but rather see academic misconduct as a complex social phenomenon. In this respect, sociology theories and psychology constructs can be useful in the analysis of reasons why there are cases of students who opt to engage in unethical academic practices even though they are conscious of institutional regulations.

Such a sociological perspective is the theory of anomie which was first formulated by Émile Durkheim, and subsequently by Robert K. Merton. It is also called anomie where social norms and moral codes are either eroded or obscured and when people have no alternative ways of success, they turn to deviant pathways. At such competitive educational environments where grades and other academic achievements are used as the main measure of success, students might end up feeling normatively disoriented. Academic dishonesty can become an alternative option when pressure to perform and ethical principles are at odds with each other, and academic performance is expected to be reached by any possible tool.

In addition to structural factors like anomie, sociocultural pressure also forms an important part in defining the academic behavior of students. Success in education is highly associated in most of the societies such as India with the family expectations, social status, and career prospects. Parents, peers, and the society usually pressure students heavily to find a good academic performance and career growth. These pressures might bring about anxiety and fear of failing and consequently this may induce some students to fall into the habit of dishonesty as a way of coping. Such cultural priorities on outcomes instead of education may also legitimize such practices in some academic settings.

Meanwhile, personal moral consciences are a factor of significance in making ethical choices. Moral conscience is the internal feeling of doing right or wrong which helps an individual to behave according to the ways of morality. A student that has high morality responsibility might not succumb to dishonest activities under the influence of external forces. On the other hand, in cases of moral insensitivity or rationalization of unethical behavior, chances of committing academic misconduct are high. There is a need to understand how external social pressures play out with internal moral regulations and thus as an explanation of the variation of academic integrity among students.

Academic dishonesty is a problem that has increasingly been given consideration within the Indian system of higher education, especially in the fast growing urban academic centres. Hyderabad city is one of the biggest educational centers in India with several governmental and non-governmental universities where students with various social and cultural backgrounds are enrolled. The high academic level of competition, along with the high expectations of the society towards academic success, brings about circumstances under which the issues of academic ethics can be posed. Although the given problem becomes more relevant, empirical studies investigating the sociological, psychological predictors of academic dishonesty in Indian universities are not yet as numerous.

Specifically, intense studies that combine the idea of anomie, social pressures and moral conscience to describe academic malpractices among higher education learners have not been done. Current studies tend to concentrate on the institutional policies or personal attitudes without delving in the larger social setting, which shapes the behavior of students. It is significant to fill this gap so as to come up with a better-rounded concept of academic dishonesty and effective ways of promoting academic integrity in higher institutions of learning.

II. Literature Review

Academic Dishonesty in Higher Education

Academic dishonesty is typically described as an act of deliberate violation of norms of academic integrity (such as exam cheating, written work plagiarism, data fabrication or falsification, unauthorized collaboration, and new types of such behavior as contract cheating (out-sourced work). Recent research indicates that it is not specific to a field or a specific part of the world; instead, it is a worldwide issue that is informed by a design of assessment, institutional enforcement, student opportunity structure, and changing digital learning conditions. In a general overview to the literature on the subject of academic dishonesty, it is emphasized that cheating and plagiarism remain a problem as they are relatively simple to commit and are hard to identify regularly, particularly when learning and testing is performed via the Internet or in a hybrid format (Holden et al., 2021; Sozon, 2024).

According to evidence provided by systematic and review-based studies, academic dishonesty is also taking a different form. Online and distance-based testing has increased the opportunities of students to gain access to the authoritative resources and connections, thus altering the way and the perceived danger of the activity (Gamage et al., 2020; Garg and Goel, 2022). Meanwhile, contract cheating has also become a high-tech market, with review scholarship focusing particularly on the use of commercial essay mills, social media platforms as intermediaries, and platform-based academic assistance services where the line between justifiable tutoring and unethical outsourcing is thin (Liyanagamage et al., 2025).

Academic dishonesty has far reaching implications, whereby it is not only in terms of unfair grading. Review studies attribute misconduct to the degradation of institutional credibility, undermined graduate competence, and eventual risks to professional ethics- particularly in the fields where the safety and trust of the people is paramount (e.g. medicine, engineering, education). The integrity threats of literature reviewing in the context of AI also state that when such a practice becomes widespread, it becomes possible to discredit the qualifications and make universities reconsider the validity and authenticity of assessment (Balalle et al., 2025).

Anomie Theory and Academic Behaviour

The concept of anomie theory, which emerged in classical sociology and was discussed by Durkheim in relation to the undermining of moral regulation and the strain definition by Merton between the sought objectives and the legitimate methods applied in academic areas can be taken as an effective approach to explaining scholarly misconduct. Within the academic circles, students could be culturally programmed to achieve high academic grades, competition qualifications and employability results. Where official channels of attaining success (time, aptitude, assistance, just grading) seem inadequate to satisfy these anticipations, strain might prompt innovatively adjusting oneself, e.g., through cheating, plagiarism, or buying papers, as an alternative way to gain socially rewarded achievement.

The more recent review-based scholarship on problematic cheating suggests the presence of the problem being frequently context-dependent, with performance measurements prevailing over the values of learning and making the rules breaking a normalized aspect of peer culture (Tight, 2024). In these circumstances, the lack of normative commitment and moral restraint is manifested in the perceptions of students that academic rules are on the one hand not consistently enforced, that everyone is doing it, or that the outcomes are important than the processes-conditions which undermine normative commitment and moral restraint. Online evaluation studies that emphasize integrity-related examination procedures also indicate that swift adoptions to remote evaluation might enhance norm misunderstanding and decrease a sense of oversight, consolidating an environment of cheating (Gamage et al., 2020; Holden et al., 2021).

Sociocultural Pressures in Educational Contexts

Sociocultural factors, such as family norms, educational status, rivalry among peers and culturally supported success discourses, often influence the academic decisions and risk-taking attempts of students. It is indicated that cheating is more probable whereby academic success is cast as an up-or-down threshold to mobility and regard, and whereby failure is prominently socially punishable (Sozon, 2024; Tight, 2024). Learners might also be under pressure to not only pass, but to excel especially in competitive urban university ecosystems.

In the similarity of systematic reviews of scholarly dishonesty, it is highlighted that social comparison and peer pressure can provide impetus to dishonest behavior: students are more likely to rationalize cheating when they feel that other people are getting an unfair advantage, or when group-based cheating is a casualty of friendship (Chiang et al., 2022; Newton, 2023). Moreover, the evidence on contract cheating notes structural and cultural factors, including language barriers, time poverty, fear of failure, and the need to live up to the expectation of scholarship/visa or family, which may exacerbate the use of the unethical outsourcing of assistance (Liyanagamage and colleagues, 2025). This information helps confirm the perspective that cheating is not necessarily a character issue but, in many cases, a culturally ingrained reaction to the cultural expectations and the competitive education atmosphere.

Moral Conscience and Ethical Decision-Making

Moral conscience can be defined as a sense of right and wrong that is internalized and that controls behavior in terms of guilt, responsibility and self-evaluation of moral goodness. This comes into agreement with moral reasoning and self-regulatory ethics in the academic integrity literature: students that have a higher internal moral norm are expected to resist temptation to cheat, whilst those who can counteract the feelings of guilt or excuse the wrongdoing are more apt to transgress. According to the reviews devoted to the online learning context, moral judgment is affected by perceived anonymity, decreased teacher presence, habitualization of shortcuts, and uncertainties about permissible collaboration which weakens the restraint based on conscience (Holden et al., 2021; Chiang et al., 2022).

Another similar trend highlighted in reviews is moral drift in digitally mediated learning. The regulations in remote evaluation appear to be bargainable, and the detection is unspecified, students have the ability to redefine cheating as assistance, efficiency, or survivability, and make the psychological cost of lawbreaking less expensive (Newton, 2023). More contemporary systematic AI and integrity research posits that generative devices also complicate the aspect of conscience-based decision-making since students might not think that specific AI applications (paraphrasing, idea generation, drafting) are unethical because institutional policies are not always consistent (Balalle et al., 2025). Similarly, a review study of contract cheating has

emphasized that ethical decisions are influenced by both personal values and external pressures, and prevention of contract cheating thus needs not only monitoring and fines but integrity education, redesign of the assessment, and conducive learning environments (Gamage et al., 2020; Liyanagamage et al., 2025).

Research Gap

Even though, scholarly dishonesty has received a comprehensive research in the world system of higher learning, there has been less research that has incorporated sociological theories, sociocultural demands, and moral psychological applications in the Indian academic environment. The existing literature is more inclined to the policies of institutions, technological detection methods, or personal attitudes towards cheating and pays relatively less attention to the overall social and cultural pressures influencing the behavior of students. Specifically, there is a lack of research on the joint effect of the anomie, family expectations, peer competition, and moral conscience. Moreover, there are little empirical studies on the topic of universities in Hyderabad, one of the largest education centers in India, which means that context-dependent research on the social factors that cause academic dishonesty is required.

III. Theoretical Framework

The research is based on the theoretical framework that is integrated which incorporates sociological and psychological viewpoints used to explain academic dishonesty among university students. Academic misconduct is not merely any single ethical failure but it is also a phenomenon that is influenced by more encompassing structural, cultural, and moral effects. The proposed study will integrate the reason of anomie theory, sociocultural pressure views, and moral conscience theory, as a way of giving a detailed explanation as to how the external social conditions and internal moral governance interact to determine the academic behaviour in students.

Anomie as a concept has been proposed by Emile Durkheim and developed by Robert K. Merton but it serves as a valuable sociological prism through which deviant behaviour can be studied in circumstances where social norms are either weakened or ambiguous. Anomie is used to refer to a situation of normlessness whereby a person is in a situation where moral direction and social control fail. Performance-based assessment, extreme competition, and high academic achievement standards in educational settings can put a student under stress to meet socially desirable performance objectives including high grades, scholarships, or career prospects. In cases where lawful ways of attaining these objectives seem to be inadequate because of lack of time, studies challenges, or school requirements, they may think of adopting new tactics like cheating or plagiarism. In the given context, academic dishonesty may be viewed as a deviant adaptation that develops in situations when the disjuncture between the socially defined ends and the means that are socially acceptable becomes acute.

Sociocultural pressure is also another important theoretical approach to explaining academic misconduct along with structural explanations. Family requirements, social mobility, and individual identity have strong connections with educational attainment in most societies. Parents, peer group, and social life around usually exert tremendous pressure on students to succeed in school and have the chance to firstly secure a place in a career. These expectations can also give rise to a high stakes academic environment whereby learning is sidelined to achievement. In this respect, the fear of losing, severe competition with classmates and the wish to compare themselves with high-achievers could be the reasons which make students resort to dishonest behavior as a coping strategy. In some situations, sociocultural norms that place importance on achievement, prestige and status can thus help in the normalization or rationalization of academic misconduct.

Although external forces are a critical health factor, individual moral governance is critical towards ethical decision-making. Moral conscience is the sense of right and wrong which is internalized in a person and which helps to act in accordance to moral principles and own values. When students possess a good moral conscience, they tend to stick to their principles of honesty, fairness and responsibility even under the academic pressure or even under the social pressure. On the other hand, in case of low moral awareness or situations when people justify the service of dishonest actions as justified in particular circumstances, the risk of academic misconduct is greater. The psychological theories of moral development imply that ethical behaviour depends on the personal values, empathy, moral reasoning, and self-regulation as the factors influencing moral development that leads to the development of conscience-based decision-making.

Such a combination of viewpoints can enable the research to see academic dishonesty as a complex phenomenon which is affected by structural and personal influences. The theoretical framework supposes that the situations of anomie and sociocultural pressures can lead to the possibility of academic dishonesty by providing the environments in which the immoral conduct will be considered as the possible way of attaining academic success. Meanwhile, the moral conscience also acts as an internal control system that may deter or avert such behaviour. The conceptual model postulates that the relationship between academic dishonesty and anomie and sociocultural pressure would be positive, but that relationship between moral conscience and academic dishonesty would be negative and would be seen as an protecting influence against unethical academic

conduct. Combining these theoretical viewpoints, the framework creates a holistic basis of studying the multidimensional social and psychological factors behind the acts of academic dishonesty in college students.

IV. Research Objectives

1. To test the occurrences of academic dishonesty among university students in Hyderabad.
2. To determine how anomie affects academic misconduct.
3. To explore how students cheat under the influence of the sociocultural pressures.
4. To determine how moral conscience can help prevent academic dishonesty.
5. To examine how these factors are related to ethical decision-making among the students.

V. Research Questions / Hypotheses

Research Questions

1. What is the role of anomie in academic dishonesty by students?
2. What are some of the sociocultural pressures that lead to cheating behaviour?
3. Can moral conscience minimize academic dishonesty?

Hypotheses

- H1: The more the level of anomie, the more academic dishonesty.
- H2: There is a positive relationship between sociocultural pressures and the cheating behaviour.
- H3: Good moral conscience correlates negatively with academic dishonesty.

VI. Methodology

The research design/methodology that will be used in this study is a quantitative survey-based research design to explore the relationship between anomie, sociocultural pressure, moral conscience, and academic dishonesty among university students. Considering the fact that it facilitates the systematic gathering of measurable data, a quantitative method suits the research in question as it would be possible to statistically analyze relationships between variables. The survey technique is a good means to elicit perceptions, attitudes, and self-reported behaviours of students in terms of academic integrity in a framework. The study will provide consistency in the responses because the questions and scales will be standardized, which will make the analysis objective.

This study was carried out in a number of university departments at Hyderabad which is one of the major educational centers in India that has a high population of public and privately run higher learning institutions. Hyderabad is a city that attracts students with different social, cultural and academic backgrounds and therefore it becomes an appropriate context in understanding the social and psychological factors that impact academic dishonesty. The competitive academic environment and high focus of the educational success of the students in this city is a good place to research on the influence of structural pressures and moral considerations on shaping academic behaviour of the students.

The respondents of this research will be undergraduate and postgraduate learners pursuing various academic courses in the selected higher institutions of learning. The study incorporated a total of 30 students. A stratified sampling method was used to select the participants so that the sample would be evenly represented across various academic levels and academic disciplines. This sampling approach was chosen because it would provide a balanced view of the problems of academic integrity among different groups of students and make them feasible to conduct research in the context of analytical scope.

Information was gathered using a structured questionnaire that was made to evaluate the most important variables of the research. The questionnaire was structured into various parts to focus on various areas of academic experiences and ethical attitudes of students. The initial section was the collection of a few demographic details, including the academic level and area of study. The second section concentrated on academic dishonesty behaviours which included self-reported experiences in regards to cheating, plagiarism or other kinds of academic misconduct. The third small part was the measurement of perceptions of anomie, which evaluated the beliefs of the students towards the academic norms, enforcement of rules, and perceived pressure to succeed academically using atypical methods. The fourth part explored sociocultural pressures or family expectations, peer competition, as well as the societal focus on academic success. The last part evaluated moral conscience, which is based on morality beliefs of the students, personal values and their responsibility towards honest academic behavior. The responses were registered in a likert scale format to express the extent of the agreement or disagreement to the statement.

Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used in analyzing the collected data. The first statistical approach was descriptive statistics that would summarize the demographics of the respondents and how students actually responded to the research questions about academic dishonesty and its aspects. Correlation analysis was then done to test how the major variables related to each other i.e. anomie, sociocultural pressures, moral conscience and academic dishonesty. Moreover, the regression analysis was used

to establish the degree to which the independent variables explain the prevalence of academic dishonesty amongst the students. These statistical tools are useful in establishing any important relationship between the variables and they also give empirical evidence on the factors which play a role in the unethical academic behaviour in the chosen university.

VII. Results And Findings

The results are provided in this section based on the survey done on 30 university students of the selected universities in Hyderabad. The analysis will be based on the demographic traits of the respondents, the frequency of academic dishonesty practices, as well as how anomie, sociocultural pressures, moral conscience, and academic dishonesty are related. The research variables were analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and regression interpretation.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents included in the study.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 30)			
Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	16	53.3
	Female	14	46.7
Level of Study	Undergraduate	18	60
	Postgraduate	12	40
Age Group	18–21	17	56.7
	22–25	13	43.3

Interpretation

The demographic data reveal that 53.3 percent of the surveyed participants were male, and the rest 46.7 percent were female, meaning that gender representation was relatively even. The level of study was found to be at 60% undergraduate and 40% postgraduate students. The number of respondents aged 18-21 (56.7 percent) was the most common age group, which includes the average population of undergraduates. This age profile implies that the results mainly reflect first-year undergraduates who tend to be subjected to competition and assessment forces in schools.

Frequency of Academic Dishonesty Practices

Students were inquired on whether they had ever participated in or observed some of the types of academic dishonesty which include cheating in exams, plagiarizing or unauthorized collaboration.

Table 2 Frequency of Academic Dishonesty Practices		
Type of Practice	Yes	No
Cheating in exams	10 (33.3%)	20 (66.7%)
Copying assignments/plagiarism	12 (40%)	18 (60%)
Unauthorized collaboration	14 (46.7%)	16 (53.3%)

Figure 1. Types of Academic Dishonesty Reported



Interpretation

The result shows that unauthorized collaboration (46.7) was the most prevalent reported type of academic dishonesty, which was then followed by plagiarism (40) and cheating in examination (33.3). These findings indicate that collusive academic dishonesty can be considered to be not so severe as cheating in tests directly. The comparatively large rate of plagiarism also speaks in favor of the necessity to raise awareness of writing academic papers and the ways of citing.

The Anomie and Academic Dishonesty Relationship

Correlation analysis was done to explore the relationship between the perceptions of students to anomie and academic dishonesty behaviour.

Table 3
Correlation Between Anomie and Academic Dishonesty

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)
Anomie → Academic Dishonesty	0.48

Figure 2. Relationship Between Anomie and Academic Dishonesty



Interpretation

The correlation ($r = 0.48$) shows that there is a moderate positive relationship between anomie and academic dishonesty. This implies that students who find that commercial standards of academic life are not being maintained, or that their sense is that the regulations of institutions are being laxly followed, are more apt to be involved in dishonest actions. The outcome confirms the hypothesized assumption that normlessness and academic pressure are potential causes of deviant academic behaviour.

Influence of Sociocultural Pressure on Cheating

It also analyzed the effect of sociocultural constraints like family demands, peer rivalry, and the social stress on academic achievement.

Table 4
Correlation Between Sociocultural Pressure and Academic Dishonesty

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)
Sociocultural Pressure → Academic Dishonesty	0.41

Figure 3. Sociocultural Pressure and Cheating Behaviour



Interpretation

The relationship between the sociocultural pressures and academic dishonesty is moderate and positive, with the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.41$). This observation implies that students who have a high sense of expectations imposed on them by family or the society to perform high academically might be more inclined to be affected by dishonest practices as a way of coping. It seems that competitive academic situations and fear of failure determine the ethically-oriented choices that students make.

Ethical Behaviour, Moral Conscience

The correlation between the moral conscience and academic dishonesty was analyzed to find out whether internal ethical values minimize dishonest behaviour.

Table 5

Correlation Between Moral Conscience and Academic Dishonesty

Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)
Moral Conscience → Academic Dishonesty	-0.52

Interpretation

Moral conscience has a moderate negative relationship with academic dishonesty with correlation coefficient ($r = -0.52$). This implies that the students who have better ethical understanding and personal ethics will have low chances to cheat or plagiarize. The moral conscience seems to be an internal control measure that deters unethical academic behaviour despite the external pressure.

These results indicate that structural and psychological factors contribute towards academic dishonesty among students in the university. Psychological experiences of anomie and sociocultural pressure exhibit

positive associations with dishonest practices, as it is possible to suggest that external academic pressure and the decrease in normative control can make the misconduct more likely. Moral conscience on the other hand shows negative correlation with academic dishonesty and this shows the relevance of internal ethical values in promoting academic integrity. These findings help in confirming the theoretical framework of the research which focuses on the joint effect of social environment and moral regulation in modifying the academic behaviour of the students.

VIII. Discussion

The results of the research are significant considering the issues that determine the academic dishonesty in university students in Hyderabad. The findings show that academic misbehavior is the consequence of not only personal ethical failure but also a pattern of structural pressure, sociocultural and internal moral control. The study helps build on the literature of understanding the sociocultural pressure and moral conscience as far as the relationship between anomie and honest academic behaviour are concerned.

The theoretical assumptions of the classical sociological theory are supported by the positive correlation between anomie and academic dishonesty. Anomie theory proposes that deviant behaviour can be caused by a weakening of the social norms or by the fact that the person has a sense of lack of attachment between the socially acceptable objectives and available means of their attainment. Within the framework of higher education, there are high expectations that a student should achieve high grades, gain competitive chances, and show academic success. Students feeling that the rules of the institution are inconsistently followed or that the pressure to succeed is more important than the ethical standards are likely to use dishonest means as the alternative way of attaining these objectives. The average positive relation between anomie and academic dishonesty in this research implies that the perception of the normative disintegration and academic pressure may lead to the normalization of cheating behaviour in university settings.

Other findings also bring out the effects of the sociocultural pressures in academic behaviour of students. The findings indicate that there is a positive correlation between sociocultural expectations and academic dishonesty thus implying that family, peer, and societal factors exerting external pressure can lead to the high probability of unethical academic practices. Academic achievement in most educational settings especially in the highly competitive academic systems has been closely linked to social status, career prospects and individual success. Students can thus be under a lot of pressure to achieve good grades in school, to an extent they may be tempted to hold results at a higher esteem than ethical procedures. Such pressures may be especially important in the Indian context where educational attainment is commonly regarded as one of the main vehicles of social mobility and career progression. The results of this paper are indicative of the fact that academic dishonesty can be partially indicative of the greater cultural focus on performance and success.

The other significant study finding is the associated negative correlation between moral conscience and academic dishonesty. Students who claimed to have greater ethical awareness and personal devotion to academic integrity were less inclined to indulge in dishonest behaviour. This finding is consistent with moral development and ethical decision-making theories, which focus on the importance of internalized moral values in the process of directing behaviour. Moral conscience is a type of self control that helps in deterring an unethical behavior in a case where the external forces are present. The results indicate that increasing the level of ethical consciousness of students and developing the culture of integrity in universities could have a significant effect in preventing academic dishonesty.

Findings on this research are similar to a number of earlier researches on academic integrity among institutions of higher learning. According to some previous studies, academic dishonesty has been found to be related to high academic stress, competition and perceived pressure to perform. Research in different academic settings has also established plagiarism and unauthorized collaboration as some of the typical academic misconducts amongst learners. On the same note, prior studies have also emphasized the effect of institutional culture, peer pressure as well as the sense of fairness in influencing the attitude of students towards cheating. These findings are supported by the current study that has shown that dishonest academic behaviour is due to both social and psychological factors. Meanwhile, it contributes to the current body of literature by combining sociological theory with moral psychology in an attempt to explain the phenomenon of academic dishonesty in the environment of the Indian universities.

The same findings are also significant implications to the study of academic integrity in Indian higher education. With the growth of universities and the attendant competition over academic and career prospects, universities have to not only deal with identifying instances of misbehaviour, but also deal with the underlying issues which promote unethical behaviour. The policies should also target structural and educational interventions in their efforts to promote the academic integrity. This can be in terms of the reinforcement of institutional rules and guidelines, marketing an open evaluation framework, offering instruction in academic writing and citation culture, and embedding morality training in university curricula. Besides, the universities

ought to establish favorable learning conditions that minimize over-pressure on performance but promote authentic learning and intellectual growth.

On the whole, the discussion has demonstrated that academic dishonesty is a complicated process that is influenced by the links between the social environment, cultural norms, and personal values. This situation needs to be handled on a holistic perspective that involves institutions and moral growth of students. Through the analysis of the aggregate effect of the factors of anomie, sociocultural influences, and moral conscience, the study can contribute to a better comprehension of the problem of academic integrity in Indian universities and present some information which can be used in future studies and policy-making in higher education.

IX. Implications

This research has a number of significant implications with regard to higher education institutions, policy making bodies and the society in dealing with the increasing menace of academic dishonesty among students in universities. As the findings show that academic misconduct is determined by structural pressure, the sociocultural expectations, and personal moral values, anti-academic dishonest action should not be limited to punitive interventions, but to the establishment of a culture of academic integrity. As a policy, education should consequently give more importance to building and enhancing inclusive academic integrity systems in universities. Institutional policies and procedures on plagiarism and cheating, explicit rules, and active discipline of the academic rules are critical to upholding ethical academic practices. Universities and other regulatory agencies should also make sure that academic integrity policies are properly relayed to the students during orientation modules, curriculum mandates and institutional handbooks to make sure that students have full knowledge on what is expected of them in the area of academic work in as far as ethical standards of academic work are concerned.

Besides policy changes, university institutions ought to engage in institutional decisions that are geared towards encouraging ethical behaviour and responsible academic conduct. Educational institutions can also be proactive by holding workshops, seminars, and sensitization on academic integrity, prevention of plagiarism and responsible research practices. Implementation of ethics education in a university course may assist in training students to be more responsible, just and honest in their academic and professional lives. The role of faculty members in promoting the culture of integrity is also significant since through their assessment designs, they can promote original thinking, critical analysis, and authentic learning instead of rote memorization. Education on adequate citation behaviours, research ethics and academic writing are also able to minimise chances of unknowing plagiarism and academic misconduct.

The paper also points out the necessity of more extensive cultural interventions, which would deal with the pressures of the society on the academic behaviour of students. The high academic performance, rankings and career results in most education settings such as in India may pose high pressure on students to perform well by any means. To solve this problem, the society should change the attitude towards education in which learning, creativity and intellectual growth should be cherished with the academic performance. The collaboration between families, learning institutions, and policymakers should be done to establish conducive academic settings that minimize undue performance pressures and promote moral learning behaviors. Through setting poor expectations and focusing on personal development and not only on academic achievement, universities can enable them to develop responsible graduates who appreciate integrity and ethical behavior inside and outside the academia.

Limitations of the Study

There are a few limitations of this study. First, the study took place in a limited number of universities in Hyderabad, which limits the applicability of the results to other areas or situations of education in India. Second, the data were obtained using self-reported questionnaires, and this can also be affected by social desirability bias or untrue answers. Also, it might be possible that the interpretations of the academic dishonesty and ethics behaviour by participants were culturally oriented and based on individual perceptions.

Future Research Directions

The future researches can be used to extend this study by providing comparative analysis of the academic dishonesty in various universities in different parts of India in order to get insights into the regional differences in academic dishonesty. Longitudinal studies can also help in making more in-depth interactions concerning the change in attitude and behaviour of students in respect of their ethical attitudes. Also, further studies need to combine psychological variables with the institutional variables, including academic policies, academic system of assessment, and the university culture in order to come up with a more detailed picture of academic integrity.

X. Conclusion

This paper analyzed the conditions that affected the occurrence of academic dishonesty in university students in Hyderabad with special attention to the influences of the means of anomie, sociocultural pressure and moral conscience. The results show that academic dishonesty is influenced by both structural and psychological factors and is not a singular ethical failure only. The findings indicate that the perceptions of anomie and the pressure of the sociocultural environment are positively correlated with the dishonest academic activity, which means that the weakened normative control and the high expectations of the successful academic performance might make students resort to unethical behaviours. Simultaneously, the research has established a negative connection between moral conscience and academic dishonesty, and this result indicates the significance of internal ethical principles in managing students in terms of honest scholarly behavior.

The research highlights the need to deal with the larger social and cultural contexts that shape the academic behaviour of the students. The practices of academic dishonesty can be normalized in case there is a strong competition in the environment, high performance expectations, and fear of failure when the ethical guidance and the institutional support is not proper. Thus, the problem of academic dishonesty needs to be addressed by a complex approach which would take into account the external influences and moral growth of students.

A robust culture of academic integrity in the institutions of higher learning is necessary in ensuring the integrity and quality of academic systems stands their ground. Institutions of higher learning not only ought to have explicit policies against cheating and plagiarism, but also need to create an atmosphere of ethical behavior, ethical scholarship, and respect towards intellectual work. Higher learning institutions can promote the use of honesty, responsibility, and integrity in academic and professional life of students through concerted efforts to create policies, educate about the ethics, and provide supportive learning environments.

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