

Fear of Negative Evaluation and Academic Dishonesty Among Undergraduates in Kerala

Maria Jogi^{1*}, Priyanka V R²

ABSTRACT

The primary objectives of the study were to find out whether there is any significant relationship between fear of negative evaluation and academic dishonesty among undergraduates and also to find out whether there is any significant difference in fear of negative evaluation and academic dishonesty based on gender and area of residence. The sample included 148 undergraduates (males = 68 and females = 80) taken from different districts of Kerala. The data was collected using web-based survey. Brief fear of negative evaluation scale and academic dishonesty scale were used. The data was analysed using different statistical tools such as the Spearman's correlation, Man-Whitney U test and Kruskal Wallis test (IBM SPSS). Findings revealed no significant correlation between fear of negative evaluation and academic dishonesty, significant difference in academic dishonesty among males and females and significant difference among undergraduates living in rural, semi-urban and urban areas of Kerala for certain dimensions of academic dishonesty (Cheating in Examination (CE), Plagiarism (PL), Prior Cheating (PC)).

Keywords: *Fear of negative evaluation, Academic dishonesty, Undergraduates*

Academic dishonesty is an intentional act of cheating or deceit while fulfilling academic requirements and/or duties (Gitanjali, 2004). It involves cheating in examinations, plagiarism, altering research results and so on (Aluede, Omoregie & Osa-Edoh, 2006). Individuals who engage in academic dishonesty might consider it as a normal or acceptable behaviour (Crown & Spiller, 1988). Students may rely on using dishonest academic practices in order to overcome the pressure they obtain from their peers, family, society to excel academically and in order to avoid being negatively evaluated by them (Bozdog, 2021). Studies show that males are more likely than females to report engagement in academic dishonesty tendencies (Salleh et al., 2013; Arshad et al., 2021).

Fear of negative evaluation (FNE) is the apprehension about others' evaluations, distress over their negative evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively (Watson & Friend, 1969). It is an aspect of social anxiety (eg., Weeks, Heimberg, Rodebaugh & Norton, 2008; Winton, Clark & Edelman, 1995). It is

¹MSc Psychology Student, Dept. Of Psychology, Kristu Jayanti College, Bangalore, India

²Assistant Professor, Dept. Of Psychology, Kristu Jayanti College, Bangalore, India

*Corresponding Author

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commonly recognised that people who live in social networks may worry about things like disapproval, misinterpretation, and poor judgement by other members of the society (Bozdag, 2021). These anxious conditions have a negative impact on people's lives and may require them to take the wrong steps in order to turn them into positive ones. It is evident that people cheat in class while they are employed or enrolled in school in order to avoid social judgement. Individuals high in fear of negative evaluation undertake such behaviours so as to avoid being negatively evaluated by others (Watson & Friend, 1969). Studies show that females tend to have higher fear of negative evaluation than males (Kumar et al., 2015).

A few studies have been conducted on the relationship between fear of negative evaluation and academic dishonesty. Ömür et al. (2014) aimed to understand the correlation between fear of negative evaluation and academic dishonesty among university students who were teacher candidates. Teacher candidates' levels of fear of negative evaluation and academic dishonesty were found to be moderate. Also, a low level positive significant correlation was reported between the variables. Kırıl and Saracaloğlu (2018) investigated the relationship between fear of negative evaluation level and academic dishonesty tendency among graduate and undergraduate university students. The results indicated that academic dishonesty tendency of the students correlated positively with their fear of negative evaluation level. Bozdag (2021) also found similar results on a study conducted among university students.

Another study done by Wowra (2014) showed significant positive correlation between academic dishonesty and fear of negative evaluation. It is likely that some students have resorted to dishonest practices in the academic settings in order to avoid being negatively evaluated. In the study done by Dickstein, Montoya & Neitlich (1977), a negative correlation was found between cheating among students and fear of negative evaluation, even though the relationship was not significant. Similarly, a few other studies have found no significant correlation between fear of negative evaluation and cheating among students (Dickstein, Montoya & Neitlich, 1977; Zimny, Kaspar & Heckman, 1995; Zimny, Redhead & Heckman, 1996; Whitley, 1998).

Indian studies conducted on the relationship between the two variables are limited. Undergraduates are the adults of the future and therefore an object of interest (Bozdag, 2021). Identifying several factors that contribute to academic dishonesty can help to identify several techniques to reduce such tendencies. Previous studies done on the relationship between academic dishonesty/cheating and fear of negative evaluation in different parts of the world have revealed different results (Wowra, 2014; Ömür et al., 2014; Zimny, Redhead & Heckman, 1996; Whitley, 1998). Therefore, the current study aims to understand the relationship between fear of negative evaluation and academic dishonesty among the Indian population (Kerala) and also to compare them in terms of various demographic variables such as gender and area of residence.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives

- To find out whether there is any significant relationship between fear of negative evaluation and academic dishonesty among undergraduates.
- To find out whether there is any significant difference in fear of negative evaluation and academic dishonesty based on Gender.
- To find out whether there is any significant difference in fear of negative evaluation and academic dishonesty based on Area of Residence.

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Hypothesis

H0.1: There is no significant relationship between Fear of Negative Evaluation and Academic Dishonesty among Undergraduates.

H0.2: There is no significant difference in Fear of Negative Evaluation and Academic Dishonesty based on Gender.

H0.3: There is no significant difference in Fear of Negative Evaluation and Academic Dishonesty based on Area of Residence.

Research Design

Comparative and correlational research designs were used in this study. Comparative research design was used to identify whether there was any difference in fear of negative evaluation and academic dishonesty based on gender and based on area of residence. Correlational research design was used to find relationship between fear of negative evaluation and academic dishonesty among undergraduates.

Sample and Sampling

The population of the study was undergraduates from the state of Kerala, in India. A sample of 148 undergraduates aged between 18-21 was selected for the study. To get the sample, convenience sampling method was used. Web-based survey was used to obtain the data from the sample.

Inclusion Criteria

- Students who can read and understand English.
- Students doing undergraduate in any subjects.
- Students aged between 18-21.

Exclusion Criteria

- Students with major physical and psychological illnesses.

Tools

1. **Socio-demographic Sheet:** The socio-demographic sheet was used to measure characteristics like age, gender, area of residence.
2. **Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (Leary, 1983):** It is a 12-item shortened version of Fear of negative evaluation scale by David Watson and Ronald Friend (1969). It was designed to measure the fear of receiving negative evaluations from others (one aspect of social anxiety). The participants responded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'Not at all characteristic of me' (1) to 'Extremely characteristic of me' (5). High scores indicate a high level of fear of negative evaluation. The Brief FNE has excellent internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of .90. The Brief FNE has a test-retest correlation of .75 over a four-week period. Criterion validity was also established (Leary, 1983).
3. **Academic Dishonesty Scale (ADS) (Bashir and Bala, 2018):** ADS, which was adapted from (Bashir and Bala, 2018), consists of 23 items based on six dimensions which are arranged to measure academic dishonesty, i.e., cheating, plagiarism, other persons' assistance, prior experience of cheating, falsification and lying about academic assignments. The participants responded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from always=5, frequently=4, sometimes=3, rarely=2 and never=1. The reliability coefficient of ADS is 0.949 (Bashir and Bala, 2018).

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Data Collection

148 undergraduates from Kerala were selected for the study. The sample was obtained through convenience sampling method. The questionnaires measuring academic dishonesty and fear of negative evaluation along with self-prepared socio-demographic questions were administered via web-based survey.

Data Analysis

The data obtained, that included responses from 148 undergraduates was processed in Microsoft Excel and the statistical analysis was done using IBM SPSS Statistics 21. The frequencies of the socio-demographic variables were computed. Then the reliability and normality of the data was found out using Cronbach's Alpha and Shapiro-Wilk test respectively. The data was analysed using different statistical tools such as the Spearman's correlation, Man-Whitney U test and Kruskal Wallis test.

RESULT

H0.1: There is no significant relationship between Fear of Negative Evaluation and Academic Dishonesty among Undergraduates.

Table 1: Result of Spearman's Rank Correlation among fear of negative evaluation (FNE) and academic dishonesty (AD) (Cheating in Examination (CE), Plagiarism (PL), Outside Help (OH), Prior Cheating (PC), Falsification (F), Lying about Academic Assignments (LAA)) among undergraduates.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. LAA	1.000							
2. F	.694**	1.000						
3. PC	.557**	.675**	1.000					
4. OH	.560**	.649**	.585**	1.000				
5 PL	.464**	.480**	.362**	.446**	1.000			
6. CE	.643**	.590**	.672**	.564**	.403**	1.000		
7. AD	.820**	.777**	.725**	.791**	.702**	.806**	1.000	
8. BFNE	-0.015	0.053	0.028	0.029	0.121	-0.127	0.012	1.000

Note: ** - Significant at 0.01 Level

There is no significant relationship between the scores of fear of negative evaluation and academic dishonesty. Significant relationships exist among the subscales of the academic dishonesty scale.

The null hypothesis was accepted.

H0.2: There is no significant difference in Fear of Negative Evaluation and Academic Dishonesty based on Gender.

Table 2: Summary of comparing scores on fear of negative evaluation (FNE) between male and female undergraduates

	Males	Females		
	Mean Rank	Mean Rank	U	p
FNE	68.63	79.49	2321.00	.124

Since, $U=2321.00$, $p=.124$, there is no significant difference between scores of fear of negative evaluation between males (Mean rank=68.63) and females (Mean rank= 79.49)

Table 3: Summary of comparing scores on academic dishonesty (AD) (Cheating in Examination (CE), Plagiarism (PL), Outside Help (OH), Prior Cheating (PC), Falsification (F), Lying about Academic Assignments (LAA)) between male and female undergraduates

	Males	Females		
	Mean Rank	Mean Rank	U	p
LAA	90.10	61.24	1659.00	.001
F	88.26	62.81	1784.500	.001
PC	86.74	64.09	1887.500	.001
OH	92.58	59.13	1490.500	.001
PL	78.38	71.20	2456.000	.001
CE	89.77	61.52	1681.500	.001
AD	91.85	59.76	1540.500	.001

Since, $U=1659.00$, $p=.001$ for LAA, $U=1784.500$, $p=.001$ for F, $U=1887.500$, $p=.001$ for PC, $U=1490.500$, $p=.001$ for OH, $U=2456.500$, $p=.001$ for PL, $U=1681.500$, $p=.001$ for CE, $U=1540.500$, $p=.001$ for AD, there is significant difference in scores of academic dishonesty between males and females.

H0.3: There is no significant difference in Fear of Negative Evaluation and Academic Dishonesty based on Area of Residence.

Table 4: Summary of comparing scores on fear of negative evaluation (FNE) based on area of residence (rural, semi-urban, urban).

	Rural	Semi-urban	Urban		
	Mean Rank	Mean Rank	Mean Rank	X^2	p
FNE	81.26	76.81	67.93	2.356	.308

Since, $X^2 = 2.356$, $p=.308$, there is no significant difference between scores of fear of negative evaluation between rural (Mean rank=81.26), semi-urban (Mean rank=76.81) and urban (Mean rank=67.93) areas.

Table 5: Summary of comparing scores on academic dishonesty (AD) (Cheating in Examination (CE), Plagiarism (PL), Outside Help (OH), Prior Cheating (PC), Falsification (F), Lying about Academic Assignments (LAA)) based on area of residence (rural, semi-urban, urban)

	Rural	Semi-urban	Urban		
	Mean Rank	Mean Rank	Mean Rank	X^2	p
LAA	84.17	66.52	76.58	4.030	.133
F	85.26	73.48	68.81	4.058	.131
PC	90.06	73.77	65.52	8.635	.013
OH	87.34	69.10	71.97	4.302	.166
PL	95.17	70.93	65.21	11.248	.004
CE	90.13	71.75	67.54	6.512	.039
AD	93.16	69.52	67.91	8.734	.013

Since, $X^2 = 8.635$, $p=.013$ for PC, $X^2 = 11.248$, $p=.004$ for PL, $X^2 = 6.512$, $p=.039$ for CE, $X^2 = 8.734$, $p=.013$ for AD, there is significant difference in scores of academic dishonesty between rural, semi-urban and urban areas.

DISCUSSION

The first hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between Fear of Negative Evaluation and Academic Dishonesty among Undergraduates. No significant relationship was identified between fear of negative evaluation and academic dishonesty among undergraduates. Similar results have been reported by other studies (Redhead & Heckman,

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1996; Whitley, 1998). Students who have a tendency to present themselves in a socially desirable manner are less likely to have reported having cheated than other students (Zimny et al., 1995; Zimny et al., 1996).

The second hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in Fear of Negative Evaluation and Academic Dishonesty based on Gender. In order to test this hypothesis, Mann Whitney U-test was administered. The results showed that the mean ranking of females was higher than the mean ranking of males for fear of negative evaluation. The difference found was not statistically significant. Similar findings have been reported by other studies (Kumar et al., 2015; Fathima, Nandhika & Arifzinna, 2019) where no significant difference was found between males and females in their levels of fear of negative evaluation.

For Academic Dishonesty, for all the dimensions (Cheating in Examination (CE), Plagiarism (PL), Outside Help (OH), Prior Cheating (PC), Falsification (F), Lying about Academic Assignments (LAA)), the mean rank for males were higher than that for females. The difference found was statistically significant for all the dimensions. Males have higher academic dishonesty tendency than females. Similar findings have been reported by other studies (Salleh et al., 2013; Arshad et al., 2021) where significant difference was found between males and females in their level of academic dishonesty/cheating.

The third hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in Fear of Negative Evaluation and Academic Dishonesty based on Area of Residence. In order to test this hypothesis, Kruskal-Wallis test was administered. For fear of negative evaluation, the results showed that the mean ranking was the highest for rural and the lowest for urban. The difference found was not statistically significant.

For Academic Dishonesty, for all the dimensions (Cheating in Examination (CE), Plagiarism (PL), Outside Help (OH), Prior Cheating (PC), Falsification (F), Lying about Academic Assignments (LAA)), the mean rank was the highest for rural. Except for LAA and OH (semi-urban), the mean rank was the lowest for urban. The difference found was statistically significant for PC, PL, CE and AD. A study by Peculea and Peculea (2020) found similar results for cheating and plagiarism behaviors, where significant difference was found in the levels of cheating and plagiarism behaviours between rural, semi-urban and urban areas.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study revealed that there is no significant correlation between fear of negative evaluation and academic dishonesty among undergraduates in Kerala. There exists a significant difference in academic dishonesty among males and females and significant difference among undergraduates living in rural, semi-urban and urban areas of Kerala, for certain dimensions of academic dishonesty (Cheating in Examination (CE), Plagiarism (PL), Prior Cheating (PC)). There is no significant difference between males and females and also between people living in rural, semi-urban and urban areas of Kerala in their levels of fear of negative evaluation. This study has important implications for educators, students, and researchers in the field of academics. Further research is needed to explore the mechanisms underlying the relationship between fear of negative evaluation and academic dishonesty among students. This study was conducted among undergraduate students from Kerala only. Further studies can be conducted on students from other regions as well.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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