



Research Paper

Why do Chinese students often cheat on exams at home, but less abroad?

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Abstract: Sky-high Chinese economic growth, coupled with an increasingly significant number of students studying abroad in the last few decades, Chinese students' unethical academic behaviours are considered an international issue. However, there is a lack of relative studies that there are no data available on the exact extent of unethical academic behaviours among Chinese students. This study explores the underlying reasons/motivations/variables that can influence Chinese students to perform unethical behaviours either at home or abroad. A purposive sampling technique was selected to collect samples with an in-deep interview method. Based on critical criteria, four participants were joined in our conversations. Research results showed that there are 7 variables (4 external and 3 internal), and 23 variables (16 external and 7 internal) that can exactly influence one's unethical behaviours, meanwhile, they relate to each other. The results provide meaningful implications for teachers, educators, as well as education department to understand why and how Chinese students' unethical behavioural formation.

Keywords: Chinese students' unethical behaviour, higher education, cheating, dishonesty, abroad

1. INTRODUCTION

In the past fifteen years, a large number of academic articles have published on educational journals related to student cheating (Makridis & Englander, 2020), indicating a great and growing concern about college cheating globally (Stiles et al., 2018). The concept of cheating is viewed as the academic dishonesty and used by colleges and universities to refer to the same meaning (Koc & Memduhoglu, 2020). Students who want to acquire a higher score at the expense of justice and fairness utilizing cheating, such as collaborative cheating (Zhang & Yin, 2020), hire ghostwriters (Cheung et al., 2016), copying internet resources (Stiles et al., 2018), preparing an assignment or exam by cheating or plagiarism (Koc & Memduhoglu, 2020). According to Zhang and Yin (2020), academic dishonesty among university students includes a wide range of unacceptable practices that abuse the guideline of integrity. The prevalent practice of academic dishonesty threatens the core mission of the university due to the main object of higher educational institutions is to master their graduates have the learning and skills they certify (Yu et al., 2018).

More importantly, the damage coming from academic dishonesty has found to related to other negative behaviours that extend beyond higher education (Yu et al., 2018), it can harm either student in schools or influence society (Cheung et al., 2016). Those who are practiced with academic dishonesty are more likely to show deviant behaviours in future, such as shoplifting (Beck & Ajzen, 1991), engage in a broad range of work-related dishonesty (Sims, 1993), as well as harmful substance mishandle (Blankenship & Whitley, 2000). Certain researchers suggested that college students who cheat more often regularly ended up citizens who engage in unethical habits and internalize part of life (Cheung et al., 2016; Yu et al., 2018). Therefore, educators who are concerned about cheating are endeavoring to discover ways to control its spread (Cheung et al., 2016).

According to Lin and Wen (2007), academic dishonesty is an ongoing issue in higher education among various countries. Although Asian countries have been becoming one of the major players in the world economy, their graduates will soon play effective roles in the workplaces, and Asian students have been major foreign students in many western countries, but only a few studies were conducted in Asia (Cheung et al., 2016). Indeed, academic dishonesty in China has become an international issue Visentin (2015). Certain studies conducted that Chinese students occupied the highest percentage of foreign students, and thus could influence their own countries' education systems (Cheung et al., 2016; Visentin, 2015). However, there is a lack of relative studies that there are no data available on the exact extent of academic dishonesty among Chinese students or what factors may predict Chinese students' unethical behaviours (Yang, 2012). Moreover, although some studies have explored Chinese students' academic dishonesty, few researchers have directly investigated the effects of cultural aspects orientations on academic dishonesty in different countries (Zhang & Yin, 2020).

2. LITERATUREREVIEW

2.1 Chinese students' academic dishonest behaviours

The academic dishonest behaviours are prevalent events among students around the world, but also in China (Yang, 2012). For example, Finn and Frone (2004) asserted academic dishonesty is a highly prevalent and ongoing issue at all grade level. In a longitudinal study by McCabe et al. (2012) found that about 65%-87% of college students in America had cheating experiences in the past six decades. Potaka and Huang (2018) reported that university students in Australia can hire someone to sit an exam or complete an entire subject for them. Cheung et al. (2016) conducted that some students were not afraid to implement such unethical practices because they do not think this is a serious concern and they do not face any consequence.

The academic dishonesty threatens the Chinese educational system. In some Chinese academic

institutions, ghostwriters are hired, plagiarism occurs, and results are faked to achieve publication in the international journal (Stiles et al., 2018; Zhou, 2010). Moreover, Chinese students' academic dishonest behaviours affect other countries' educational standard (Cheung et al., 2016). One aspect, China has been becoming one of the major players in the world economy (Tsui & Ngo, 2016a). On the other hand, China is the largest country of origin for international students in the world, there were around 662,100 Chinese students left China to pursue overseas studies in 2018 (Textor, 2020). Especially, Chinese students occupied the highest percentage of foreign students in certain countries. For instance, China accounted for 36.1% of the international students enrolled in Australia higher education (Cheung et al., 2016), and China had the largest share of enrollment at 33.7% in America (Hollingsworth, 2020). Therefore, Chinese students' unethical academic behaviours are not only internal problem, but also occurred many oversea educators and researchers' concerns (Stiles et al., 2018; Tsui & Ngo, 2016b), and thus it has become an international issue (Visentin, 2015).

Certain studies indicated that Chinese students' unethical behaviours are threatening their own countries' educational system. Potaka and Huang (2018) showed that some Chinese ghostwriting services industries can provide sit exams on behalf of students for Chinese students in Australia. Stiles et al. (2018) compared the difference ethical academic behaviours between Chinese and American and found that Chinese students reported more extensive cheating than did the American students. In some cases, Asian students including Chinese students do not think their unethical academic behaviours are unallowable compared to European and New Zealand. Therefore, it is necessary to understand Chinese students' unethical academic behaviours (Cheung et al., 2016).

2.2 Underpinning Chinese culture and academic dishonesty

Culture in Chinese society is highly based on traditional Confucian values (Tsui & Ngo, 2016b), and it can be viewed as Chinese own philosophy. The key characteristic of Confucianism is collectivism, it regards as a cultural difference and individualism through independent and interdependent self-construction (Zhang & Fang, 2020). Hence, collectivistic societies emphasize group-orientation goals, cooperation and minimal competition (Wang et al., 2020a). In some circumstance, studies showed that collectivism is more fitter to investigate Chinese consumers' beneficial behaviours (e.g., pro-environmental behaviour) (Wang & Wong, 2020), and displayed more predictive power compared to individualism (Cho et al., 2013).

A deeper development extensive connection between individuals of collectivism is *Guanxi* in Chinese society (Tsui & Ngo, 2016b). *Guanxi* seems like keeping relationship between individuals, but it more complicated than simple relationship. According to Zhang and Fang (2020), the concept of *Guanxi* is complex and multifaced, due to it is a personal connection which including an exchange, and a resource. In the workplace, *Guanxi* can be viewed as two aspects: (1) supervisor subordinate *Guanxi*, it considers to be inclusive and respectful of individuals and supervisors; and (2) co-work *Guanxi*, it considers to be daily work cooperation and exchange activities after work (Yang & Lau, 2015). Therefore, *Guanxi* plays a particular important role in Chinese society, and the establishment of a strong *Guanxi* with the right people is the key to achieve a long-term commercial success (Zhang & Fang, 2020).

However, an intensive collectivistic value (i.e., *Guanxi*) results in a serious academic problem which is collaborative cheating (Zhang & Yin, 2020). In contrast to individual cheating, which is conducted solitarily, collaborative cheating is characterized by the involvement of at least two people, even a group of people deliberately helping each other out in academic practices that are formally required to be completed by individual student (McGowan, 2016; Wryobeck & Whitley Jr, 1999). Especially, younger generations put more

emphasis on *Guanxi* than older people in Chinese society (Chan et al., 2002), thus it will produce certain academic unethical issues. Chapman et al. (2004) indicated that students will take advantages of the ties of friendship with their fellows to obtain higher scores, because they can exchange of two outstanding results from this “friendship”, thus would be perceived as more appropriate and would arise a less negative response. Meanwhile, to help friends cheat might can manifest their higher loyalties (Zhang & Yin, 2020), they do not want to disappoint people with whom they feel close (Tsui & Ngo, 2016b). Certain studies showed that helping friends overcome an exam is perceived to bring pleasure and make one feel good (Bunn et al., 1992; Chapman et al., 2004). Thus, the loyalty to *Guanxi* (i.e., friendship) among students is an influential neutralization technique that is employed by cheater to justify their cheating and to explain away the shame and guilt of unethical academic behaviour (Diekhoff et al., 1999).

2.3 Social norm (peer influence) and academic dishonesty in China

Social norm refers to the perceived views or pressures of significant others (e.g., friends, relatives, business partners or colleges) that would affect one’s decision or choice (Wang & Wong, 2020; Wang et al., 2019). In contrast with researchers found peer influence is a poor predictor for consumer behaviour (Wang, 2020; Wang et al., 2019), it plays a vital role in influencing academic unethical behaviours in educational domain (Koc & Memduhoglu, 2020). Carrell et al. (2008) found students who are more likely to cheat when they believed that their peers were cheating and who tend to cheat more when cheating was common among their peers in the college (Cheung et al., 2016). In contrast, peer disapproval is the most significant predictor of cheating (McCabe & Trevino, 1997). Studies showed that a collectivistic value results in the high extent of peer influence and thus collaborative cheating (Zhang & Yin, 2020), because students may find that they are extreme difficult to resist the social pressure of helping out of a peer on a test in the collectivistic society (i.e., China) (Lin & Wen, 2007).

2.4 Approachability of teachers and academic dishonesty in China

Students perceived support from teachers is a significant predictor of their motivation and academic achievement (Tsui & Ngo, 2016b). Based on the social bond theory (Hirschi, 1969), there is a significant relationship between teachers’ displays of interaction with students’ classroom behaviour, including cheating. The prior literature revealed the relation between teacher-student relationships and academic dishonesty falls mainly into students’ perceptions of teachers’ personalities and pedagogy (Tsui & Ngo, 2016a). In general, students perceived teachers’ competence, commitment, respect for teachers, as well as their faculty members to be approachable and available for interactions are less likely to occur unethical academic behaviours (Murdock et al., 2001; Tsui & Ngo, 2016a). Furthermore, cheating was less likely to occur when teachers display pedagogical competence and pedagogical caring than in any other scenarios (Tsui & Ngo, 2016b). In contrast, certain studies found bad student-faculty relationships (Komarraju et al., 2010); students’ perceptions of teachers’ unfairness as a motivation (Tsui & Ngo, 2016b); poor pedagogy and performance goal structure were negatively associated with cheating (Murdock et al., 2007).

The prevalent teaching practices in China has frequently been criticized as being a monologue, with a major emphasis on techniques for controlling the classroom (Stiles et al., 2018). The teacher-student relationship in Chinese society is also embedded in Confucian concept of rites (Tsui & Ngo, 2016a) and higher power distance (Tsui & Ngo, 2016b). In a typical Chinese academic environment, teacher-student interaction is minimal, and students adopt a passive learning style (Tsui & Ngo, 2016b), because the traditional Chinese culture suggests that students should treat their teachers as their parents (Tsui & Ngo, 2016a). Especially, well-

known Chinese sayings: harsh teachers produce good students (Tsui & Ngo, 2016a), thus, Chinese students are accepting of an unequal distribution of power between themselves and their teachers, and Chinese students are very respectful of their teachers and they typically do not challenge their authority (Liu, 2013). Finally, power distance absolutely in the hands of the teachers (Tsui & Ngo, 2016a), a positive association may therefore exist between power distance and academic dishonesty (Tsui & Ngo, 2016b). When students cannot learn effectively, perceived their classroom were less personalized and satisfying, and find their studies' materials difficult to follow, they tend to take a cheat (Cheung et al., 2016).

2.5 School identification and self-efficacy

According to Finn and Frone (2004), academic dishonesty is more likely to occur when students feel disconnected from school and dissociate from school rules and procedures compared to students who are feel closely identified with school. Cheating is more likely among students who dislike college and feel their college and teachers are unfair (Whitley, 1998), and students who do not succeed in college through traditional means respond with feelings of disconnect and devalue both the goals of college and the usual means for attaining them (Finn & Frone, 2004). Otherwise, classes scale, classroom condition, assignment arrangement, and teachers take step to prevent academic cheating significantly associated with students' academic unethical behaviours (Cheung et al., 2016).

Sometimes, Chinese students cannot choose a university based on their pure decisions. The current national university entrance exam in China is the "Gaokao", which is the sole criteria for college and university admission (Stiles et al., 2018). Although some students have the opportunities can to be admitted to college or university (e.g., athletics, music, arts etc.), but the majority of students still have to go through the *Gaokao* system if they want to obtain higher and better education (Stiles et al., 2018). However, one issue can be considered is that public university is much better than private one, because they are generally performing better in ranking and getting more grants and aids from the governments (Lin & Wen, 2007). Considering the population and unequal distribution of resources between rural areas and metropolitan cities (Stiles et al., 2018) and the locations of public and private universities (Lin & Wen, 2007), it is not hard to image that students with better academic career and performance tend to choose public university in large cities as their first choice of education. Nevertheless, the enrollment of university is based on students' *Gaokao* grades, but the number of applications is infinite. Therefore, certain students' applications will be adjusted to other or even worse university and majors, if students do not want to accept, they need to attend the next year's *Gaokao*.

If the students enroll in a worse university or major as they not expected, students with low learning orientation, higher grade orientation, and low academic self-efficacy tended to cheat more often (Marsden et al., 2005). Low achieving students who did not identify with their university were more likely to cheat as were those who were high achieving but had low academic self-efficacy (Cheung et al., 2016). In contrast, students in the same environment with high academic self-efficacy cheated less than students with a low mastery goal (Cheung et al., 2016). According to Finn and Frone (2004), self-efficacy refers to a person's evaluation of one's ability or competency to perform a task, reach a goal, or overcome an obstacle. High self-efficacy is related to high academic motivation such as persisting at a task or working hard (Schunk, 1991). Certain studies found low self-efficacy had a negative association with academic dishonesty (Finn & Frone, 2004; Marsden et al., 2005). It is mentioned that if students believe one particular subject has a high intrinsic value, in other words, students who had a high interest in an academic subject and thought it had a high utility value, they tended to be cheated less and reported cheating less acceptable (Cheung et al., 2016).

2.6 Social environment and academic dishonesty in China

According to Tsui and Ngo (2016b), an academic dishonesty can be considered as a social phenomenon due to one's cheating attitude is influenced by the prevailing social environment. Indeed, social environment will lead to students' neutralizing attitudes and their perceived cheating norms, and thus students will justify and ascribe their academic unethical behaviour to social environment (Beasley, 2014). One example is that in 2019, a Chinese famous drama actor and a post-doctoral candidate at Peking university –Tian-Lin Zhai, when participating in live online programs, expressed that he does not know the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI, the largest comprehensive and research-orientated Chinese academic resource/information system). Chinese researchers reported that Zhai's prior published paper has more than 40 per cent similarity with other papers. As a result, Peking university cancelled his study career.

In the same year, Elisabeth Bik, a consultant in San Francisco, California, who criticized several images in Cao Xuetao's (a China's most prominent scientists and president of Nankai University) published papers look unexpectedly similar (Normile, 2019). Although Cao responded that he and his teams have confidences about data, however, they corrected data for four published papers until 4th December 2019, and he is still a president of Nankai university. Hence, Normile (2019) indicated that "the cost of research misconduct is either very low or does not exist in China. Academic misconduct in the U.S. and Europe usually leads to resignation or dismissal, but that practice is not very common in China".

The 34th China Adolescents Science and Technology Innovation Contest (CASTIC) has held in 2019, Macao. A sixth-grade primary student, Chen, Lingshi, who come from Yunnan province, China. Based on the topic "Study on the function and mechanism of C10orf67 in the development of colorectal cancer" awarded the third-class prize. This occurred the earthquake in the Chinese academia, and many netizens found that his parents are deans of tumour signal transduction discipline group of Kunming Institute of Zoology. As a result, the CASTIC cancelled his prize (China Adolescents Science and Technology Innovation Contest, 2020), but this event does not influence his parents' research career. Cheung et al. (2016) indicated that the prevalent academic dishonesty in some Chinese academic institutions, ghostwriters are hired, plagiarism occurs, and results are faked to achieve publication in international journals. Especially, Chinese undergraduates feel skeptical when they arrive on campus and hear orientation speeches about the lofty virtues of education, and many of them think those virtues have nothing to do with the real world (Yang, 2012), but at the same time, advertisements for cheating instruments are posted all around the campus at Chinese universities, in such places as toilets, classrooms, stairways, and dormitories (Yang, 2012).

2.7 Culture diversity and Chinese students' academic dishonesty

Culture diversity is an important predictor can be explained students' academic dishonesty in non-origin countries, including China (Cheung et al., 2016). Many students are unclear about what constitute cheating (Cheung et al., 2016), and they have no knowledge of the criteria that are institutionally applicable for determining cheating in other countries (Makridis & Englander, 2020). There are variations of values and ethical decisions making due to different social, economic, and political institutions from different cultures (Tsui & Ngo, 2016a). For instance, the American students did not believe that giving someone past exams or using exams form a prior semester was cheating, but Polish students tended to feel the giving or use of prior exams was cheating (Lupton et al., 2000). Singaporean students considered cheating in exam-related contexts to be serious, but viewed plagiarism as less serious (Lim & See, 2001). Among the various cheating behaviours, plagiarism by Chinese students has attracted most attention from scholars (Tsui & Ngo, 2016a). However, Sowden

(2005) indicated that Chinese Confucian cultures suggest that it is not dishonorable to repeat the words of the teachers.

Cheung et al. (2016) demonstrated that the major reason of Asian students, including Chinese students violated the plagiarism rules due to poor mastery of language proficiency in a new cultural country, followed by lack of awareness of the university's requirements. This corresponds with Chapman et al. (2004), academic cheating has become a global problem as it has become easier for students to study in other countries as well as it is difficult for educators to understand how to control academic cheating among students from different cultures and backgrounds. Therefore, when students found their learning materials difficult to understand, they tended to take an easier way, which cheating to succeed in university (Cheung et al., 2016). Overall, Chinese oversea students still adopt passive learning method, poor language, less self-efficacy, less connection among teacher-students, strong peer influence, and close *Guanxi* may exert negative effect on their unethical academic behaviours.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study is twofold. The first objective is to compare the Chinese students' ethical and unethical academic methods and tactics in universities between in China and other countries, thus, to illustrate that whether Chinese students' unethical academic behaviours are more rampant in China or outboard. The second objective is to detect when and why Chinese students exercise unethical academic behaviours either in China or outboard. Indeed, to explore the motivations of Chinese students to perform cheating behaviours.

4. RESEARCH METHOD

4.1 Research paradigm

This study adopts a philosophically interpretivist approach solely as its main principle, coupled with an inductive approach in order to understand the multiple realities. The type of study is an exploratory one, due to it is concerned with finding out what is happening, to seek new insights, to ask questions and to assess phenomenon in a new light (Saunders et al., 2011). This is particularly useful if researchers want to clarify the understanding of a problem (Saunders et al., 2011). A qualitative interview was carried to answer the questions, as it offers various understanding the means that participants can be contributed to various phenomenon, which can help researchers to address the research questions and objectives (Saunders et al., 2011). The results can be researchers are able to collect a rich and detailed set of data.

4.2 Data collection

Researchers cannot easily acquire an accurate sampling frame from companies, or locate appropriate respondents to answer the research questions, thus, the non-probability sampling method was adopted (Saunders et al., 2011). A purposive sampling technique was selected to collect samples with an in-deep interview method. This method allows the researchers to exercise self-judgment in selecting cases that would best fit their aim, enable them to answer their research questions, and allow them to achieve their objectives (Wang et al., 2020b). Yin (1994) suggests that the reasonable limited requirement of sample case of 2 and 4, which 2 cases is the minimum for performing a comparison and anything more than 4 cases can be overwhelming for both the researchers and audiences.

For this study, the selected participants were based on four major criteria: (1) business students have been found to less academic ethic than students in other faculties (Yang, 2012), and they tend to be less critical

of their cheating behaviours (Tsui & Ngo, 2016b); (2) this study explores whether Chinese students exercise more academic ethical behaviours in China compare to who are studying outboard, however, students' cheating behaviours are sensitive topic, including China. Therefore, the participants should be at least pursued one of three academic levels (degree, master, PhD) either in China or other countries. The participants should be studied in one degree in China, but other degrees revealed otherwise, and vice-versa; (3) the participants' education backgrounds should come from different countries, it can provide detailed information and represent divergent cultures; and (4) the participants are better be lecturers, as they can provide some evidence from "managers" perspectives.

A total of four participants engaged in the interview of this study. Participant 1 (P1) is a Chinese second-tier university lecturer, his degree graduated from a second-tier university in China, and his master and PhD were graduated from top-tier university in Malaysia. Participant 2 (P2) is a Chinese top-tier university lecturer, his degree graduated from a top-tier university in China, and his master and PhD were graduated from a top-tier university in Korea. Participant 3 (P3) is a Chinese second-tier university lecturer, her degree graduated from a top-tier university in China, and her master was graduated from a top-tier university in Canada. Last participant (P4) is a Chinese top-tier university lecturer, her degree graduated from a top-tier university in China, and her master and PhD were graduated from a top-tier university in France. All of participants had more than two-years and less than five-years teaching experience in their university. The interview was performed in January 2021, researchers conducted an in-deep interview with each participant separately, and each interview lasting around one and half hour.

5. FINDINGS

Table 1 displays the participations' information. The names of the participants are not revealed but replaced with the interview consequence.

Table 1. Participation demographic and other information

	Gender	Age	Marital status	Education level	Working years	Year-Income	Graduation country	Duration of study abroad	Primary students
P1	Male	31	Married	Ph.D.	2	RMB>100,000	Malaysia	7	Degree
P2	Male	35	Single	Ph.D.	4	RMB>100,000	Korea	6	Degree
P3	Female	38	Married	Master	9	RMB>100,000	Canada	3	Degree
P4	Female	32	Single	Ph.D.	3	RMB>100,000	France	7	Degree

A number of expectations were identified in the interview, which can be described in Table 2.

Table 2. Variables for cheating for outboard and at home for Chinese students.

Reasons of cheating	Aboard	At home
External	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Language 2. Culture diversity 3. Different study environment 4. No counselors' supervision 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No ethical/unethical knowledge acquired 2. Teaching skills 3. Low graduation requirements 4. Relaxed invigilation 5. No teacher-students interaction in class 6. Low punishments with failed in exam 7. Social environment influence 8. Misleading information 9. Disjointed relationship between class and

		practice
		10. Scholarship
		11. High grade for pursuing higher degree
		12. No usual performance (in-class usual results)
		13. Low teachers' academic level
		14. No teacher-students relationship
		15. Parents' expectations
		16. No teachers' supervision
Internal	1. Peer influence	1. Peer influence
	2. Friendship	2. Friendship
	3. Self-control	3. Self-control
		4. Low self-efficacy
		5. No research/career goal
		6. Addicted
		7. Flaunting

6. DISCUSSION

All of four participations indicated that Chinese students are more undertake cheating behaviours at home far than studying outboard. All of them admitted they have had cheating when they were studying either in China or outboard, but they all said they cheat less and less each time when they were studying abroad.

Pertaining to this question, P1 stated that:

"...Obviously, I and they (i.e., Chinese students) are more cheating in China, the cost of cheating is really low, and the cost for compensation also is really low. In China, if you failed in exam because cheating, the university still would give you more than one chances attending next examination let you pass this module before graduation. But if in foreign universities, first, they would give you a deferment letter, then, you would receive an academic probation letter..."

P3 stated that:

"...Maybe that you also can pass this module in next examination in foreign universities, but the main question is you have to explain the reasons for cheating to your lecturers. If you can list certain convinced reasons for cheating, your lecturers will approve you attending next examination, otherwise, you not only cannot attend next examination, but also you left a very bad impression to lecturers..."

P4 mentioned that:

"...Before we go abroad, we see a lot of reports and information about how foreign universities punish students who were cheating during exam, thus, we cannot cheat in exam as same as at home..."

P1 further explained that why he cheats less and less in his foreign university:

"...Before we studied at home, when we have exams, the right answers should be exactly same as the books, documents, etc., we learnt before. Initially I think foreign universities' exams are same, but as time goes on, I realized that we do not need to do that, we just report the key points of right answers using your own words, you will pass the exams. This is really easy and increase my learning initiatives in the class..."

In relation to the understanding of ethical and unethical behaviour in a university, all of participations highly criticized the academic ethical/unethical training in China. They indicated that there is a significant difference between Chinese students and foreign students' knowledge about academic ethical and unethical behaviours. For abroad universities, their students have been trained and educated how to avoid unethical behaviours since degree level or even before. Thus, they have a good study habit. But for Chinese students, they lack knowledge about what ethical and unethical behaviours are.

In relation to this, P1 stated that:

“...Until to now, I am a lecturer in this university, I still do not know what unethical behaviours in Chinese university are. When I was a new lecturer, we need attend some new lecturer training, however, there is nothing training related to unethical behaviour in a university whether for lecturer or student...”

P2 further mentioned that:

“...We need submit assignment to Turnitin each time for checking plagiarism before submit to lecturer in foreign university. In China, we do not have this requirement. For them (i.e., foreign students), they all know what plagiarism is, and they think this is a normal thing. But for Chinese students, except their final essays need to submit to plagiarism system, otherwise, they never used this before...”

P3 stated that:

“...For me now, students cheat during exam, the plagiarism failed the graduation standard are unethical behaviours, otherwise, ethical behaviours. Because I also do not know clearly what unethical behaviours are here...”

In relation to the unethical methods, participations stated that Chinese students cheating behaviours are more robust and direct abroad. In contrast, their cheating methods are more prudent and cautions at home.

Pertaining to this issue, P1 stated that:

“...To be honest, I think we waste too much their (foreign universities’ lecturer) trust, especially for graduate defense or Viva. Their lecturers believe their Chinese students can do the defense; however, Chinese students are afraid to do presentation, and do not attend that event. I have done a master’s degree defense for one Chinese students, because we are close friend...”

P3 stated that:

“...Chinese students’ unethical methods are ‘fantastic’ at home, condensed cheat sheet, using mobile phone, talking watch, Bluetooth headset, or collaborative cheating during exams; hire ghostwriter, pay for registration, buy the articles, buy the authorship, or copying internet contents for other academic requirements. Overall, they may not finish their assignments by themselves, but they attend exams. In contrast, if they study abroad, they are more willing to copying internet contents, buy assignments from previous students, collaborative cheating, pay for registration, hire someone sit exams on behalf of them abroad. They neither attend in class nor exams...”

Last, in relation to when and why Chinese students exercise unethical academic behaviours either in China or outboard. All of participations agreed that all cheating behaviours are not caused by single reason, but multifaced. Specifically, external reasons played certain important role in influencing students’ internal reasons, finally, unethical behaviours. For Chinese students who are studying at home, the whole university’s education systems and lecturers’ academic level seem to highly impact their unethical behaviours inevitably.

Pertaining to this issue, P2 stated that:

“...Chinese students received misleading information from their high schools’ teachers. *Gaokao* is so important for students, high school teachers always tell their students that: *Gaokao* is last mile in your study’s career, if you can overcome this obstacle, you can enjoy your rest study life in a university. When a student register in university, he/she will lose self-control, diminish the self-efficacy immediately...”

P4 stated that:

“...Now I totally understand why lecturers so loose with invigilation during the exams. The university has a pass & fail standard for each class and grade. You need control how many percentages of students pass this module and fail also. If your invigilation is serious, certain students cannot pass this module and over the standard, you must write a report about why they cannot pass this module...”

P4 further stated that:

“...Even if we invigilate very strictly and certain students fail in this module, and we are willing to write this report, but we still need let them pass the re-sit for exam. We must ensure each student can receive their graduate certification. Because if they cannot get this certification, their parents will come to university, and university’s managers do not want to put them in trouble. In the end, you must let this student pass this module, because you will receive huge pressure from students’ parents and university’s managers...”

P1 stated that:

“...I really disappointed with Chinese current academic environment whether for lecturers or students. Majority of Chinese journals are charged for publication fee, and they are not Open-access journals. Moreover, you cannot publish articles on top journals and apply funds if you are not top-university’s lecturer, but meanwhile, you have work-missions push you to publish articles on high standard journals. This situation also happened for students, especially for master and Ph.D. students, they have pressure to graduate from current university. Thus, there is a writing-publishing business chain, and this is not a secret everywhere...”

P3 also criticized academic environment that:

“...Tian-Lin Zhai, a famous actor, a Peking University’s student, it is unbelieved that his master graduation dissertation’s plagiarism failed to achieve standard, and he can pass that. Except this, so many academic events’ winners are children, due to their parents are professional researchers that help their children to win the competition. Obviously, this causes a huge negative influence on researchers, students, etc., this also hurt the overall Chinese academic environment...”

P1 further stated that:

“...Because these reasons, many second-tier and other universities’ lecturers give up publishing articles and applying funds, however, if they are working at public universities, they will not lose their jobs, but retaining current job titles. Thus, there are no passions and patience for them to teach students. A lot of lecturers open businesses outside and spend less time and attention in class. Reading slides and repeating contents from books to students are normal teaching skills among them...”

P3 stated that:

“...There is no relationship between most students and lecturers is also significantly influenced students’ unethical behaviours. Because the Chinese universities implement Campus Counselor Policy, means students are more connected with their counselors after class. They give feedbacks/complaints of whether in class or out class to their counselors, few opportunities can contact lecturers directly...”

P3 further mentioned that:

“...Moreover, the Chinese Confucius culture teaches students can not challenge teachers’ authority more than thousands of years. Therefore, it is not doubt that the teacher-student interactions in class is low. Certain students do not know their lecturers’ names when they finish this module...”

P4 mentioned that:

“...Certain students have passions with new module, as time goes on, they realize they are studying in a depressing environment. Especially, many business students feel that their knowledge acquired from class disjointed with practice. However, due to teachers’ teaching skills and others, they lack interest in study, thus lose their research goals...”

The lecturers’ negative attitude and behaviour towards teaching result in students’ passive learning attitudes. This further leads to lose their self-control, self-efficacy, and many others.

Pertaining to this issue, P1 stated that:

“...Many lecturers did not give the marks based on students’ usual performances. They do not care students’ attendance and performance in class, but they still give high marks arbitrarily when this module finishes due to they do not want to let these students fail in this module...”

Lastly, students who do not want to fail the module, they will perform certain unethical behaviours in exams. However, there are still certain differences between their motivations.

Pertaining this issue, P4 stated that:

“...Generally, students who do not want to fail the module, they perform certain cheating behaviours. In particular, when their close friends pass the past exams with cheating, they will follow their steps. Certain good usual-performance students also will cheat, to apply scholarship, to pursue a better result are their motivations. It is weird that bad usual-performance students pass the exams with cheating, they do not feel shame, but flaunting their cheating techniques to others, they were addicted to cheat...”

Students who are studying abroad and performing cheating mainly based on external obstacles. It seems that external reasons significantly influenced internal reasons. Culture diversity and language are most important determinators of cheating behaviours.

Pertaining to this issue, P1 stated that:

“...Language is the most important obstacle for Chinese students studying abroad. Although they may pass the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or others. They always struggle with problems such as pronunciation and accent, thus become their communication barriers. Sometimes, they cannot adapt to these language problems until they graduate from university...”

P1 further mentioned that:

“...If you cannot overcome language obstacles, you will exaggerate the influence of language on your individual’s whole living. You will preserve your own cultural style and resist to adapt other culture. Narrowing the friend circle with only Chinese, discussing academic questions with Chinese students, these diminish a Chinese student’s progress in pursuing his/her study abroad...”

P3 stated that:

“...The culture diversity can be expressed through different study environment in terms of class, university, dormitory environment whether hardware aspect or intrinsic aspect. Small class, positive teachers-students interaction, asking questions freely in class are new to Chinese. Lecturers not only concern about students’ examination results but also usual-performance. Certain Chinese students feel uncomfortable in class due to they do not want to speak, discussion, etc. Meanwhile, no restrictions on dormitory’s door, electric, and internet closing time significantly influence one’s self-control...”

P4 indeed stated that:

“...Because such external reasons, Chinese students cannot fit in foreign university’s life, they have to live/study/play with other Chinese together. The collectivistic value plays a significant role in their abroad life currently. Asking helps from close friends, previous students, even local Chinese is only one way for them to pass the study’s obstacles...”

All of above findings lead us to understand further the reasons of why and when Chinese ethical and unethical behaviours happen whether studying at home or abroad. Their unethical behaviours cannot be segmented as separate dimension, there is a significant correlation between external reason and internal reason,

and each reason can result in one and more other reasons.

7. Conclusion

In a nutshell, the impact of external reasons on Chinese students' unethical behaviours is robust and fundamental. The current academic environment exactly diminishes certain researchers, lecturers, and students' motivations to continue to pursue their research goal. Chinese universities' evaluation systems to students also discourage and restrict teachers' positive attitudes to teach their students. The listless teaching skills hurt students' motivations to study more in class. They are easy to lose self-control and self-efficacy and feel what they learned disjointed between class and practice. Teachers also do not concern about students' class usual-performance, this makes it easy for students to lose the already shaky teacher-students interaction and relationship. Back to students' aspect, they will look for help from close friends and others for overcoming exams' obstacles. Under the collectivistic culture, it students are difficult to refuse others' requests about collaborative cheating. In the end, this becomes a bad cycle surrounding Chinese students at home.

Students who are studying abroad, they should overcome language question initially, then they can be adapted in a new study/living environment. Otherwise, they are easy to drop in a bad situation. They should be braver and more outgoing to make communications with others whether in class or out of class. Because they are easy to lose self-control without supervision by counsellors compared to Chinese students who are studying at home. For these students, they need to look for certain academic training before they go outboard, such as what is plagiarism, how to use citations, what are standards for evaluation by foreign lecturers, etc. At least, these behaviours may help students can be adapted quicker in their academic/studying life.

Although this research's participation has a representative for certain students in some local cities and countries, however, the study's results did not represent the entire Chinese student whether studying at home or abroad. Second, all of the participants' degree was graduated from China, and their higher education's certification acquired from foreign countries. Because older people usually have more self-control compared to younger people, thus, this is another limitation for this study. This study explores certain reasons or variables that can influence Chinese students' unethical behaviours, further study may be able to distinguish some of the underlying reasons/variables to obtain a deep relationship between them.

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