

Attitude to Cheating and its Correlation with Social Beliefs and the Supposed Attitude of Others

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Academic dishonesty is a widespread but dangerous phenomenon, as it forms tolerance for fraud in other areas, including through tolerance of the dishonesty of others. The article is devoted to the analysis of the correlation between the subjective assessment of the permissibility of academic dishonesty and belief in a competitive world (BCW), the supposed assessment of peers and adults among schoolchildren, loyal and not loyal to dishonesty. It is considered both the attitude towards cheating itself (active dishonesty), as well as the message about the dishonesty of others and the refusal to help in dishonesty (passive dishonesty). 507 people were recruited for the research, 296 of them girls, aged from 13 to 18 years, average age of 15,6 ($\pm 1,38$), who completed the questionnaire online. The level of BCW was measured using the questionnaire "Scale of belief in a competitive world, short version" by J. Dakkit adapted by O.A. Gulevich and colleagues. To assess the permissibility of cheating, were used vignettes, which described dishonest behavior and judgments about this behavior. Participants were supposed to assess them on a Likert scale from 1 to 9. Each type of dishonesty (cheating itself, reporting cheating and refusing to help with cheating) was represented by 3 vignettes. The results showed that the assessments of the admissibility of certain aspects of cheating are not related to each other and have a different structure of links with the BCW and the intended assessment of others. The results confirm the data on the greater complexity of honesty compared to dishonesty. For the disloyal, the permissibility of cheating is associated with more factors than for the loyal. Active dishonesty in loyal people is associated with prevalence, in disloyal people — with BCW and the opinion of parents.

Keywords: academic dishonesty; high and low loyalty to cheating; perceived norms; belief in a competitive world.

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Связь отношения к читерству с социальными верованиями и предполагаемым отношением других у старшеклассников

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Представлены материалы анализа связи субъективной оценки допустимости академической нечестности с верой в конкурентный мир (ВКМ), предполагаемой оценкой сверстников и взрослых у школьников, лояльных и нелояльных к нечестности. Подчеркивается, что академическая нечестность широко распространенное, но опасное явление, так как формирует терпимость к мошенничеству и в других сферах, в том числе и за счет терпимого отношения к нечестности других. Рассматривается как отношение к собственно читерству (прямой нечестности), так и к сообщению о нечестности других и отказу помочь в нечестности (косвенной нечестности). Выборку составили 507 человек, из них 296 девушек, возраст — от 13 до 18 лет, средний — 15,6 ($\pm 1,38$), заполнявших опросник онлайн. Уровень ВКМ измерялся с помощью опросника «Шкала веры в конкурентный мир, краткая версия» Дж. Даккита в адаптации О.А. Гулевич и коллег. Для оценки допустимости читерства использовались виньетки с описанием нечестного поведения и суждения об этом поведении, согласие с которым нужно было оценить по шкале Ликерта от 1 до 9. Каждый вид нечестности (собственно читерство, сообщение о читерстве и отказ помочь в читерстве) был представлен 3 виньетками. Установлено, что оценки допустимости отдельных аспектов читерства не связаны друг с другом и имеют различную структуру связей с ВКМ и предполагаемой оценкой других (одноклассников, учителей, родителей). Результаты подтверждают данные о большей сложности честности по сравнению с нечестностью. Также полученные данные показали, что у нелояльных допустимость читерства связана с большим количеством факторов, чем у лояльных.

Ключевые слова: академическая нечестность; высокая и низкая лояльность к читерству; воспринимаемые нормы; вера в конкурентный мир.

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Introduction

Academic dishonesty (cheating) is an unpleasant phenomenon, but widespread [1; 3; 15; 18], it manifests itself in various forms, but in all cases it involves violating academic rules for the sake of some benefits. Cheating lays down so-called “neutralizing attitudes” [14], which contribute to the fact that dishonesty becomes possible, since it is normal [19] and as a result it is reproduced in the workplace [17].

The attitude to dishonesty includes both an assessment of the permissibility of their own dishonest behavior (direct dishonesty), and an assessment of the message that someone is cheating and agreeing to help the cheater (indirect dishonesty). The subject of the research in the work is the connection between the assessment of the permissibility of direct and indirect cheating with general ideas about whether there are rules in the world and how they work, about its prevalence, the expected reaction of classmates, teachers and parents among high school students who are loyal and not loyal to dishonesty.

Belief in a competitive world (BCW), in accordance with the theory of J. Dackitt [7] is based on the belief that there are no rules, the world is built on the agreement of everyone with everyone and everything is possible to achieve goals. In such a world, dishonesty is not only acceptable, but also desirable. Research shows that BCW is directly related to self-esteem of dishonesty [5], willingness to cheat at a job interview [9] and corrupt intentions [26]. Although the contribution of BCW to the assessment of the permissibility of cheating among schoolchildren has not been sufficiently studied, it can be assumed that in the perception of a world in which there are no rules, cheating will be considered acceptable.

Both declarative and perceived norms

contribute to the assessment of the permissibility of a particular behavior. Declarative ones are fixed in official rules, and perceived ones are a subjective idea of what is possible and what is not possible in the current social reality, what will be approved or not approved [16]. In cases where perceived norms do not coincide with declarative ones, behavior is determined by the influence of perceived ones, since their processing for decision-making is based on heuristic (obvious) rather than systematic information processing, which requires less cognitive effort [13].

Research shows that the assessment of the prevalence of cheating is one of the most significant predictors of dishonesty among students and schoolchildren [6; 10; 15; 18; 30]. The strong influence of peer behavior may indicate that academic dishonesty is not only learned by observing peer behavior, but also that peer behavior provides a kind of normative support for deception [15].

Perceived norms are formed both from a subjective assessment of the extent of dishonesty, and from the expected reaction of others, which for schoolchildren are classmates, teachers, parents. The likelihood of cheating increases in a situation where a person is sure that others, especially classmates, will not report the violation, and, if necessary, will help to deceive, and adults will not condemn or punish.

The willingness of students to report rule violations is considered one of the significant factors in reducing dishonesty [22], but research shows that it is not common and is considered very undesirable behavior [3; 22; 23; 27; 29]. Anyone who decides to report violations on the part of a friend risks being rejected by the team [22].

Another important component of the attitude towards cheating is assistance in

fraud. In this case, the assistant also behaves dishonestly, but does it for the sake of another, which can be perceived as morally acceptable behavior [28]. However, the attitude towards the decision to help or refuse dishonesty and the relationship of the decision with the assessment of the admissibility of active dishonesty and other factors have not been sufficiently investigated.

The real disapproval of cheating on the part of classmates and classmates is one of the most significant factors in preventing dishonesty [12; 15; 30]. If many students have a negative attitude towards cheating, then it is difficult to get help with cheating, and there is a high probability that someone informs a teacher [12].

Although the opinion of adults is in many cases less important for high school students than the opinion of their peers, studies, according to the results of a meta-analysis by G. Tabares and colleagues [24] show a significant contribution of the position of parents to the prosocial behavior of adolescents. This allows us to assume that parents' opinions about various aspects of cheating are related to the assessment of the permissibility of such behavior.

The position of teachers also plays an important role. Cheating among schoolchildren is significantly inversely related to the disapproval of teachers [1], and the willingness to report dishonesty is directly related to teachers' support for such behavior [23].

However, research shows that in the same conditions, people cheat to varying degrees. And, although the level of deception in laboratory experiments is directly related to the general honesty index in the country [8], people who are influenced by common perceived norms differ in their tendency to deceive [11; 21]. Unlike most traits, the levels of dishonesty do not have a normal distribution,

and depending on the tasks, either a small part of the participants lie to the maximum extent, or a small part lies minimally [11]. It is relevant to identify the psychological differences between "liars" and "non-liars". For example, students who are loyal and disloyal to dishonesty have a different structure of connection with faith in a just world and the possible results of dishonesty [4].

This suggests that the permissibility of dishonesty among loyal and non-loyal schoolchildren also has a different structure of connections with the idea of the existence of rules and norms in the world, which is reflected in the BCW, with the prevalence of cheating and the expected reactions of others.

The study was organized to test the following hypotheses:

1. Students loyal to dishonesty rate the prevalence of direct and indirect cheating significantly higher, and the negative reaction of classmates, teachers and parents significantly less than disloyal ones.
2. Those loyal to dishonesty consider both direct and indirect cheating less acceptable than those who are not loyal, the reaction of classmates is more negative, and adults are more positive.
3. Students who are loyal to dishonesty have significantly higher BCW than those who are disloyal.
4. Direct and indirect forms of dishonesty are directly related to both loyal and disloyal dishonesty.
5. The permissibility of all forms of dishonesty among those loyal to cheating is directly related to the BCW, the prevalence assessment, and vice versa — with the alleged negative reaction to the dishonesty of classmates.
6. The permissibility of dishonesty among those who are disloyal to cheating

is directly related to BCW and the alleged negative reaction of adults.

Empirical Research

Sampling and methods

The study participants were 507 people, 296 of them girls. Age from 13 to 18 years, average 15.7. The differences in age are not significant.

The level of BCW was measured using the questionnaire "Scale of faith in the competitive world, short version" [2], consisting of 12 statements. Examples: "Money and wealth are exactly what is valuable in life," "A person who has an advantage in a situation should use it in any way to achieve his goal." Agreement with the statements is assessed on a 5-point Likert scale.

3 vignettes were used in each case to analyze attitudes towards the permissibility of cheating, reporting cheating to the teacher and refusing to help with cheating.

After each vignette, participants were asked to rate agreement with the following statements on a 9-point Likert scale.

1. This is a common behavior.

2. If classmates find out about it, they will treat him worse.

3. He will have disagreements and misunderstandings with teachers or the administration, which may develop into a conflict.

4. If parents find out about this, they will most likely disapprove of his actions.

The analysis of the results showed that the Cronbach's alpha for agreeing with the statements for all vignettes is 0.795, which indicates a fairly high consistency of responses and makes it possible to consider the total value as an indicator of the admissibility of dishonesty. Gender differences are not significant in all cases, which made it possible to consider the sample as a whole, without dividing subgroups of girls and boys.

Statement of results

To identify subsamples with high and low levels of cheating tolerance, the upper and lower quartiles of the distribution of the agreement were used with the statement that it is possible to do so. The subsample with a low tolerance of cheating consisted of 127 respondents with scores from 3 to 9 points (the lower quartile of the general distribution), the subsample with a high tolerance included 126 respondents with scores from 18 to 27 points. Since in most cases the distribution in the subsamples according to the Shapiro-Wilk criterion differed from the normal one, non-parametric criteria were subsequently used.

The analysis of the results showed that the permissibility of dishonesty has no significant links with the permissibility of reporting the dishonesty of others and with the permissibility of refusing to participate in dishonesty for either loyal or disloyal to dishonesty, which suggests the absence of a holistic attitude of schoolchildren to cheating.

The Mann-Whitney criterion was used to test the hypothesis of differences in agreement with judgments and the level of BCM. The results are shown in Table 1.

Spearman's criterion was used to test the hypothesis of the correlation between assessing the admissibility of dishonesty, reporting the dishonesty of others and refusing to participate in dishonesty with social beliefs and the alleged attitude of others. The results are presented in Table 2.

Discussion

The results of comparing agreement with judgments about cheating options suggest that loyal and non-loyal students of

Table 1

Differences in agreement with statements and the level of social beliefs among students who are loyal and disloyal to dishonesty

	Disloyal to dishonesty				Loyal to dishonesty				U	Effect size
	Mean	Std.Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean	Std.Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis		
The permissibility of dishonesty										
Prevalence	13,323	4,963	0,033	-0,443	20,738	4,400	-0,367	-0,595	2208,0****	0,724
Deterioration of classmates' relationships	16,283	3,390	0,341	2,630	14,151	3,816	-1,030	2,450	5871,0***	0,266
Problems with teachers	17,929	5,790	-0,310	-0,439	15,794	6,660	-0,111	-0,811	6507,5	0,187
Disapproval of parents	20,118	5,570	-0,689	-0,174	14,929	6,454	-0,124	-0,779	4342,0****	0,457
The message of dishonesty										
Prevalence	10,780	6,309	0,770	-0,010	11,841	7,442	0,550	-0,762	7533,5	0,058
Acceptable	10,142	6,934	0,810	-0,212	8,563	6,357	1,070	0,390	6874,5	0,141
Deterioration of classmates' relationships	21,370	5,425	-1,17	1,57	22,183	5,262	-0,853	-0,207	7188,0	0,102
Problems with teachers	11,024	6,889	0,634	-0,362	12,262	7,118	0,408	-0,515	7220,5	0,098
Disapproval of parents	14,906	6,592	-0,022	-0,546	17,214	6,252	-0,253	-0,294	6349,5*	0,206
Refusal to help with dishonesty										
The prevalence of failure	15,646	6,060	-0,075	-0,497	16,397	6,433	-0,057	-0,611	7454,0	0,068
Acceptable	16,685	6,234	-0,183	-0,560	14,627	6,416	0,121	-0,648	6502,0	0,187
Deterioration of classmates' relationships	18,031	4,381	-0,306	1,540	19,651	4,733	-0,149	-0,276	6474,5	0,191
Problems with teachers	10,055	5,096	0,318	-0,541	12,127	7,011	0,338	-0,734	6693,5	0,163
Disapproval of parents	11,614	5,326	-0,036	-0,754	14,175	5,894	0,141	-0,114	6089,5***	0,230
BCW	44,276	15,258	-0,008	-0,489	59,833	13,133	-0,061	0,811	3433,5****	0,571

Note: * — <0,05, ** — <0,01, *** < 0,001, **** < 0,0001 The significance is given taking into account the Bonferroni correction.

the same school have different perceived norms of direct dishonesty, and that for loyal students, dishonesty is more consistent

with perceived norms and the assumed opinion of peers. These differences can be explained by the effect of false agreement

Table 2

The correlation of assessing the acceptability of dishonesty, reporting the dishonesty of others and refusing to participate in dishonesty with the perceived attitude of others and social beliefs

	Disloyal to dishonesty			Loyal to dishonesty		
	Dishonesty	Message	Refusal	Dishonesty	Message	Refusal
Prevalence	0,109	0,464****	0,466****	0,414****	0,481****	0,260
Deterioration of classmates' relationships	-0,039	-0,311***	-0,046	-0,166	-0,680****	-0,194
Problems with teachers	-0,093	-0,035	-0,335***	-0,01	-0,369****	-0,115
Disapproval of parents	-0,381***	-0,207	-0,319***	0,089	-0,099	-0,031
BCW	0,290**	-0,023	-0,338****	0,025	-0,098	-0,092

Note: * — <0,05, ** — <0,01, *** < 0,001, ****< 0,0001 The significance is given taking into account the Bonferroni correction.

[20], according to which people tend to attribute their vision of the world to the majority. And the difference in parents' reactions is most likely due to real differences in family upbringing.

However, the idea of the prevalence of indirect dishonesty and the reaction of others to it among those loyal and not loyal to cheating are similar. Indirect dishonesty is carried out in a social context and its perception can be more objective.

As expected, the permissibility of all aspects of cheating has a different structure of connection with BCW and the expected reaction of others. The rejection of dishonesty, as a more complex behavior among those who are not loyal to cheating, is not related to the reproduction of what can be directly observed, but to the norms learned from parents and the general idea of how the world works. Research [25] shows that honesty requires greater cognitive resources, and schoolchildren need more grounds for honest behavior, both the general low belief that not all means are good, and the opinion of parents. In the

absence of such restraining factors, students act primarily on the basis of a direct impulse, relying solely on perceived norms.

The links of the permissibility of indirect dishonesty, which presupposes social interaction, are structured differently.

The structure of the links between the permissibility of reporting cheating is similar for both loyal and disloyal. Schoolchildren are guided only by perceived norms, and loyal ones are also guided by the opinion of teachers. This corresponds to the data of Steven-son and colleagues on the dependence of the probability of reporting dishonesty on the behavior of teachers [23]. The connection with the BCW and the opinion of the parents is not significant in any case. The fact that it is impossible to "surrender" others is supported by social relations and is not related to ideas about the structure of the world.

For those who are disloyal to dishonesty, refusal to help is associated with almost all the factors considered, except for the reaction of classmates. Perhaps this is a rather difficult decision for them, affecting both the

general idea of rules and social norms. And for loyal people, no connection is significant, probably the decision is made without taking into account the factors considered, for example, on the basis of sympathy for those asking or their own benefits.

Conclusions

The data obtained are consistent with the idea that honesty is more complex than dishonesty, clarifying the differences in the nature of the correlation between active and passive dishonesty with perceived norms and one's own values.

Direct dishonesty (self-cheating) among the non-loyal is related to the general idea of the world, the value system and the opinion of parents and is not related to perceived norms. And for loyal people, the permissibility of their own dishonesty is related

to the behavior and reaction of others, but not to the BCW and parental attitudes.

The correlation of indirect forms of cheating with other factors is differentiated in both loyal and disloyal people. Reporting the dishonesty of others, as a condemned action, is associated with perceived norms for everyone. There are probably no uniform standards for helping others to be dishonest. And for the loyal, it is probably related to factors that were not taken into account in the study, and for the non-loyal, the decision to help is related to all factors except the opinion of the teachers.

Perhaps the reasons for the different attitudes towards dishonesty in a single environment are determined by the difference in family upbringing, which needs special study, as well as the possibility of forming other collective norms.

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