
The Relations between Students' Attitude toward Business Ethics and Academic Misbehaviors

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Business Ethics and Academic Misconduct

- Students' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are learned and developed in their courses at academic institutions can affect the definition of acceptable economics and business ethics, and predict their future behaviors.
- It is important to understand how prevalent academic misconduct among business school students is, and to guide them to fair play because these students are the future business practitioners, decision makers, and—potentially—economic leaders.

Academic Dishonesty

- Academic dishonesty often includes cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, and illegitimate collaboration.
- Positive correlations between both frequency and belief of academic dishonesty and frequency of workplace dishonesty have found. (Nonis & Swift, 1998)
- Most studies report that academic misconduct is more prevalent among business students than non-business students based on various self-report survey studies (Meade, 1992; Park, 2003; Pullen, Ortloff, Casey, & Payne, 2000)

Gap

- Most of the research explored a specific type of academic misconduct such as exam cheating and its correlations with unethical/ethical business intentions and behaviors.
- There are different perceptions of what constitutes academic misconduct across the relevant studies.
- College students' behaviors which may disturb academic environments or violate student disciplines have received little attention in research.

Gap_Cont'd

- We need to reframe academic misconduct with a broader definition because of the potential impact of a wide variety of students' misbehaviors on shaping their professionalism.
- We need a deeper understanding of each dimension of academic misconduct as it relates to the ethical dimension of business practices.

“Business students who have never engaged in academic dishonesty may think they maintain a strict moral code in their academic conduct, but they can be involved in disrespectful, disturbing, and slacker behaviors which can also shape their moral frame in both classroom and the workplace.”

Objective

- To empirically test the relationship between the frequencies of academic misbehaviors that students exhibited during their undergraduate years and their perception of business ethics.
- Academic misconduct includes:
 - 1) disrespectful behavior,
 - 2) slacker behavior,
 - 3) plagiarism/fabrication, and
 - 4) exam cheating.

Hypotheses

H₁: Students' frequencies of engaging in academically undesirable behaviors during college, specifically (a) disrespectful behavior and/or (b) slacker behavior, have a positive relationship with their attitude toward questionable, unethical business practices.

H₂: Students' frequencies of engaging in academically dishonest behaviors during college, specifically (a) plagiarism/fabrication and/or (b) exam cheating, have a positive relationship with their attitude toward questionable, unethical business practices.

Method

- Samples
 - Business students enrolled at a northwestern regional university
 - Paper-and-pencil questionnaire used
 - 135 collected and 133 used (98.5%)
- Measures
 - Academic misconduct: Total 15 items (3 dropped)
 - Disrespectful Behavior (5), Slacker Behavior (4), Plagiarism/Fabrication (3), Exam Cheating (3),
(e.g., Etter, Cramer, & Finn, 2006; Ferrell & Daniel, 1995; Nonis & Swift, 2001; Stevens & Stevens, 1987; Tom & Borin, 1988)
 - Business Ethics: Total 10 items
 - This measurement set was originally developed to identify personal ethical belief that could potentially conflict with perceived company interests (Cole & Smith, 1996; Froelich & Kottke, 1991)
- Independent samples t-tests

Reliability Test

- All Cronbach's α values show higher than the cut-off .7 as evidence of reliability. (Nunnally, 1978)
- Academic misconduct
 - Disrespectful behavior: .764, slacker behavior: .786, plagiarism/fabrication: .788, exam cheating: .744
- Business ethics
 - Business operation ethics: .850, employee practice ethics: .903
 - The scale has never been validated as multi-dimensional by the original authors, so two dimensions and individual items were all reported in the study.
- Three items were dropped due to weak item loading values.

Common Methods Bias Check

- The Harman single-factor analysis is used to check the potential for an occurrence of method variance.
(Podsakoff & Organ 1986)
- With a set of cleaned measures, the factor analysis of all variables results in a solution that accounts for 67.10%. The first factor accounts for 30.15% with the data. Therefore, common methods bias is not likely to be a concern.

4. Results

Statistical Information of Respondents

| | | No. | % | Cumulated % |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|-----|------|-------------|
| Gender | Male | 62 | 46.6 | 47.0 |
| | Female | 70 | 52.6 | 100.0 |
| | Missing | 1 | .8 | |
| Major | Marketing | 40 | 30.1 | 30.3 |
| | General Management | 31 | 23.3 | 53.8 |
| | Accounting | 23 | 17.3 | 71.2 |
| | Health Services Administration | 3 | 2.3 | 73.5 |
| | HR Management | 4 | 3.0 | 76.5 |
| | Economics | 3 | 2.3 | 78.8 |
| | Operation Management | 6 | 4.5 | 83.3 |
| | Finance | 10 | 7.5 | 90.9 |
| | Management Information System | 6 | 4.5 | 95.5 |
| | Others/Missing | 7 | 5.3 | 100.0 |
| School Year | Freshman | 2 | 1.5 | 1.5 |
| | Sophomore | 2 | 1.5 | 3.0 |
| | Junior | 71 | 53.4 | 56.8 |
| | Senior | 51 | 38.3 | 95.5 |
| | Graduate | 6 | 4.5 | 100.0 |
| | Missing | 1 | .8 | |

Note: N = 133;

4. Results

Statistical Information of Respondents_Cont'd

| | | No. | % | Cumulated % |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----|------|-------------|
| Cumulative GPA | >= 2.3 and <= 3.0 | 32 | 24.1 | 25.0 |
| | > 3.0 and <= 3.3 | 34 | 25.6 | 51.6 |
| | > 3.3 and <= 3.6 | 37 | 27.8 | 80.5 |
| | > 3.6 | 25 | 18.8 | 100 |
| | Missing | 5 | 3.8 | |
| Age | >= 18 and <= 20 years old | 37 | 27.8 | 28.2 |
| | > 20 and <= 22 years old | 46 | 34.6 | 63.4 |
| | > 22 and <= 25 years old | 19 | 14.3 | 77.9 |
| | > 26 years old | 29 | 21.8 | 100.0 |
| | Missing | 2 | 1.5 | |
| Working Experience | 0 year | 41 | 30.8 | 31.8 |
| | > 0 and <= 3 years | 28 | 21.1 | 53.5 |
| | > 3 and <= 5 years | 25 | 18.8 | 72.9 |
| | > 5 years | 35 | 26.3 | 100.0 |
| | Missing | 4 | 3.0 | |
| Nationality | USA | 128 | 96.2 | 97.0 |
| | International | 4 | 3.0 | 100.0 |
| | Missing | 1 | .8 | |

Note: N = 133;

4. Results

Correlation and Descriptive Statistics

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|----------------|---------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|--------|--------|------|------|
| 1. DB | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. SB | .427** | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 3. P/F | .247** | .441** | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 4. CHT | .463** | .498** | .464** | 1 | | | | | | |
| 5. BE | .024 | .216* | .357** | .152 | 1 | | | | | |
| 6. EE | .207* | .438** | .321** | .345** | .610** | 1 | | | | |
| 7. Gndr | .088 | -.114 | -.079 | -.075 | -.257** | -.252** | 1 | | | |
| 8. AgLn | -.330** | .106 | -.003 | -.043 | .063 | .073 | -.216* | 1 | | |
| 9. GPA | .027 | -.024 | -.007 | .121 | -.196* | -.122 | .243** | .056 | 1 | |
| 10. Prf | -.307** | .021 | -.167 | -.095 | -.038 | .016 | -.148 | .763** | .040 | 1 |
| M | 2.19 | 1.39 | 1.64 | 1.22 | 1.57 | 1.65 | n/m | n/m | 3.33 | 4.39 |
| SD | .715 | .540 | .626 | .414 | .672 | .798 | n/m | n/m | 3.47 | 5.03 |

Notes: $N = 133$; *SD*: Standard Deviation; DB: Disrespectful Behavior; SB: Slacker Behavior; P/F: Plagiarism/Fabrication; CHT: Exam Cheating; BE: Business Ethics; EE: Employee Ethics; Gndr: Gender; AgLn: Age (Ln); GPA: Cumulative GPA; Prf: Professional working years; n/m: not meaningful. ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Factor Analysis of Variables

| | Factor | | | | | |
|------|--------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| DB1 | | | | .606 | | |
| DB2 | | | | .615 | | |
| DB3 | | | | .794 | | |
| SB1 | | | | | | .557 |
| SB2 | | | | | | .685 |
| SB3 | | | | | | .506 |
| P/F1 | | | | | .741 | |
| P/F2 | | | | | .811 | |
| P/F3 | | | | | .572 | |
| CHT1 | | | .546 | | | |
| CHT2 | | | .848 | | | |
| CHT3 | | | .723 | | | |
| BE1 | | .662 | | | | |
| BE2 | | .770 | | | | |
| BE3 | | .811 | | | | |
| BE4 | | .758 | | | | |
| BE5 | | .542 | | | | |
| BE6 | | .568 | | | | |
| EE1 | .818 | | | | | |
| EE2 | .860 | | | | | |
| EE3 | .871 | | | | | |
| EE4 | .686 | | | | | |

Notes: N = 133

4. Results

Hypotheses Test Results

| Measures | Mean All (133) | Disrespectful Behavior | | | Slacker Behavior | | | Plagiarism/ Fabrication | | | Exam Cheating | | |
|----------------|----------------------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------------|--------------|-------------|----------------------------|--------------|-------------|------------------|--------------|-------------|
| | | Low (76) | High (57) | p value | Low (62) | High (70) | p value | Low (65) | High (67) | p value | Low (88) | High (45) | p value |
| BE Avrg | 1.57 | 1.54 | 1.61 | .574 | 1.53 | 1.60 | .560 | 1.36 | 1.78 | .000 | 1.53 | 1.64 | .389 |
| (SD) | (.672) | (.62) | (.74) | | (.74) | (.61) | | (.54) | (.73) | | (.68) | (.69) | |
| BE1 | 1.69 | 1.61 | 1.81 | .233 | 1.81 | 1.59 | .191 | <i>1.52</i> | <i>1.85</i> | <i>.051</i> | 1.70 | 1.67 | .831 |
| BE2 | 1.61 | 1.57 | 1.67 | .547 | 1.50 | 1.69 | .263 | 1.31 | 1.91 | .000 | 1.55 | 1.73 | .283 |
| BE3 | 1.74 | 1.78 | 1.68 | .595 | 1.63 | 1.83 | .248 | 1.45 | 2.03 | .001 | 1.68 | 1.84 | .369 |
| BE4 | 1.61 | 1.58 | 1.65 | .640 | 1.48 | 1.70 | .144 | 1.45 | 1.78 | .026 | 1.50 | 1.82 | .038 |
| BE5 | 1.23 | 1.16 | 1.33 | .110 | 1.27 | 1.19 | .419 | 1.08 | 1.39 | .004 | 1.23 | 1.24 | .882 |
| BE6 | 1.54 | 1.57 | 1.51 | .722 | 1.47 | 1.59 | .456 | 1.38 | 1.70 | .045 | 1.55 | 1.53 | .942 |
| EE Avrg | 1.65 | 1.51 | 1.83 | .021 | 1.48 | 1.78 | .035 | 1.50 | 1.80 | .026 | 1.53 | 1.89 | .013 |
| (SD) | (.798) | (.64) | (.94) | | (.76) | (.80) | | (.67) | (.89) | | (.75) | (.84) | |
| EE1 | 1.61 | 1.47 | 1.79 | .027 | 1.49 | 1.70 | .157 | 1.42 | 1.79 | .011 | 1.48 | 1.84 | .018 |
| EE2 | 1.58 | 1.42 | 1.79 | .011 | <i>1.44</i> | <i>1.69</i> | <i>.084</i> | 1.37 | 1.79 | .003 | 1.43 | 1.87 | .004 |
| EE3 | 1.52 | 1.37 | 1.70 | .028 | 1.34 | 1.63 | .049 | 1.34 | 1.69 | .021 | <i>1.43</i> | <i>1.69</i> | <i>.092</i> |
| EE4 | 1.89 | 1.77 | 2.05 | .141 | 1.66 | 2.09 | .022 | 1.84 | 1.96 | .557 | 1.76 | 2.16 | .045 |

Notes: $N = 133$; SD : Standard Deviation; BE: Business Ethics; EE: Employee Ethics; BE Avrg: Mean values of BE1 through BE6; EE Avrg: Mean values of EE1 through EE4; Numbers in **Bold**: Differences between means or proportions are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Numbers in *Italic*: Differences between means or proportions are statistically significant at $p < .10$.

4. Results

Hypotheses Test Results

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|----------------|---------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|--------|--------|------|------|
| 1. DB | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. SB | .427** | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 3. P/F | .247** | .441** | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 4. CHT | .463** | .498** | .464** | 1 | | | | | | |
| 5. BE | .024 | .216* | .357** | .152 | 1 | | | | | |
| 6. EE | .207* | .438** | .321** | .345** | .610** | 1 | | | | |
| 7. Gndr | .088 | -.114 | -.079 | -.075 | -.257** | -.252** | 1 | | | |
| 8. AgLn | -.330** | .106 | -.003 | -.043 | .063 | .073 | -.216* | 1 | | |
| 9. GPA | .027 | -.024 | -.007 | .121 | -.196* | -.122 | .243** | .056 | 1 | |
| 10. Prf | -.307** | .021 | -.167 | -.095 | -.038 | .016 | -.148 | .763** | .040 | 1 |
| M | 2.19 | 1.39 | 1.64 | 1.22 | 1.57 | 1.65 | n/m | n/m | 3.33 | 4.39 |
| SD | .715 | .540 | .626 | .414 | .672 | .798 | n/m | n/m | 3.47 | 5.03 |

Notes: $N = 133$; *SD*: Standard Deviation; DB: Disrespectful Behavior; SB: Slacker Behavior; P/F: Plagiarism/Fabrication; CHT: Exam Cheating; BE: Business Ethics; EE: Employee Ethics; Gndr: Gender; AgLn: Age (Ln); GPA: Cumulative GPA; Prf: Professional working years; n/m: not meaningful. ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

4. Results

Additional Test Results

| Measures | Mean All (133) | Gender | | | Age | | | Cumulative GPA | | | Working Experience | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|---------------|------------|
| | | M (62) | F (70) | p value | < 22 (63) | >= 22 (68) | p value | < 3.4 (66) | >= 3.4 (62) | p value | < 3 (56) | > =3 (73) | p value |
| BE Avrg (SD) | 1.57 (.672) | 1.76 (.69) | 1.41 (.62) | .003 | 1.43 (.58) | 1.69 (.71) | .025 | 1.70 (.77) | 1.44 (.54) | .025 | 1.57 (.70) | 1.59 (.66) | .889 |
| BE1 | 1.69 | 1.71 | 1.67 | .821 | 1.60 | 1.78 | .300 | 1.82 | 1.52 | .074 | 1.77 | 1.66 | .525 |
| BE2 | 1.61 | 1.85 | 1.40 | .006 | <i>1.44</i> | 1.76 | .055 | 1.71 | 1.48 | .172 | 1.61 | 1.64 | .831 |
| BE3 | 1.74 | <i>1.92</i> | <i>1.59</i> | <i>.052</i> | <i>1.57</i> | <i>1.88</i> | <i>.070</i> | 1.97 | 1.53 | .012 | 1.68 | 1.82 | .417 |
| BE4 | 1.61 | 1.97 | 1.30 | .000 | 1.40 | 1.78 | .008 | 1.68 | 1.56 | .443 | 1.52 | 1.71 | .203 |
| BE5 | 1.23 | 1.31 | 1.17 | .219 | 1.16 | 1.28 | .261 | 1.27 | 1.21 | .578 | 1.32 | 1.18 | .205 |
| BE6 | 1.54 | 1.77 | 1.33 | .005 | <i>1.38</i> | <i>1.63</i> | <i>.096</i> | 1.77 | 1.31 | .004 | 1.55 | 1.53 | .906 |
| EE Avrg (SD) | 1.65 (.798) | 1.86 (.86) | 1.46 (.69) | .004 | 1.58 (.79) | 1.71 (.81) | .344 | 1.72 (.83) | 1.58 (.76) | .320 | 1.57 (.82) | 1.72 (.80) | .297 |
| EE1 | 1.61 | 1.81 | 1.42 | .008 | 1.52 | 1.67 | .318 | 1.65 | 1.54 | .450 | 1.54 | 1.67 | .386 |
| EE2 | 1.58 | 1.77 | 1.40 | .010 | 1.56 | 1.60 | .749 | 1.65 | 1.52 | .368 | 1.54 | 1.60 | .657 |
| EE3 | 1.52 | 1.73 | 1.33 | .008 | 1.43 | 1.58 | .303 | 1.64 | 1.41 | .140 | 1.48 | 1.56 | .634 |
| EE4 | 1.89 | 2.15 | 1.68 | .014 | 1.79 | 1.97 | .349 | 1.95 | 1.85 | .594 | 1.73 | 2.06 | .090 |

Notes: N = 133; SD: Standard Deviation; BE: Business Ethics; EE: Employee Ethics; BE Avrg: Mean values of BE1 through BE6; EE Avrg: Mean values of EE1 through EE4; Numbers in **Bold**: Differences between means or proportions are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Numbers in *Italic*: Differences between means or proportions are statistically significant at $p < .10$.

Findings

- Students who reported higher frequencies of engaging in disrespectful behavior, slacker behaviors, or exam cheating perceived the given questionable, unethical employee practices as more acceptable conducts than the students reported lower frequencies.
- Students who reported higher frequencies of engaging in plagiarism/fabrication were more accepting of both questionable, unethical business operations and employee practices, reconfirming the results of prior studies.

Recommendations

- Academic dishonesty should be regulated, and fair competitions among students should be encouraged.
- Disruptive behaviors i.e., disrespectful or slacker behavior should be better guided to facilitate sound learning environments at colleges as well as to grow students to be morally sensitive and ethically behaving business professionals.
- Relevant regulations and ground rules may be needed to announce at the college/school/department level, and class citizenship should be set up as a shared norm/culture among students and instructors.

Limitations

- Initial preliminary study in the relevant research area
- Simple t-test findings
- Small sample size
- Investigation at a single business school
- Self-reported survey, not free from common method bias
- 35% sample have no working experience
- Two-dimensions of business ethics scale never validated in the previous studies
- Generalizability not established



Thank you

Measure Characteristics

| Measures | M | SD | Cronbach's α |
|---|------|-------|---------------------|
| Disrespectful Behavior (all) | 2.19 | .715 | .764 |
| 1 Arrived late or left early for the class without legitimate reasons. | 2.00 | .937 | |
| 2 Had personal chats with someone while classes are in session. | 2.68 | 1.027 | |
| 3 Used a cell phone or device (e.g., internet surf) when prohibited in class. | 2.70 | 1.249 | |
| Slacker Behavior (all) | 1.39 | .540 | .786 |
| 1 Delayed/Hesitated to engage in group work I was responsible for. | 1.57 | .772 | |
| 2 Tried to influence an instructor after a test or at the end of the quarter. | 1.30 | .718 | |
| 3 Used a false excuse to delay/re-schedule an exam or report due. | 1.32 | .711 | |
| Plagiarism/Fabrication (all) | 1.64 | .626 | .788 |
| 1 Used materials from sources without citations. | 1.92 | .888 | |
| 2 Padded or falsified bibliographies/references/data sources. | 1.42 | .665 | |
| 3 Fabricated activity (e.g., interview or visit) for class assignment. | 1.59 | .819 | |
| Exam Cheating (all) | 1.22 | .414 | .744 |
| 1 Received or provided unauthorized assistance on an exam. | 1.30 | .590 | |
| 2 Used or had unauthorized materials out during an exam. | 1.26 | .532 | |
| 3 Used a cell phone to text message to give/receive help during an exam. | 1.11 | .382 | |

Notes: N = 133; SD: Standard Deviation; Answers were all based on a 5-point Likert scale where 5 = Very often, 4 = Often, 3 = Occasionally, 2 = Seldom, and 1 = Never for academic misconduct measurements, and 5 = strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree for business ethics.

Measure Characteristics_Cont'd

| Measures | | M | SD | Cronbach's α |
|--|---|------|-------|---------------------|
| Business Ethics 1-Business Operation Ethics (all) | | 1.57 | .672 | .850 |
| 1 | It is okay for a supervisor to ask an employee to support someone else's incorrect viewpoint. | 1.69 | .963 | |
| 2 | It is sometimes necessary for the company to engage in shady practices because the competition is doing so. | 1.61 | .952 | |
| 3 | Employee should overlook someone else's wrongdoing if in best interest of company. | 1.74 | .984 | |
| 4 | Supervisor should not care how results are achieved as long as desired outcome occurs. | 1.61 | .851 | |
| 5 | There is nothing wrong with a supervisor asking employee to falsify a document. | 1.23 | .626 | |
| 6 | Profits should be given priority over product safety. | 1.54 | .909 | |
| Business Ethics 2-Employee Practice Ethics (all) | | 1.65 | .798 | .903 |
| 1 | Employee may need to lie to customer/client to protect company. | 1.61 | .836 | |
| 2 | Employee may need to lie to co-worker to protect company. | 1.58 | .837 | |
| 3 | Employee may need to lie to supervisor/manager to protect company. | 1.52 | .851 | |
| 4 | Employee may need to lie to another company's representative to protect company. | 1.89 | 1.079 | |

Notes: N = 133; SD: Standard Deviation; Answers were all based on a 5-point Likert scale where 5 = Very often, 4 = Often, 3 = Occasionally, 2 = Seldom, and 1 = Never for academic misconduct measurements, and 5 = strongly agree and 1 = strongly disagree for business ethics.