

Higher Education Dilemma: The Relationship between Social Bond Theory and Academic Cheating of Public University Students in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT:

The main purpose of this study is to test the moderating effect of locus of control on the relationship between the elements of Social Bond Theory namely attachment, commitment, belief and involvement with academic cheating among public university students in Malaysia. Basically, the main challenge for higher education institutions is to ensure that academic cheating behavior can be curbed so that the graduates who will be born meet the needs of the market and can commit any crime. Therefore, the higher education sector must function as an efficient institution. There is no doubt that the current challenges and developments require human capital that has high integrity values to achieve the organization's goals. Previous studies show that academic cheating is influenced by various factors such as attachment, commitment, belief and involvement. Apart from that, integrity is also one of the main issues in the question of cheating. The study respondents consisted of postgraduate students at public universities throughout Malaysia. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed to selected respondents. Several hypotheses have been constructed and tested SPSS for Windows version 25.0. The findings showed that Social Bonding Theory explained more than 70 percent of academic cheating. All four constructs established the significant contributor to academic cheating.

Keywords: Social bond theory, attachment, commitment, belief, involvement, academic cheating

Introduction

Academic integrity refers to the commitment to behave honestly and morally within an academic context (Anoopa, et al., 2019). The examples include not cheating during examinations, avoiding thesis plagiarism, manipulating research data, and altering qualification documents for university admission. For university students, academic integrity also encompasses giving recognition to sources when adopting the ideas of others. Accordingly, it is vital to recognize the importance of integrity within educational organizations and to take effective steps to promote and maintain integrity values in every aspect of educational activity. Through a strong emphasis on integrity, educational organizations can build a culture of honesty, shape exemplary leadership, and produce a younger generation of integrity to lead the nation's future toward sustainable progress.

According to a report by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (2024), student enrollment in higher education institutions is expected to reach 1.5 million by the year 2024. The Malaysia Education and Labour Market Report (2024) stated that student enrollment in higher education institutions is predicted to increase in the medium term of the following year at an average annual rate of 5.1% to reach 1.8 million students by 2028. A large percentage of the Malaysian population who have completed secondary school are eligible to pursue studies at higher levels of education.

Higher education plays a crucial role in the development of quality human capital. However, the issue of academic dishonesty continues to be a major challenge. A study by McCabe (2020) shows that 32% of undergraduate students are involved in academic dishonesty. This situation reflects a serious integrity problem within our education system. Academic dishonesty is contrary to the goals of academic and professional integrity and has an incalculable impact on students, universities, higher education institutions, academics, and socio-economics. Concerns regarding academic integrity have been

raised worldwide for a long time (Yuan et al., 2024).

Academic dishonesty is not a new concept. In fact, this issue has been documented repeatedly regarding the existence of cheating (Bacon et al., 2020; Alexandron, et al., 2023; Edgeren & Walters, 2006). In higher education institutions, academic dishonesty is an ongoing and increasingly pervasive problem within the field of education (Ampuni et al., 2020; Duong 2023). To date, dishonest or fraudulent behavior in the academic world is an undeniable behavior occurring at every level of education. Fundamentally, students consider dishonest behavior in the academic world to be a serious problem, but in reality, students continue to commit dishonesty (Chala, 2021). Consequently, academic dishonesty has become a common problem in universities worldwide, leading to unintended consequences for both the students and the education system (Baran & Jonason, 2020).

Education is viewed as one of the primary aspects in shaping future generations. Thus, the significance of learning is evident (Aron et al., 2021). Education is a method for developing skills, habits, and attitudes expected to help an individual become better (Sitti Hadijah & Jamaluddin, 2020). It also influences an individual's life, including their moral values. In this regard, Institute of Higher Learning (IHL) are expected to produce professional, high-quality, and high-integrity graduates including possessing knowledge, character, morals, and professional ethics, thus, to foster a high-quality and intellectual nation (Aron et al., 2021).

Consequently, the government has strived to enhance the performance of educators and the standards of teaching provided in lecture halls. The government has also outlined several initiatives and strategic plans as keys to improving the quality of educators and the teaching profession in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (MOE, 2013). The study by The International Centre for Academic Integrity (ICAI, 2020), aimed to demonstrate the rates of

cheating behavior. A total of 840 students from various colleges participated as respondents. The findings showed that 32% of undergraduate students cheated in any way during examinations. Two percent of undergraduate students hired others to complete academic assignments and submitted them as their own. The study also found that 25.1% of undergraduate students used unauthorized electronic sources to complete papers, projects, homework, or other assignments. These electronic sources included articles, Wikipedia, and YouTube. Additionally, 28% of undergraduate students collaborated with others to complete individual assignments as instructed. Finally, the findings showed that 15% of undergraduate students paraphrased or copied several sentences or more from any source without citing it.

Based on these findings, the field of education is not exempt from acts of dishonesty and malpractice. The world of education is currently experiencing a concerning problem: academic dishonesty. The issue of academic dishonesty is a matter that raises anxiety within the modern education sector (Salma, 2021). Issues related to academic dishonesty are not new in scientific research; they have become an increasingly global issue on the world stage (Peled et al., 2019). Tang (2022) states that if individuals become accustomed to academic cheating in college, they will tend to do the same when they enter the workforce. Cheating occurs not only in the government sector but also in the private sector. However, Khadra & Delen (2020) state that individuals in non-profit organizations are more likely and prone to engage in dishonesty because these organizations rely on decency, moral missions, values, and ethical messages. This is also supported by Kuznetsov et al. (2024), who note that non-profit organizations are vulnerable to fraud, and the potential for such organizations to close is high.

At the international level, there are several basic measures for deviant behavior such as corruption, including the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). The index measurement is conducted by Transparency International (TI),

which serves as a fundamental indicator to measure the corruption index at the national level (Yusof, 2010). Malaysia is ranked third highest among ASEAN countries and 57th out of 180 countries globally (Madina, 2024). A detailed examination shows that Malaysia's Corruption Perceptions Index between 2018 and 2023 was inconsistent. Although Malaysia's scores and rankings appeared relatively good in 2023 compared to 2022, the crime of corruption must be given serious attention.

Academic dishonesty committed by an individual in their youth significantly impacts unethical behavior in the professional world. This phenomenon will have repercussions when they enter the workforce later, potentially leading to corruption and data fraud. Consequently, this requires serious attention because someone who frequently engages in academic dishonesty tends to commit fraud in their professional field (Jatmika et al., 2022). As mentioned by Borde et al. (2022), the Enron, WorldCom, and Tyco crises are examples of irresponsible corporate management that adversely affected many parties. In the Enron case, executive Kenneth Lay was found guilty of fraudulent actions, raising questions about the extent to which he and other Enron executives adhered to the values of respect, integrity, communication, and excellence stated in the Enron Code of Ethics (Enron, 2000). The Enron Code of Ethics was intended to prevent dishonesty in dealings with the company's customers and employees (Yu, 2022).

The collapse of these major corporations not only caused many employees to lose their source of income but also impacted the economic system of the respective nations. In line with the issue of moral decline that has occurred, Fritz et al. (2023) state the importance of an internal locus of control in promoting good behavior while simultaneously avoiding unethical practices. Following current challenges in this field, many believe that the willingness to cheat or commit malpractice depends on one's locus of control (Enyi, 2020). These unethical practices must be eradicated immediately as they bring negative impacts from political, social, and

economic perspectives of a country (Daumiller & Janke, 2020).

Cheating exists at different levels of education (Anderman & Murdock 2007) and frequently during adolescence (Anderman and Midgley 2004; Ding et al. 2014). About 85 % of American student engage in some types of academic dishonesty before graduating from high school (NBC News 2012). Studies of cheating tend to overlook adolescents' social bonds and the importance of social integration (popularity) (Kratzer and Lettl 2009; Lucifora and Tonello 2015), collect data in only one country (with some exceptions), and fail to detect cultural differences.

This study adopts social bonding theory, develop a theoretical model of social bonds (attachment, commitment, belief and involvement) and academic cheating behavior and cheating perception, collect data from student in France and China, and make the following contributions to the literature. We expand the social bonding theory from the context of criminology and delinquency to a new context of academic cheating. From the perspective of social integration, popularity matters, yet popular French girls and unpopular Chinese boys engage in cheating—revealing a profound and novel paradox of cheating across culture and gender. Our discoveries demonstrate bad company corrupts good morals and offer interesting, original, and innovative theoretical, empirical, and practical contributions to cheating and business ethics.

Theory

In the literature, researchers have examined various variables (Kish-Gephart et al. 2010) related to cheating, such as, demographic variables—age, gender, and grade (Crown and Spiller 1998; Elias 2009; Klein et al. 2007; Smith et al. 2004), personality variables—Machiavellianism, religiosity (Chen and Tang 2013; Bloodgood et al. 2008, 2010, Tang and Tang 2010), self-esteem (Tang and Zuo 1997), moral judgment (Bernardi et al. 2004; West et al. 2004), love of money (Chen et al. 2014; Tang

2014; Tang and Chiu 2003; Tang and Liu 2012; Tang and Sutarso 2013), and achievement goals or motivations (Weiss et al. 1993). Others have studied social and environmental contexts—classroom climate and personality of teachers (Murdock et al. 2001), perceived prevalence of peers' cheating (Andrews et al. 2007), or moral support of the family (Park et al. 2013). Most studies investigate individuals from one single country (Allmon et al. 2000), such as, Canada (Widelman 2009), China (Ma et al. 2013), Hungary (Orosz et al. 2013), Japan (Kobayashi and Fukushima 2012), South Korea (Park et al. 2013), UK (Kirlan 2009), and the US (Gino and Wiltermuth 2014; Premeaux 2010), with some exceptions (Pascual-Ezama et al. 2015; Salter et al. 2001; Tang et al. 2011, 2015). In this study, we incorporate social bonding theory.

Social Bonding Theory

Social bonding theory, a major paradigm in criminology (Andrews and Bonta 1998), is an extension of Durkheim's (1897/1951, p. 209) notion: "The more weakened the groups to which the individual belongs, the less he depends on them, the more he consequently depends only on himself and recognizes no other rules of conduct than what are founded on his private interests" (cited in Hirschi 1969, p. 16). When an individual's social bond to conventional society is weak or broken, deviance or delinquency will result. When individuals are strongly attached to others (emotional closeness to family, peers, and school); committed to customary lines of action (rational calculation of the costs of law breaking for future goals); engaged in social activities (time spent in conventional activities with peers); and believe in the validity of the moral values of society (normative beliefs and ideas supporting the conventional orientation); they are less likely to engage in unethical acts.

A recent incident on October 1, 2015 in the US was a case in point. A 26-year-old (male) gunman singled out Christians during his massacre, killed nine innocent people, and injured several more at the Umpqua Community College, in Roseburg,

Oregon. He was obsessed with Satan, documented his devotion to darkness, and wrote in the manifesto: "I am going to die friendless." He had a lonely childhood, did not talk to anyone, and did not like anyone, according to some sources. In his evil attempt to get others' attention and recognition, the shooter died on Thursday afternoon after exchanging gunfire with law enforcement officials.

Social Bonding Theory and Academic Cheating

Researchers empirically have tested Hirschi's (1969) social bonding theory on adolescence deviant behaviors: e.g., use of alcohol (Labouvie 1996), cigarette (Akers and Lee 1999; Labouvie 1996), and marijuana (Akers and Cochran 1985), or delinquency (LaGrange and White 1985). Others are rather equivocal concerning the theory's empirical status (Kempf 1993). Counterintuitively, frequency of attending religious services and membership in religious organizations increase the probability of cheating (Vowell and Chen 2004). Among four social bonds, only attachment and belief components predict academic cheating, whereas commitment and involvement exhibit little significant influence on cheating (Michaels and Miethel 1989). Significant positive relationships between social bonds and cheating exist among Japanese females, but not among Japanese males (Kobayashi and Fukushima 2012). There is a dearth of empirical research on social bonds and academic cheating due to the lack of cross-disciplinary research by scholars in sociology and behavioral ethics.

Attachment

Hirschi's Social Bond Theory argues that **attachment** is an individual's ability to engage in social relationships and maintain close ties with others, such as parents and peers. Co-curricular activities, work, and school can influence an individual's life choices, their level of affection, and their psychological respect toward

conventional institutions (Wu et al., 2021). This indicates that if an individual's emotions are rooted within an institution like the family or school, they are less likely to engage in dishonest behavior because they fear losing respect. Conversely, attachment to peers who engage in unethical behavior increases a teenager's tendency toward committing dishonesty (Akinnubi et al., 2021). Once this attachment is formed, an individual becomes sensitive to the thoughts, feelings, and desires of others and their peers. Among the characteristics of attachment are intimate, loving, and close bonds with others. If these social bonds weaken, break, or are non-existent, many negative outcomes may occur, including crime and deviance. For example, teenagers who have weak social bonds with their school and parents are more prone to engaging in unhealthy lifestyles (Cho et al., 2024). In contrast, strong elements of attachment to institutions can prevent individuals from engaging in misconduct.

In conclusion, it can be said that the element of attachment can influence an individual's actions and behavior. With strong attachment ties, an individual is more likely to think twice before committing an act perceived as wrong, and such wrongful actions may be avoided. Furthermore, this element enables individuals to be wiser in choosing peers, as peer influence can significantly affect their behavior.

Previous research found that attachment continues to be vital for dishonest behavior during adolescence (James, 2019; Danhouse & Erasmus, 2020; Oigo, 2022; Stewart, 2020). Smith (2021) states that a lack of parental supervision is a risk factor for committing dishonesty. This indicates that the parental bond between child and parent is non-existent when student lack parental oversight. Before graduating, a student is likely to experience several different academic and social pressures, whether internally or externally. It is these pressures that are linked to academic misconduct. The pressure to succeed and the fear of failure are among the reasons why students engage in cheating (Efendy et al., 2023; Ghanbaritalab & Tahmasebi Koyani, 2020).

Furthermore, this pressure can also be associated with parental pressure exerted on students, high parental expectations for their children's success, or parents who face financial implications regarding the family (Reaney, 2024; Akbar, 2020). These factors place pressure on students to ensure they pass their courses and achieve grades that will allow them to secure employment more easily in the future (Akbar, 2020). Hirschi (1966) suggested that attachment to parents is most critical during early adolescence. Marcus and Betzer (1996) found that regardless of whether the individual is male or female, attachment to one's father is the best predictor of antisocial behavior. Moreover, Marcus and Betzer discovered that, particularly for male students, attachment to peers is directly influenced by the quantity and style of parental upbringing (Marcus & Betzer, 1996). These results are consistent with Hirschi's claim that all components are interrelated and adaptable to the environment.

H1: There is a significant relationship between attachment and academic cheating

Commitment

Commitment refers to the rational aspect of social bonds—the level of dedication and willingness of an individual to pursue the goals of conventional institutions in society, such as education, employment, and organizations, which provide benefits to the individual (Salamone & Correa, 2024; Wu et al., 2021). For example, a student with a high commitment to curricular or co-curricular activities can discipline themselves with time management and strive in their studies to secure a scholarship. When an individual is earnest about education, work, or conventional institutions, they tend to hold more significant positions as appropriate (Cullen et al., 2022; Hirschi, 1969). An individual who demonstrates commitment by engaging in society and adhering to rules to achieve their goals can avoid becoming involved in crime. The likelihood of an individual engaging in criminal behavior decreases when they realize that such behavior will jeopardize their long-term goals.

In conclusion, it can be said that the element of commitment can prevent someone from engaging in academic dishonesty. This is because the individual spends their time on beneficial institutional activities, such as being involved in associations and co-curricular programs. A schedule packed with these activities ensures that the individual has no time left to engage in acts like crime or malpractice.

Research has found that commitment to activities and involvement in the larger community, along with ties to the school, are significantly associated with academic dishonesty among students (Brandt, 2022). There are several potential correlations between the activities performed by an individual as they approach adulthood and deviant behavior (Hirschi, 1969). An example of such an action is smoking. The earlier an adolescent begins to smoke, the greater the likelihood of them engaging in deviant behavior (Hirschi, 1969). Due to this commitment to conventional activities, an individual will weigh the benefits against the risks before committing an act—specifically, an act of malpractice or deviance. Hirschi (1969) also concluded that those most involved in adult-like activities during youth, such as smoking and drinking, are more prone to engaging in dishonest behavior.

H2: There is a significant relationship between commitment and academic cheating

Belief

Belief is the moral aspect contained within social bonds, and it undeniably differs from the three elements discussed above. Belief explains an individual's or society's perception and norms regarding compliance with the law. The behavior of an individual who believes in the validity of laws, rules, and perceptions as social reinforcements will foster compliance, encouraging them to follow the established rules and standards as existing norms within a society (Cullen et al., 2022; Hirschi, 1969). If an individual holds a strong belief that societal rules are morally valid and ought to be followed, they are less likely to engage in dishonesty, crime, and

misconduct. Consequently, if a teenager adheres to the moral values of conventional society, they possess an innate understanding of right and wrong and will not violate the law (Akinnubi et al., 2021).

In conclusion, it can be said that the element of belief in the laws and regulations established within society is capable of controlling an individual's actions, preventing them from committing wrongful acts. Additionally, compliance with these laws brings benefits to oneself, others, and society as a whole.

Research conducted by De et al. (2006) suggests that institutions lacking a formal policy or code of ethics regarding good academic practices are likely to have higher rates of academic dishonesty. If an institution possesses a code of ethics, students may be less likely to cheat (Aljurf et al., 2020). Furthermore, having specific policies on good academic practices that are well-known to both staff and students can exert a positive influence on student behavior and reduce the frequency of misconduct cases (Awosoga et al., 2021; Marques et al., 2019). According to Hirschi (1969), dishonesty can result when the norms of a society are not internalized by an individual. However, Hirschi (1969) also states that scholars agree on one point: acts of misconduct occur due to a lack of effective belief in the prohibitions against such behavior.

H3: There is a significant relationship between belief and academic cheating

Involvement

Involvement refers to an individual's participation and energy in activities aimed at limiting the amount of free time available,

thereby reducing or lowering the opportunity and likelihood of engaging in dishonesty (Cullen et al., 2022; Hirschi, 1969; Wu et al., 2021). From a logical standpoint, an individual participates in various activities to dedicate their time and energy to beneficial pursuits. This, in turn, reduces the opportunities for them to engage in actions that contravene the law in the future. Conversely, if an individual is less involved in organizations, they will have a high tendency to engage in malpractice.

In conclusion, it can be said that the element of involvement is capable of controlling an individual's behavior, preventing them from engaging in wrongful acts. An individual is said to dedicate much of their time to beneficial activities, leaving them with no time to get involved in illegal activities.

Findings from a study by Chiang et al. (2020) show that involvement has a significant relationship with academic dishonesty. Research by Wu et al. (2021) also found that most forms of involvement have a significant correlation with academic dishonesty. Godoy (2019) discovered that an increase in positive attitudes toward school, higher levels of involvement in school activities, and an overall improvement in positive outlooks are all capable of reducing academic dishonesty behavior.

H4: There is a significant relationship between involvement and academic cheating

Methods

Proposed research framework is illustrated in Figure 1. Basically, this framework was based on social bonding theory by Travis Hirschi (1969) and academic cheating.

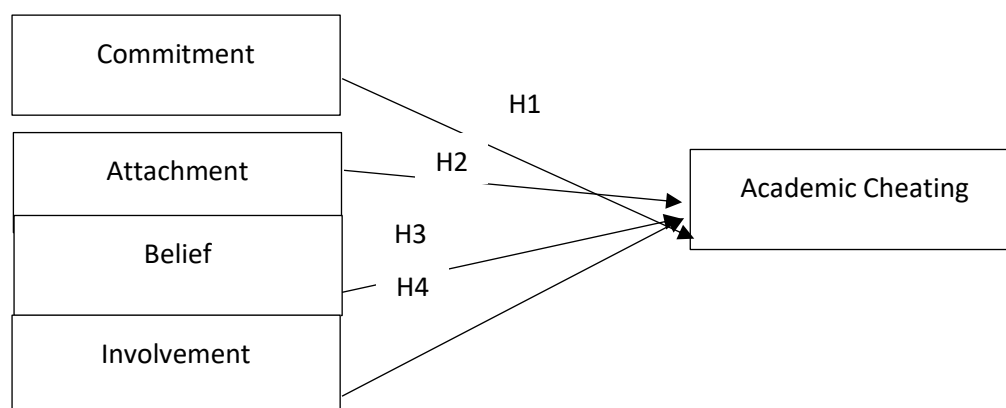


Figure 1: Research Framework

These four elements have been selected as the causes (stimuli) for a student's reaction in committing academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is the response (respond) that occurs if any of these elements—namely attachment, commitment, belief, and involvement—are affected or compromised.

Participants

The population size for this research consists of 53,786 postgraduate students from Public Higher Education Institutions (IPTA) across Malaysia. This data is derived from the 2023 higher education statistics provided by the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia. This group of students comprises various courses, including both full-time and distance learning programs. The sample size for this study was determined based on the table developed by Krejcie & Morgan (1970), which is 361. The sample selection will be conducted using the convenience sampling method. Subsequently, respondents will be selected through a lottery method. However, after taking into account the response rates from previous studies, a total of 500 questionnaires will be distributed to the selected respondents.

Instrument and Measurement

A structured questionnaire serves as the primary measure for this study; therefore, it is essential to have a well-designed questionnaire to obtain accurate, valid, and reliable responses (Sekaran, 2006). The questionnaire items for this study are divided into several sections, namely: demographics, attachment, commitment, belief, involvement, and academic dishonesty. Attachment (5 items), commitment (10 items), belief (6 items), involvement (5 items), and academic dishonesty (5 items) were measured using five likert scale items, ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Results

Table 1 describes the descriptive analysis of the variables. The descriptive analysis established that respondents perceived the high agreement towards the items measured the construct. Respondents scored the high mean in attachment (mean = 3.98, sd = 0.65), followed by commitment (mean = 3.90, sd = 0.74), belief (mean = 3.82, sd = 0.83) and involvement (mean = 3.80, sd = 0.76). respondents also scored the high mean in academic cheating (mean = 3.66, sd = 0.87).

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of the Variables

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Attachment	3.98	0.65	High
Commitment	3.90	0.74	High
Belief	3.82	0.83	High
Involvement	3.80	0.76	High
Academic Cheating	3.66	0.87	High

Relationship among variables

Result of correlation analysis is summarised in Table 2. It can be found in the table that the correlation coefficient (r) among variables were less than 0.9, indicating that the variables were free from multicollinearity issue. It can also be found that all of selected factors were

significantly associated with academic cheating. Attachment showed the significant association with academic cheating ($r=0.548$, $p<0.01$). Furthermore, commitment showed the highest correlation with academic cheating ($r=0.550$, $p<0.01$), followed by belief ($r=0.478$, $p<0.01$) and involvement ($r=0.339$, $p<0.01$).

Table 2: Relationship among Variables

	Academic Cheating	Attachment	Commitment	Belief	Involvement
Academic Cheating	1				
Attachment	.548**	1			
Commitment	.550**	.737**	1		
Belief	.478**	.847**	.727**	1	
Involvement	.339**	.555**	.572**	.650**	1

Notes: ** $p<0.01$; * $p<0.05$

Hypotheses Testing

Four main hypotheses were developed and tested in this study. The hypotheses were tested using linear regression analysis. Results were illustrated in Table 3. As indicated in Table 3, Social Bonding Theory explained 72.4 percent of academic cheating ($R^2 = 0.724$, $F = 101.358$, $p<0.01$). all four variables were found to be

significant predictor to academic cheating. attachment was found to have the biggest significant effect on academic cheating ($B = 0.450$, $t = 10.465$, $p<0.01$), followed by career commitment ($B = 0.168$, $t = 3.457$, $p<0.01$) and involvement ($B = 0.147$, $t = 3.117$, $p<0.01$). Other significant variable was belief ($B = 0.134$, $t = 2.483$, $p<0.05$). These findings support all four hypotheses developed.

Table 6.12: Effect of Social Bonding Theory on Academic Cheating

Independent Variables	B	t	Sig.
Attachment (H1)	.450	10.465	.000
Commitment (H2)	.168	3.457	.001
Belief (H3)	.134	2.483	.013
Involvement (H4)	.147	3.117	.002
R ²	0.724		
F	101.358		
Sig.	0.001		

Discussion

In this article, we develop a new theoretical model of social bonds (attachment, commitment, belief, and involvement) and self-reported academic cheating. We collect data from 375 students and test our model based on the whole sample and also across demographic background. The findings offer the following theoretical, empirical, and practical contributions.

Theoretical contribution

The carefully select components of social bonds and cheating outcomes and achieve excellent fit between the reflective and formative measurement models and our data. Future researchers will have confidence in applying this short 26-item, 4-factor social bonds construct in other contexts. This study offers the following theoretical contributions.

First, the findings shed new lights on both the bright and dark sides of social bonds and academic cheating. On the bright side, parental attachment, academic commitment, and belief reduce cheating behavior and perception. On the dark side, our counterintuitive and novel finding demonstrates that involvement contributes positively to academic cheating. Researchers in consumer behavior consider sharing as a positive pro-social behavior and an act of generosity (Belk and Llamas 2011). However, sharing with peers at school (an egoistic act) spillovers to academic

cheating, demonstrating social sharing's dark side—bad company corrupts good morals. In the context of self-serving altruism, student might consider cheating as morally acceptable (Gino et al. 2013).

The result illustrate that the positive relationship between involvement and academic cheating is stronger for students. In individualistic cultures, sharing is viewed as an “egoistic” act, turned toward individuals themselves. Thus, there are some revealing cultural differences regarding social bonds which affect academic cheating. High parental attachment constrains academic cheating among students, whereas high academic commitment and high moral values limit academic cheating among students, supporting the literature (Betz et al. 1989; Chen et al. 2014; Chen & Tang, 2013; Ritter 2006; Tang & Chen 2008; Tang & Sutarso, 2013).

Empirical Contributions

We cannot provide counterintuitive, interesting, and novel discoveries without collecting data from good samples. We test our theoretical constructs using a large sample of 375 student in Malaysia. The EFA and CFA results demonstrate four different and separate constructs of social bonds with solid psychometric properties, illustrate rigorous measurement invariance evidence across culture and gender, and provide strong empirical support our theoretical model. We trust that these results enhance the

generalizability of our findings and provide a firm foundation for future cross-cultural empirical studies in under-researched areas of the world.

Practical Contributions

Research illustrates that intact families and good family relations decrease the chances of delinquent behavior among children (Shoemaker 2000). Further, paternalistic, moral leadership enhances employee creativity among Chinese employees (Gu et al. 2015), and perceptions of authentic supervisor's personal integrity and character (ASPIRE) make a difference in reducing dishonesty (Tang and Liu 2012). Taken together, individuals with power and authority in various contexts (parents and managers) play an important role in shaping other people's intentions and behaviors. Furthermore, since parental attachment is also related to other two components of social bonds—academic commitment and moral values—we provide critical implications for administrators, educators, parents, students, business leaders, and even employers.

First, parents in families, educators in schools, and managers in business organizations play an important role in reducing dishonesty and enhance creativity and performance. Second, educators should include parental support to improve adolescents' academic self-efficacy and moral values, exemplify parents with strong moral values and eminent business leaders as role models in ethics education at schools, and count on them as active partners in education.

Third, besides announcing and enforcing zero tolerance for cheating and dishonesty at schools, it may be helpful to discuss the reasons behind these policies and highlight consequences of dishonesty. Now many full-time MBA students are required to visit federal prisons and interview white-collar criminals who cooked the books (Kercheval 2004; Tang and Chen 2008). Having first-hand experiences of observing punishments of crime may create a solid, vivid, and long-lasting image which, in turn, may greatly reduce adolescents' temptation to engage in dishonesty

(Howard et al. 2015). Following social learning theory and ethical leadership (Brown et al. 2005), people look to the social context to determine what is ethically right or wrong, obey authority figures, and do what is appropriate or rewarded. Various "cultural norms" pose different levels of risk and uncertainty for dishonesty (Kahneman 2011; Tang et al. 2015). Thus, we need to establish, clearly, an ethical cultural norm in schools, and fairly early in their lives. This may prevent them from digging deeper and deeper into a hole of which they cannot get out (Lawson 2004; Tang and Chen 2008).

Fourth, increasing opportunities for student to get involved in meaningful activities produces a sense of achievement. Feeling competent at school is a critical element of reducing academic cheating. Empowering student through activities provides challenges and accomplishments, enhancing positive self-esteem. Besides relying on academics in schools, we may focus on community-based programs, e.g., academic tutoring with parents or inviting business practitioners to ethics programs to intensify efforts in educating student for their academic careers, communicate standards of conduct and code of ethics at professional level, and develop professional attitudes to reduce future cheating (Smith et al. 2004; Tang 2014).

Fifth, specifically, the moderating roles of culture and gender add a further refinement that merits managerial consideration. To target student more effectively through communication, instructors must understand that motives to cheat at school differ across both culture and gender. Because male student pay attention to academic commitment and to maintain moral values, educators must revamp codes of ethics in schools. Signing an honor code at the beginning of the academic year in front of the whole school's student body, reminding them of ethical values such as recall of the Ten Commandments, and providing strong and strict enforcement of the honor code stop cheating¹⁰ (Mazar et al. 2008; Tang 2012, 2014). Student would be aware of the repercussions if they do not respect the rules and become more responsible for their

actions. Academic cheating and rule breaking, as indicated by their self-serving altruism and the red sneaker effect, at a very young age may have the potential to grow into the Enron Effect later in their lives as executives in organizations.

Researchers and practitioners must take a proactive stance and prevent it from happening. Sixth, since some individuals without strong social bonds engage in dishonesty, administrators, educators, and managers must take extra care in treating people who get caught for cheating, stealing, and other unethical acts. Potentially, they deal with dangerous and delinquent criminals. Those who engage in cheating or unethical acts (a visible symptom on the surface) seek other individuals' attention and recognition in the society and have many deeply rooted disorders and mental problems. We must communicate carefully, exercise negotiation skills, stand in their shoes, understand their personal background, offer psychological help, and diffuse deadly situations carefully to avoid

major disasters, massacre, and killing innocent people in the society.

Conclusion

The study bridges the gap between constructs of social bonds (criminology and delinquency) and academic cheating (business ethics) and test a theoretical model using data from 375 student in Malaysia. The study demonstrate that parental attachment, commitment, and belief and involvement reduce academic cheating promotes it. Four social bonds contribute to our understanding of cheating, differently, across cultural and gender. Our exploration of social integration reveals new insights to our question: Who are likely to cheat in schools? The novel discoveries shed new lights on both the bright and dark sides of social bonding on academic cheating and make significant theoretical, empirical, and practical contributions to the business ethics literature.

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