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A review of conceptual theories on the nature of academic fraud

Abstract. *The review-descriptive article examines the phenomenon of “academic dishonesty” and conceptual theories of its origin. The authors consider self-efficacy theory, self-determination theory, achievement goal theory, self-determination theory, goal achievement theory, planned behaviour theory, operant conditioning theory, crime theory, neutralization theory, expected value theory, and rational choice theory. According to the self-efficacy theory of A. Bandura theory, learners who are unsure of their knowledge and skills, irrespective of their previous achievements, cheat. The self-determination theory of E.L. Deci and R.M. Ryan sense of unmet basic psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and connectedness to others increases the likelihood of academic fraud. J.G. Nicholls’ goal attainment theory determines that learners who seek to avoid demonstrating poor performance are more likely to commit academic fraud. Within I. Ajzen’s theory of planned behaviour the intention to act dishonestly can be explained by the student’s own attitude to academic dishonesty, the subjective norms adopted in the educational environment in which he or she is placed and the subjective assessment of the ease of committing dishonest acts. Operant conditioning theory determines that if an act (i.e. academic fraud) has been performed successfully, it is more likely to be repeated. In the theory of crime, academic fraud is seen as dishonest behaviour by learners during learning activities. Factors influencing the prevalence and frequency of dishonest behaviour of learners have been identified, such as low self-control, the possibility of committing academic fraud, and the presence of positive attitudes towards dishonest behaviour. According to the neutralization theory of G.M. Sykes, and D. Matza dishonest practices of learners are explained by the fact that they do not consider them as cheating but as morally acceptable phenomena. G.S. Becker’s expectation-value theory and rational choice theory view academic dishonesty as a rational and weighted decision made by students themselves, i.e., in terms of possible costs and benefits to them (economic approach).*

Keywords: *self-efficacy theory, self-determination theory, achievement goal theory, self-determination theory, goal achievement theory, planned behaviour theory, operant conditioning theory, crime theory, neutralization theory.*

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Introduction

The Webster’s Dictionary defines academic dishonesty as «intentionally engaging in deceptive practices about one’s academic work or the work of another» [1]. A number of studies in the USA, Europe, and China show that between

75% and 90% of surveyed learners resort to academic dishonesty during their university studies [2, 5]. Dishonest behaviour of learners has a lot of negative consequences: as a result of academic fraud learners receive inflated grades, but in fact, the future specialist does not have the necessary knowledge, skills, and competencies for

quality and effective performance of professional activities.

In order to find effective measures to eliminate preconditions and prevent cases of academic fraud, it is necessary to understand why learners commit such actions and what could be a reason to abandon them and study honestly. To prevent dishonest behaviour (socio-psychological decision-making mechanisms in favour of dishonest behaviour) at university, it is important to understand the reasons why learners resort to academic dishonesty. This will allow us to understand how to structure pedagogical practices in the university in such a way as to reduce the prevalence of dishonest behaviour and motivate learners to learn honestly and consider the theories that explain why learners engage in dishonest behaviour.

Methodology

Motivational theories. Self-efficacy theory. Motivational theories that examine the factors that influence an individual's own goal attainment have a special place in academic fraud research. These include self-efficacy theory, self-determination theory and goal attainment theory.

According to the provisions of the self-efficacy theory of A. Bandura [6], an individual's confidence in his abilities and skills affects his self-assessment of his ability to perform a particular task, which leads to the achievement of the desired result. Learners who are not confident in their knowledge are more likely to engage in dishonest behaviour to achieve a positive learning outcome in the presence of favourable environmental factors.

In this theory, academic dishonesty is defined as dishonest behaviour which includes normalizing help to other students, plagiarism, the use of cheat sheets and cheating in examinations. The hallmark of this theory is the position that the cognitive beliefs underlying motivated behaviour are the result of an interaction between students and the environment. An important factor explaining academic cheating is considered to be learners' perceptions of their self-efficacy, in other words, their academic capabilities. Thus,

according to empirical results, more learners who are unsure of their knowledge and skills, irrespective of their previous achievements, cheat. This was confirmed in a study by Anderman L.H., Freeman T.M., Mueller C.E. [7], in which learners' beliefs about their own abilities better predicted cheating rates among them than their grade point average.

To combat dishonest behaviour within this theory, the authors suggest helping students to set short-term goals: the student's self-efficacy beliefs will increase and the likelihood of cheating may be reduced. Teachers should encourage students to be motivated to do well and do well, even if the student fails, teachers should deal positively with such failures and motivate students to continue their work.

Self-determination theory. The self-determination theory of E.L. Deci, R.M. Ryan [8] is based on the theory of intrinsic/extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the desire to engage in learning activities because of the interest and enjoyment of doing them. The external motivation of a student is the performance of a learning activity because of external factors to the activity. Such as receiving a high grade, praise, desire to avoid punishment, etc. Within the framework of this theory, the authors consider reasons for behaviour in terms of satisfying three needs: competence, autonomy and connectedness with others.

A study by Y. Kanat-Maymon, M. Benjamin, A. Stavsky [9] found that learners who are guided by external motivation are more prone to cheating and other dishonest practices when performing academic tasks. Feeling unmet basic psychological needs for competence, autonomy and connectedness to others increase the likelihood of academic dishonesty. However, these factors were found to be insignificant in a study by T.B. Murdock, and E.M. Anderman [10], as the university environment plays a role in shaping student motivation, which is not considered in this theory.

In order to prevent unfair behaviour, the authors suggest meeting the needs of learners and maintaining learner autonomy by avoiding

rewards and punishments. To support the learners' need for competence, teachers should provide constructive feedback and clear guidance on assignments, which will allow students to better understand the expectations of teachers. To meet learners' need for connectedness with others, trainers should establish friendly relationships with students so they know that their opinions will be listened to.

To meet the needs of learners, teachers should develop unique and interesting assignments for them and allow students to check and grade their own and fellow students' work. It is important to provide tutorials where students can discuss one-on-one with the teacher about the issues and challenges they face in their work.

Goal achievement theory. Goal attainment theory by J.G. Nicholls [11] considers motivation as a goal to achieve which human activity is directed.

This theory distinguishes two main directions: mastery goal (desire to gain necessary knowledge and skills) and demonstration goal (desire to demonstrate one's abilities). In empirical research, the demonstration goal is usually referred to as a superficial approach to learning, which leads to negative emotional, cognitive, and behavioural consequences in learning activities.

Goal attainment theory has been successfully applied in the study of academic cheating. It has been used to identify factors that explain learners' engagement in dishonest behaviour: learners' orientation to demonstrate competencies and the tendency to avoid demonstrating low competencies, as they are associated with a superficial approach to learning. Thus, learners seeking to avoid the demonstration of low competence are more likely to commit academic dishonesty.

These findings are supported by empirical studies [12], which show that mastery-seeking learners are less likely to cheat than those who are externally oriented. However, some subsequent research has established the benefits that a demonstration orientation also provides. It has been suggested that this theory needs to be revised to emphasize the potential of both the mastery target and the demonstration target.

Experts believe that in order to prevent dishonest behaviour of learners, teachers should motivate learners to master and learn the subject and reduce the emphasis on getting good grades, because, with student motivation focused on mastery, learners are less likely to commit dishonest behaviours in learning activities [13].

However, if the learner has both a mastery orientation and a demonstration orientation, perhaps an effective strategy would be to have sessions where they are required to present their projects and progress on them in front of fellow students and lecturers. The trainees themselves could act as a teacher in the classroom. The way in which they could explain new material in a clear and interesting way and engage their fellow students would be an indicator of their success. On the one hand, they themselves need to be well-versed in the material they are explaining, and on the other hand, they will be demonstrating their knowledge in front of an audience.

Behaviourist theories. Theory of planned behaviour. Behaviourist theories (theory of planned behaviour I. Ajzen and operant conditioning theory B. F. Skinner) deal with behavioural concepts that deal with learning.

The theory of planned behavior I. Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour [14] assumes that a person's behaviour is the result of three types of beliefs: a person's attitudes towards behaviour, subjective perceptions of social pressure (subjective norms) and perceived behavioural control.

Under this theory, an individual's attitudes are his or her assessment of utility and willingness to take certain actions. Subjective norms are an individual's perceptions of specific behaviours as influenced by the judgment of others. And perceived behavioral control is a person's subjective perception of the presence or absence of an opportunity to perform certain actions. However, critics of this theory say that it does not accurately predict individual behaviour.

In research, the intention to act dishonestly can be explained by the student's own attitude towards academic dishonesty, the subjective

norms adopted in the educational environment in which he or she finds himself or herself, and the subjective assessment of the ease of committing dishonest acts. The perceived ease of committing a dishonest act depends on such factors as the established sanctions for dishonest behaviour, the attitude of the teacher, etc. A modified version of I. Beck and I. Ajzen includes a fourth variable – moral obligation, indicating the expectation of compliance of a person's behaviour with the norms of morality accepted in society [14].

The success of this theory in studying academic fraud has been confirmed in the research of T.D. Carpenter, J.L. Reimers [15], where was found the relationship between intentions to act dishonestly and dishonest behavior itself.

C.J. Armitage, and M. Conner [16] found that moral obligations play an important role in this theory and that this variable contributes to the predictive abilities of the theory of planned behaviour. However, the same researchers say that the disadvantage of this theory is that it does not include variables such as self-identity, self-efficacy, and past behaviour of the student.

As methods to combat cheating, the researchers suggest influencing student attitudes toward dishonest behaviour, normalizing the consequences of such cheating to students through specific ethics courses, as well as setting rules and penalties for dishonest behaviour. In addition, universities should prevent academic cheating by, for example, installing quality plagiarism detection software to help avoid inappropriate borrowing.

The theory of operant conditioning. The term operant conditioning was introduced by B.F. Skinner [17] used it to describe behaviours that have an impact on the environment. It occurs when an action has to be performed in order to complete a task. If an action has been performed successfully, it is more likely to be repeated. Critics of this theory, however, argue that this approach fails to account for many aspects of an individual's behaviour.

Through the application of this theory to the study of academic dishonesty, a conceptual

model was created in which dishonest behaviour is viewed as operant conditioning and the level of honesty in the university is viewed as the environment. When a student is given a task, they can complete it honestly or dishonestly, when dishonest behaviors are committed at the university there may be consequences that either promote dishonest behavior or inhibit it. The consequences that lead to dishonest behavior affect the possibility of its recurrence and student attitudes towards it, which has been confirmed by empirical research. In most cases, the principle of operant conditioning has been used in conjunction with other theories, as it does not address the causes of student dishonest behavior.

According to the findings, it is important not only to develop and apply measures to prevent student cheating but also to try to form an honest academic environment in which learners will be actively involved in learning activities, which will reduce the level of academic cheating.

Common to behavioral theories is the need for an honest academic environment, which can be shaped by continuously informing learners about ethical values, imposing severe penalties for dishonest behaviour, and involving all learners in active learning activities.

Theories of deviance. Theory of crime. Many studies have analyzed the reasons for students' deviant behaviour in terms of deviant behavior theories including the theory of crime and the theory of normalizing. Deviant behaviour is human behaviour that deviates from accepted social norms and which leads to certain sanctions. In works applying those theories, student cheating is considered a crime. Theories of deviance are used to explain why some students do not follow established social norms. However, if in the student community more than 80% of students admit to dishonest behaviour during studies, the question arises as to what is the norm and what is deviant behaviour.

According to M.R. Gottfredson, and T. Hirschi [18], all people, in certain life situations, may feel the urge to commit a crime, some successfully cope with it and others succumb to this urge. The

ability of people to refrain from deviant impulses is the result of self-control, which depends on the environment.

In studies aimed at studying academic dishonesty, which is based on this theory, the dishonest behavior of learners during academic activities is considered a crime. Factors influencing the prevalence and frequency of dishonest behavior in learners have been identified, such as low levels of self-control, the presence of the possibility of committing academic dishonesty, and the presence of positive attitudes toward dishonest behavior.

A number of studies have shown an association between lack of self-control and the presence of the physical possibility of dishonest behavior with the frequency of dishonest behavior and have also found that learner attitudes towards academic dishonesty influence the prevalence of such practices. A study by A.U. Bolin [19] stressed that there is no direct relationship between the level of self-control and academic dishonesty without considering the factor of students' positive attitudes towards dishonest behavior. In this case, this theory would be considered incomplete.

Codes of honor should be developed to combat dishonest behavior. Students should be made aware of the codes and signed individually, formalization will ensure agreement with the established rules and the consequences for breaking them, possibly an effective procedure to combat academic dishonesty. Students should also be given the opportunity to comment on and refine the code, which is likely to encourage their involvement in the process. Enforcement of the code of honor should be monitored by the student council and the university ethics committee.

Neutralization theory. The neutralization theory of G.M. Sykes, D. Matza [20] demonstrates how the process of neutralization relieves a person from responsibility for dishonest behaviour, thereby eliminating or reducing the feeling of guilt. The authors of this theory identified several neutralization techniques that are used to justify deviant behaviour. Within this theory, dishonest

practices by learners are explained by the fact that they do not see them as cheating, but as morally acceptable in the university. Research has confirmed the validity of neutralization theory to explain the reasons for committing academic dishonesty, e.g., learners may deny that there are negative consequences of cheating at university.

There were identified two factors as influencing the frequency of committing academic cheating such as the perception of the educational environment and learners' attitudes towards dishonest behaviour. A correlation was also found between learners' satisfaction, their neutralization of the learning environment, their focus on completing assignments, and their tendency to justify academic cheating.

In order to prevent it, researchers suggest interventions in the holistic pedagogical process. For example, even simple changes such as friendly communication with students and the introduction of group work have a positive effect on aspects of the educational environment related to academic cheating. According to theories of deviance, students should be made aware of what is considered honest and dishonest in the university and help them to maintain an honest academic environment through active involvement in university life as well as by neutralization the relationship between the university and the student.

Theories that view the student as a rational actor. Expectation and value theory. This group of theories includes the expected value theory and rational choice theory. They view academic fraud by learners in terms of its possible costs and benefits, i.e. dishonest behaviours are rational and deliberate decisions made by the student him/herself.

The expectation and value theory of E.J. Watkinson, S. Dwyer, A.B. Nielsen was developed in education in the work of J. Eccles and A. Wigfield [21]. According to this theory, motivation in performing a certain task depends on two factors: the expectation of success in performing it and the value of this success. In this context, the expectation is defined as an

individual's beliefs about how well he or she will perform in the near or long term. The value of the task, in turn, refers to an assessment of the possible risks and the effort required to complete it.

In academic fraud research, this theory focuses on students' cognitive perceptions of the learning situation and identifies 2 factors that influence the decision to commit academic fraud: the expectation of success from a dishonest task, such as getting a high grade on a diploma, and the academic value of the task, which refers to the opportunity to be caught and punished. In studies of academic dishonesty both of these factors were confirmed, the reasons why learners did not commit dishonest acts were the existence of a sufficiently high opportunity to be caught and punished, the insignificance of the subject matter. It follows that learners' dishonest behaviors may be determined not only by their desire for gain at minimal cost but also by the academic environment that may feed their desires.

A number of papers suggest that students should be educated about the importance of academic integrity and the application of punishment, according to the University Charter, to perpetrators of academic dishonesty.

Rational choice theory. The rational choice theory of G.S. Becker [22] viewed social behavior in terms of an economic approach. According to the terms of this theory, an individual evaluates a crime by modeling the possible costs and benefits to themselves of committing it, and the rationality of the decision depends on the individual's basic goals and beliefs.

When the provisions of this theory were applied in studies of academic dishonesty, three factors were found to be associated with the commission of dishonest behavior by learners: the existence of minimal costs, such as a low possibility of punishment or receiving a non-strict punishment, and large benefits, such as receiving grades higher than expected, and student perception of the academic situation. The importance of these factors has been confirmed in a number of studies of academic dishonesty

in which, as with the expected value theory, researchers have concluded that if the probability of being detected for dishonest behavior is low and punishment for cheating is minimal, students will be more inclined to commit academic dishonesty to achieve their intended goals.

P. Bourdieu argues that learners cheat because they want to and their choices are not based on rationality [23]. However, even from this perspective, the dishonest behavior of learners cannot be interpreted solely by their egoistic desires.

Conclusion

The analysis and classification of the theories used to study academic fraud have allowed us to identify a wide range of practices to combat dishonest behavior, which is recommended for implementation based on the results of empirical research. Based on the identified practices, the theories of academic fraud can be divided into 2 groups. The first group of theories includes those that believe that teachers should prevent the dishonest behaviour of learners, e.g. by providing extracurricular activities, motivating their learners to acquire new knowledge and skills, and helping them to set short-term goals. The second group includes theories that recommend that universities implement measures to combat dishonest behaviour. For example, creating codes of conduct, introducing sanctions for cheating for learners, and fostering an honest academic environment so that learners report dishonesty of their fellow learners and teachers are prepared to take appropriate action when cheating is detected. Identifying the essence and theories that explain academic fraud by learners is the first step to investigating this phenomenon within the project «Academic Fraud by Postgraduate Education Subjects (Case Study of National Universities)».

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Академиялық алаяқтықтың табиғаты туралы тұжырымдамалық теорияларға шолу

Аңдатпа. Шолу-сипаттама мақаласында «академиялық алаяқтық» феномені және оның пайда болуының тұжырымдамалық теориялары қарастырылады. Авторлар өзін-өзі бағалау теориясы, өзін-өзі анықтау теориясы, қол жеткізу мақсаттары теориясы, өзін-өзі анықтау теориясы, мақсатқа жету теориясы, жоспарланған мінез-құлық теориясы, оперантты кондициялау теориясы, қылмыс теориясы, бейтараптандыру теориясы, күтілетін құндылық теориясы, ұтымды таңдау теориясы қарастырылған. Өзіндік тиімділік теориясына сәйкес А. Бандураны алдыңғы жетістіктеріне қарамастан, өз білімі мен дағдыларына сенімді емес студенттер есептен шығарады. Э.Л. Деси, Р.М. Райанның өзін-өзі анықтау теориясының негізінде құзыреттілікке, дербестікке және басқалармен байланысты негізгі психологиялық қажеттіліктерге қанағаттанбау академиялық алаяқтықтың ықтималдығын арттырады. Мақсаттарға жету теориясы Дж.Дж. Николлс төмен нәтиже көрсетуден аулақ болғысы келетін студенттер академиялық алаяқтық жасауға бейім екенін анықтайды. Жоспарланған мінез-құлық теориясы аясында И. Эйзен адал емес әрекет ету ниетін студенттің академиялық алаяқтыққа қатынасы, ол орналасқан білім беру ортасында қабылданған субъективті нормалар және арамдық әрекеттердің жеңілдігін субъективті бағалау арқылы түсіндіруге болады. Оперантты кондиционерлеу теориясы егер әрекет (яғни академиялық алаяқтық) сәтті жүзеге асырылса, онда ол қайта жасалуы мүмкін екенін анықтайды. Қылмыс теориясында академиялық алаяқтық студенттердің оқу іс-әрекеті кезіндегі арамдық әрекеті ретінде қарастырылады. Оқушылардың арам мінез-құлқының таралуы мен жиілігіне әсер ететін факторлар анықталды, мысалы, өзін-өзі бақылаудың төмен деңгейі, академиялық алаяқтық жасау мүмкіндігі және арам мінез-құлыққа қатысты жағымды көзқарастардың болуы. Бейтараптандыру теориясына сәйкес Г.М. Сайкс, Д. Маца білім алушылардың арамдық әрекеттері оларды алаяқтық емес, моральдық тұрғыдан қолайлы құбылыс деп санайтындығымен түсіндіріледі. Күту және құндылықтар теориясы және ұтымды таңдау теориясы Г. С. Бекер академиялық алаяқтықты студенттің өзі қабылдаған ұтымды және теңгерімді шешім ретінде қарастырады, яғни олар үшін мүмкін шығындар мен пайда тұрғысынан (экономикалық тәсіл).

Түйін сөздер: өзіндік тиімділік теориясы, өзін-өзі анықтау теориясы, жетістік мақсаттары теориясы, өзін-өзі анықтау теориясы, мақсатқа жету теориясы, жоспарланған мінез-құлық теориясы, оперантты кондициялау теориясы, қылмыс теориясы, бейтараптандыру теориясы.

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Обзор концептуальных теорий природы академического мошенничества

Аннотация. В обзорно-описательной статье рассматривается феномен «академическое мошенничество» и концептуальные теории его происхождения. Авторами рассмотрены теория самоэффективности, теория самоопределения, теория целей достижения, теория самодетерминации, теория достижения целей, теория запланированного поведения, теория оперантного обусловливания, теория преступления, теория нейтрализации, теория ожидаемой ценности, теория рационального выбора. Согласно теории самоэффективности А. Bandura, списывают те обучающиеся, которые не уверены в своих знаниях и навыках, независимо от их предшествующих достижений. В основе теории самодетерминации Е.Л. Деси, Р.М. Руан чувство неудовлетворенности основных психологических потребностей в компетенции, автономии и связанности с другими увеличивает вероятность академического мошенничества. Теория достижения целей J.G. Nicholls определяет, что обучающиеся, стремящиеся избежать демонстрацию низкого результата, в большей степени склонны к совершению академического мошенничества. В рамках теории запланированного поведения I.Ajzen намерение поступить нечестно может быть объяснено отношением

самого студента к академическому мошенничеству, субъективными нормами, принятыми в образовательной среде, в которой он находится, и субъективной оценкой легкости совершения нечестных поступков. Теория оперантного обусловливания определяет, что если действие (т.е. академическое мошенничество) было осуществлено успешно, то оно с большей вероятностью будет совершено повторно. В теории преступления академическое мошенничество рассматривается как нечестное поведение обучающихся во время учебной деятельности. Были выделены факторы, воздействующие на распространенность и частоту нечестного поведения обучающихся, такие как низкий уровень самоконтроля, наличие возможности совершения академического мошенничества и наличие положительных установок по отношению к нечестному поведению. Согласно теории нейтрализации G.M. Sykes, D. Matza нечестные практики обучающихся объясняются тем, что они не считают их мошенничеством, а морально приемлемыми явлениями. Теория ожиданий и ценностей и теория рационального выбора G.S. Becker рассматривает академическое мошенничество как рациональное и взвешенное решение, принятое самим студентом, т.е. с точки зрения возможных для них издержек и выгод (экономический подход).

Ключевые слова: теория самоэффективности, теория самоопределения, теория целей достижения, теория самодетерминации, теория достижения целей, теория запланированного поведения, теория оперантного обусловливания, теория преступления, теория нейтрализации.

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