

MODELLING THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF INTENTION ON GOAL AND ACADEMIC DISHONESTY RELATIONSHIP OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN GHANA

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ABSTRACT

This survey-inferential study assessed the mediating effect of intention on the goal-academic dishonest relationship. A random selection of 1,200 undergraduate university students was used. Close-ended questionnaire was used for data collection. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used for the analysis. It was found that students with higher goals for academic success would be more engaged in academic dishonesty. Also, intention appeared in the proposed model as a moderate mediator between the exogenous variable (Goal) and the final endogenous variable (Academic dishonesty). Students are encouraged to set their proximal goals, to increase their commitment and help them avoid procrastination. University lecturers should develop instructional programmes that build capacity of students on the use of certain strategies to improve their performance. This might encourage students to be more systematic in their work, as well as being more in control of their learning.

INTRODUCTION

Goals motivate students in their academic work (Anderman, Freeman, & Mueller, 2007; Patrick Anderman, & Ryan, 2002; Ryan & Shim, 2006; Urdan & Maehr, 1995). According to Murdock and Anderman (2006), there are two basic types of goals: social goals and achievement goals. Between these two goals, social goals have less been investigated in relation to students' academic dishonesty, but it is true that achievement goals have been explored more than social goals. Irrespective of the depth of research in any of these goals, it is suggested that goals in general, whether achievement or social, play a role in students' decisions to engage in academic dishonesty (Anderman et al., Eisenberg, 2004; Jordan, 2001). According to Ames and Archer (1988), Dweck (1986), and Dweck and Leggett (1988), studies on the motivation to achieve emphasize the intellectual aspects of behaviour, but extant scholarship indicates an advanced achievement goals framework that harmonises intellectual and emotions components of related goals behaviour of people. An individual's motivation to achieve predicts and determines his or her achievement behaviour. Weiner (1986) defined an achievement behaviour as a cohesive outline of beliefs, provenances, and feeling that bring forth the intentions of behaviour towards success. In Elliott and Dweck's (1988, p.11) view, achievement goal involves a "program" of reasoning processes that have "mental, emotional, and behavioural values". To Weiner (1986), Dweck and Leggett (1988), Elliott and Dweck (1988), and Nicholls (1984a), two divergent achievement goals exist: learning and performance goals and task-involvement and ego-involvement goals. These have been distinguished by their association to opposing outlines of motivational procedures and have been differently labeled.

Although performance and mastery goals have been described as representing two methods of "approach tendencies" (Nicholls, Patashick et al., 1989), they are prompted by dissimilar

environmental or instructional requirements and result in qualitatively different motivational patterns. Cognitive-based and affective based have identified outlined of procedures that are “set in motion” immediately a specific goal is accepted over the short-or long-term (Elliott & Dweck, 1988). According to Covington (1985), Dweck (1986) Dweck and Leggett (1988), Elliott and Dweck (1988), Nicholls (1984), and Nicholls, Patashnick, and Nolen (1985), research has associated performance and control of achievement goals produces a motivational pattern that is related to a quality of involvement likely to maintain success behaviour, whereas a performance goal fosters a failure-avoiding pattern of inspiration.

Extant literature shows that a mastery goal is linked to a wide array of motivation-related variables that are favourable towards helpful achievement activity and are essential intermediaries to self-regulated learning. Of particular reputation is indication that connects mastery goals to an attributional belief that determination leads to success, supporting an effort-outcome perception that is central to the attributional model of achievement -directed behaviour (Ames & Archer, 1988). Embracing mastery goal, pride and fulfilment are related to successful effort and guilt is related to inadequate effort (Jagacinski & Nicholls, 1984; Wentzel, 1991). According to Ames and Archer (1988) and Elliott and Dweck (1988), fondness for stimulating work and risk taking are related to mastery goals. Elliott and Dweck (1988) and Butler (1987) opined that students' ability to show persistence in of difficult situations and the amount of time spend on learning tasks as well as the quality of their engagement in learning are increased by mastery goals. Gamer (1990) and McCombs (1984) furthered those problem-solving approaches and the use of effective learning by students is considered an active engagement that is dependent on a credence that efforts lead to success, and that failure can be alleviated by a change in approach. Indeed, students' ability to use self-regulatory approaches is associated with their mindfulness and understanding of suitable approaches and knowing when and how such are applied (McCombs, 1984; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). Covington (1985) indicated that low- achieving students may have less understanding of these approaches to the degree that they are reluctant to make a pledge to apply them. Nonetheless, mastery goals are more probable to require these effort-based approaches when students are attentive (Diener & Dweck, 1978). When students are attentive on the task, "How can I understand this?" (Nicholls, 1979), "How can I do this?" (Ames & Ames, 1984) or "How can I master this task?" (Elliott & Dweck, 1988) are questions of interest. Indeed, appreciating and applying learning approaches that are linked to attending, processing, and self- monitoring, and deep processing of verbal information are reported by students applying to mastery goals (Ames & Archer, 1988; Nolen & Haladyna, 1990a).

A mastery goal direction is in divergence with performance goal direction. Performance goal direction has been related to an outline of drive that includes, a circumvention of stimulating tasks (Dweck, 1986; Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Elliott & Dweck, 1988); undesirable feelings as a result of fiasco, conveyed by a conclusion that one lacks capacity (Jagacinski & Nicholls, 1987); desirable feelings as a result of achievement with slight exertion (Jagacinski & Nicholls, 1984); and use of shallow or short-term learning approaches which include remembering and practising (Nolen, 1988). When a performance goal is accepted, self-concept of capability grows and converts an important factor in students' achievement-related behaviours (Dweck, 1986). Students whose attention is on capability and prescriptive performance, develop low self-concept of ability and are less probable to choose thought-provoking tasks or use self- regulatory approaches (Dweck, 1986; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). When students are attentive to doing better than others, self-concept of capability, then, develops a substantial mediator of mental, emotional, and behavioural variables rather than when they are attentive to trying and learning, as a mastery goal direction (Covington, 2000;

Dweck, 1986). Evidence from a study suggests that it is a mastery goal direction that encourages a motivational outline, which aims to promote long-term and high-quality participation in knowledge acquisition (Ames, 1992).

The academic dishonesty literature explored directly achievement goals. In the educational research landscape, achievement goals are measured using both the Learning and Grade Orientation Scale (LOGO and LOGO II) (Eison, 1981; Eison, Pollio, & Milton, 1986) or the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey (PALS) (Midgley, Maehr, Hruda, Anderman, Anderman, et al., 2000). Eison et al. (1986) developed the LOGO and LOGO II instruments to distinguish between learning directed versus grade directed among students (Eison, 1981; Eison et al., 1986). According to Weiss, Gilbert, Giordano, & Davis, (1993), studies that employed LOGO focused on finding an association between self-reported cheating and learning orientation among college students. In some studies, there were inverse associations recorded between learning orientations and self-reported academic dishonesty (Murdock & Anderman, 2006), where these findings are in collaboration with achievement motivation theory, which proposes that learning directed students view academic dishonesty less favourably and, as a result, engage in less dishonesty than grade-directed students. Motivation and academic dishonesty can be studied using the PALS (Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey), developed by Midgley et al. (2000). Students with mastery, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance goals are categorized by the PALS. With the help of the PALS, Anderman et al. (2007) investigated the association between undergraduate students' personal aspirations and their attitudes toward academic dishonesty. The extent to which students considered academic dishonesty as justifiable was shown to be influenced by personal performance goals, according to the findings of this study. The PALS measures have been used extensively by Murdock and Anderman, (2007) and Anderman and Midgley, (2004) to study academic dishonesty. These studies had a major drawback in that they focused mostly on students in their early twenties (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school students). As a result, the findings are not applicable to the student population at colleges and universities. Students who approach their work with performance goals have a higher desire for academic dishonesty and are more motivated to participate in academic dishonesty than students who approach their work with mastery/learning goals, as evidenced by the LOGO, LOGO II, and PALS instruments' findings. If students are driven by mastery goals, they are less likely to participate in academic dishonesty, while students who are motivated by performance goals are more likely to engage in dishonest practices. "What is the mediating effect of intention on the relationship between goal and academic dishonesty?" Was the question the study was designed to answer.

Method and Materials

This study adopted the survey-inferential design. A total of 1,200 undergraduate students was drawn from three public universities in Ghana using the simple random sampling technique. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. The first section assessed prevalence of academic dishonest behaviours with sixteen (16) items. The second section assessed intention to commit academic dishonest behaviour with five (5) items. The third section assessed goals/expectation for learning with twelve (12) items. All the items were close-ended and polytomously scored. Reliability index for this scale was 0.817. The research question was answered using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM).

Results

The model explored the relationship and the effects of goal on academic dishonesty. Results for the structural model assessment are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: SEM parameter Estimates for the Proposed Academic Dishonesty Model

Relationship	Path		P-Values	Results
	Coefficient (β)	T-Statistics		
Goal – AD	-0.123*	2.489	0.007	Supported
Goal Intention	-0.055*	2.115	0.043	Supported

Note: * sig. at $\alpha = 5\%$

From Table 1, the direct effect of goal and academic dishonesty was found to be negative and statistically significant at 5% alpha level ($r = -0.20$, $\beta = -0.123$, $p = 0.007$). This implied that an increase in goal would lead to a decrease in academic dishonesty. This means that students who realized that their goal to achieve or perform better in the course was decreasing, engaged in academic dishonest behaviour, the indirect effect was explain that effects of goal on academic dishonest behaviour, the indirect effect was determined by mediating the relationship between goal and academic dishonesty with intention. Table 2 and Figure 1 present the results of the mediation.

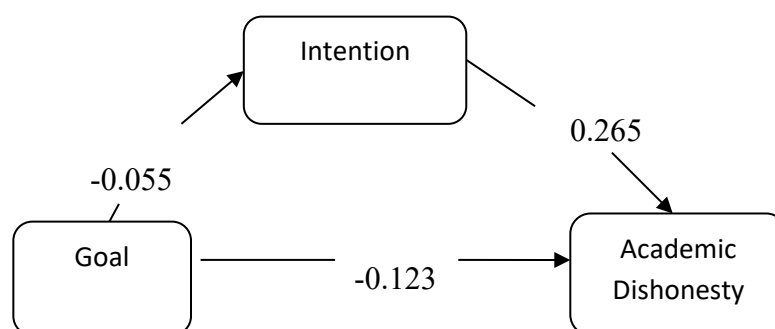


Figure 1: Mediating effect of intention on Goal to Academic Dishonesty model.

Table 2: Mediating Effect of Intention on the Goal-Academic Dishonest (AD) Relationship

	Path	Estimate	t-statistics	p-Values
Direct effect	Goal \rightarrow AD	-0.123	2.489	0.000
Total effect	Goal \rightarrow INT	-0.055	2.115	0.000
	INT \rightarrow AD	0.265	7.617	0.000
Indirect effect	Goal \rightarrow AD	-0.015	1.950	0.000
VAF	0.108			

Note: $VAF = \text{indirect} / (\text{direct effect} + \text{indirect effect})$

Table 2 and Figure 1 show that intention as a mediator in the relationship between goal and academic dishonesty resulted in an indirect effect of the variable goal on academic dishonesty. This direct relationship was not statistically significant ($r = -.20, \beta = -0.123, p = 0.05$). The Variance Accounted for (VAF) by Goal in Academic dishonesty was 0.11(11%) which is less than 0.20 (20%). This implies that the mediating role of intention in the relationship between academic goal and academic dishonesty was therefore, negligible and might exist due to chance. It also showed that, improving Goal – Intention and Intention – Academic Dishonesty links would not result into an enhancement in the Goal – Academic Dishonesty link.

DISCUSSION

Academic Goal having direct negative relationship (though weak and not statistically significant) with Academic dishonesty was not surprising because practically, goals driven belief is that students have in their ability to successfully accomplish their academic works (Bandura, 1997) and the belief that their performance is dependent on failures that are within their control (Duncan & McKeachie, 2005). Results showed that students with higher expectations for academic success would less engage in academic dishonesty. Murdock, Hale and Weber (2001) found similar result when they found a weak relationship (.29) between academic goals and students' academic dishonesty behaviour among middle school students. A possible explanation for this finding is that students who are confident that they will perform academically well will feel less of a need to cheat. This especially applies to assignments where the stakes are not as high as they would be on tests/examinations. These students would view academic dishonesty as an unfavourable strategy, because the risk associated with academic dishonesty would outweigh the perceived gains.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Goal accounted for a low variance shared by academic dishonesty indicating that students with higher expectations for academic success would less engage in academic dishonesty. Intention appeared in the proposed model as a moderate mediator between the exogenous variable (Goal) and the final endogenous variable (Academic dishonesty). It might be motivating for students to set their proximal goals, to enhance their commitment and help them avoid procrastination. University lecturers should develop instructional programmes that train students on the use of certain strategies to improve their performance. This might keep students to be more systematic in their work, as well as being more in control of their learning. Lecturers should also provide students with a model that uses a given cognitive strategy for solving an exercise and have a positive effect on students' motivation and learning towards examinations or any assessment task.

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