

Azjen's Theory and Academic Cheating in Examination of Iraqi Fine Arts Institutes Students Studying English as a Foreign Language

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ABSTRACT

There is no doubt that the educational process is the safety valve for any nation or society searching for progress and prosperity. Educational cheating is an immoral behavior that is rejected by reason, law, religion, and society. The purpose of this study is to examine potential indicators of cheating according to Azjen's theory of planned behavior where (59) mail students enrolled for the academic year 2023/ 2024 filled a questionnaire that included 33 items represented three components of the theory of planned behavior and two objective questions regarding reasons behind the cheating behavior and suggestion to avoid this behavior. SPSS, a statistics software package was used to analyze the numerical data obtained from the questionnaire. Construct validity has been used for validating the used instrument. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to evaluate the internal consistency of the questionnaire which was found to be 0.74. In the light of the results obtained, conclusions are stated, and a number of pedagogical recommendations are put forward. Also, several suggestions for further studies are proposed.

Keywords: Azjen's theory, planned behavior, academic, cheating, Fine Arts, institutes, Foreign Language

نظرية ازجان والغش الأكاديمي في امتحانات طلبة معاهد الفنون الجميلة دارسي اللغة

الإنكليزية لغة اجنبية

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الملخص

لا شك أن العملية التعليمية هي صمام الأمان لأي أمة أو مجتمع يبحث عن التقدم والازدهار. والغش الأكاديمي هو سلوك غير الأخلاقي يرفضه العقل والقانون والدين والمجتمع ولهذا السبب فإن هذه الدراسة هي محاولة لفحص التنبؤات المحتملة لسلوك الغش. الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو فحص المؤشرات المحتملة للغش وفق نظرية أزجن للسلوك المخطط حيث قام (٥٩) طالباً مسجلين للعام الدراسي ٢٠٢٣ / ٢٠٢٤ بملء استبانة تضمنت ٣٣ فقرة تمثل ثلاثة مكونات لنظرية السلوك المخطط وسؤالين موضوعيين يتعلقان بأسباب سلوك الغش واقتراح تجنب هذا السلوك. وتم استخدام حزمة البرامج الإحصائية SPSS لتحليل البيانات العددية التي تم الحصول عليها من الاستبانة. تم استخدام صلاحية البناء للتحقق من صحة الأداة المستخدمة واستخدام معامل ألفا كرونباخ لتقييم الاتساق الداخلي للاستبانة حيث بلغ ٠.٧٤. وفي ضوء تحليل النتائج المستخلصة من خلال اجراءات هذه الدراسة وضعت عدة توصيات كما وضعت مقترحات حول اجراء دراسات مستقبلية لأثرها هذا المجال من البحث.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نظرية ازجان، السلوك المخطط. أكاديمي، الغش، الفنون الجميلة، لغة اجنبية.

The Problem and its Significance

Academic cheating can be defined as a purposeful violation of ethical norms for one's own advantage and it is considered as one of the major concerns in educational institution. The study aims to examine the fit of Azjen's Planned Behavior theory to examine the predict the student's intention to cheat. The Theory of Planned Behavior is governed by three types of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Students' intention to cheat depends on their attitude, social pressure (e.g peer pressure and family), and their perception of a particular behavior or act. attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are significant predictors of students' cheating behavior.

One of the most serious educational phenomena the educational system has to deal with is cheating. Since cheating is a type of moral deviance based on violation of trust, it is seen as one of the shameful behavioral occurrences that accompany the educational process throughout all of

its stages and undercut its primary objective, which is to assess and improve behavior and personality.

Parents are missing out on opportunities to teach ethics and teach teachable moments while they are completing homework, preparing essays for school, and doing all else they can to assist their child get ahead of others (Riera & Di Prisco, 2002).

It has been hypothesized that students may cheat to obtain a goal-directed, short- or long-term benefit.

This research paper answers questions regarding three dimensions of Azjen's theory of planned behavior in predicting cheating in English language examination.

1. Do students' attitudes provide rationale for academic cheating?
2. Do students' subjective norms provide rationale for academic cheating?
3. Do perceived behavioral control provide rationale for academic cheating?
4. What are possible reasons for cheating?

The two goals of this paper are:

1. To expand the body of research regarding academic cheating.
2. To find potential reasons for academic cheating.

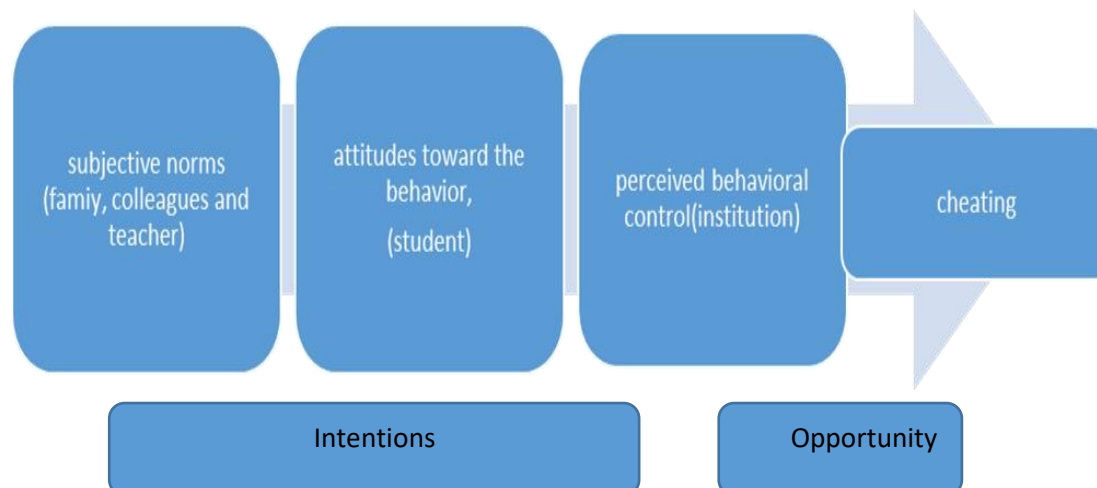
Literature Review

This paper relied on Ajzen's research (1991) regarding the theory of planned behavior that specifies three factors or components which influence the likelihood of having a particular intention and acting on it. According to the theory intentions come before actual behavior. Those three components are: (1) attitudes toward the behavior, i.e. beliefs about a behavior or traits of the personality (2) subjective norms, i.e. normative expectations of other people regarding the behavior, this include peer pressure and family, and (3) perceived behavioral control,

i.e. the perceived difficulty or ease of performing the behavior. Look at figure 1

Figure 1

Azjen's Theory of Planned Behavior



According to Ajzen's theory (1969) cheating occurs when there is a chance to do so as well as when it is done with the intention to cheat. As a result, both situational and behavioral aspects should be taken into consideration in efforts to prevent cheating. instructors who make tests less easy for cheaters to cheat can just end up with frustrated cheaters who will still definitely cheat when the next chance arises.

According to Ajzen (1991), the second part of the theory refers to perceived social pressure that shapes one's behavior. This might include peer pressure, and sometimes the family or even the teacher. Research on academic cheating has alluded to potential peer pressure in dishonesty. By watching colleagues engage in dishonest behavior, students would grow accustomed to becoming dishonest.

The third component; perceived behavioral control is the degree to which a person believes that a particular activity is easy or difficult to carry out considering their past experiences, resources, and talents. As shown in figure 1 on the opportunity side, there is a negative impact on cheating during tests due to unoccupied seats between pupils and several copies of the same test or when students are seated at the

back of the class or next to their friends. On the intention side, believing that one has a moral duty to avoid cheating has a moderately detrimental impact on intention and thus on the cheating behavior. According to Eagly and Chaiken (1993), attitude is a gauge of how people view a psychological object in light of their actions.

Previous Studies

Reviewing earlier research on attitudes of students in cheating in English Language Exams revealed that several studies addressed issues and/or employed techniques that were somewhat comparable or consistent to those used in the current study. They are as follows:

Salehi and Gholampour (2021):

Three hundred and ten students from Iran participated in the study. The subjects were given an invented cheating questionnaire. A few demographic factors were looked into. To examine the acquired data, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. According to the descriptive statistics results, cheating was prevalent among the participants, and the majority of students either had no unfavorable attitudes regarding cheating or were ambivalent about it.. The most common method of cheating was “letting others look at their papers while taking exams.” The most common reason for cheating was “not being ready for the exam.” Regarding inferential statistics, the influence and relationship of demographic characteristics on and between the participants' cheating behaviors were tested using one-way analysis of variance, an independent t-test, and correlational analyses. It was discovered that the two demographic factors—year level and gender—had no influence entirely on the cheating practices of the pupils. Moreover, there was no significant correlation found between the ratings for cheating behavior and age or achievement. The findings of Salehi and Gholampours' study is in line with this research paper that cheating

was common among participants but it didn't mention potential reasons for the cheating behavior as the current study did.

Christina R. Krone, Steve V. Rouse, and Lisa M. Bauer (2012):

Eighty-three undergraduate students at Pepperdine University answered three surveys intended to collect data on demographics, perfectionism levels, and the prevalence of academic dishonesty. Ninety-eight percent of the sample admitted to at least one instance of academic dishonesty in their lifetime. Self-oriented perfectionism scores of individuals who reported engagement in both "submitting someone else's paper as my own" and "dishonest reporting of attendance for an internship, service-learning, or similar requirement for a course" were significantly lower than those who did not report engaging in these behaviors. The frequency of reporting dishonest attendance was positively connected with levels of socially mandated perfectionism. The findings may help clarify how personality characteristics contribute to academic dishonesty. The findings of Christina R. Krone, et al.'s study is in line with the results of the current study that the sample reported engaging in at least one academic cheating behavior but it differs in using three types of perfectionism to interpret the cheating behavior instead of using Azjens' theory.

Data Analysis

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), a statistics software was used to analyze the numerical data obtained from the questionnaire.

Research Design

In this study, qualitative data was gathered to paint a fuller picture of the possible causes of academic cheating. in English language examination. A closed-ended questionnaire written on a five point Likert scale was distributed to a sample of 59 Fine Arts Institute students.

Validity and Reliability of the Cheating Questionnaire

Construct validity has been used for validating the used instrument. Researchers must comprehensively and accurately measure correlations between thoughts and behaviors and their theories of mind. The process of doing this is the process of establishing construct validity (Smith, 2005). All the items have been found valid under 0.5 degree of significance.

The 35 items were subjected to item analysis to examine score reliability. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to evaluate the internal consistency of the questionnaire. To obtain this, alpha coefficient for the three components was used and it was found to be 0.74. Some of the items have been deleted in order to increase internal consistency. The final form of the questionnaire has 33 item. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is considered "acceptable" in most social science research situations and it is in line with the guidelines suggested by Cohen et al (2011) and Kerlinger & Howard (2000).

Procedures and Methodology

In order to achieve the aims of the study one instrument has been used for data gathering. Fifty-eight fine arts institute students participated in the cheating Questionnaire. This included students from two departments and three stages. The students were informed that responding to the questionnaire was entirely voluntary and that it was a component of a research effort. The instrument was provided in Arabic, which is their mother tongue.

Description of the Instrument:

The adopted cheating questionnaire of Gardner and Melvin (1988) was used. The response options on the Likert scale were strongly agree. (SA), agree (A), undecided or do not understand (U), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD). The answers were scored 5, 4,3,2,1 respectively. Eighteen items have reversed values. The 33 items were classified according to the three components of Azjens' planned

behavior theory. Twelve items represent attitudes, twelve for the subjective norms and nine items for perceived behavior control. Two items have been added to ask for reasons behind cheating behavior and suggestion to avoid this behavior.

Population and Sample of the Study

The population of the present study consists of 705 students distributed on six departments. It includes students enrolled at Fine Arts Institute,

Departments	Design	Plastic arts	Total
Total Number	138	115	253

Baghdad, during the Academic year 2023–2024 (see Table 1).

Table 1

The Population of the Study

Sample of the Study

Fifty eight students have been chosen randomly from the whole population as the sample of the study. They are 59 students from Plastic Arts and Design departments. See table 2.

Table 2

The sample of the study

Departments	Design	Plastic arts	Total
Total Number	19	40	59

Statistical Methods

The following statistical methods are used:

1. Cronbach's alpha reliability, (Cronbach, 1951:257): It was used to compute the inter-rater reliability of the instruments.

Where:

N = number of the items

$r\text{-bar}$ = the average inter-item correlation among the items.

2. The percentage

The percentage is used to calculate the final results of the cheating questionnaire.

Data Analysis, Results. Conclusions, Recommendations, and Suggestions

Descriptive Statistics of Attitudes:

As shown in table 3 the total mean score of the first components is 2.80 with a standard deviation of 1.15. the highest score is for item number 11 and the lowest score is for item number 2 with 84 % for the total component.

The results obtained according to the first aim of the present study, is finding out the extent to which attitudes provide rationale for academic cheating. See table 3

Table 3

items	mean	Stdard Deviation	Total	Percentage
1	2.25	1.21	133	7%
2	1.44	0.70	85	4%
3	3.16	1.21	187	9%
4	4.52	0.77	267	13%
5	2.54	1.41	150	7%
6	1.57	0.91	93	5%
7	2.52	1.45	149	7%
8	2.94	1.22	174	9%
9	2.88	1.13	170	8%
10	3.06	1.18	181	9%
11	3.86	1.23	280	14%
12	2.96	1.44	175	9%
Total	33.7	13.86	2044	100%
	2.80	1.15	170	84%

Attitudes and Cheating

Descriptive Statistics of Subjective Norms:

The results obtained according to the second aim of the present study, is finding out the extent to which subjective norms provide rationale for academic cheating. See table 4

Table 4 Subjective Norms and Cheating

items	mean	Standard Deviation	Total	Percentage
1	3.42	1.13	202	9%
2	3.71	1.37	219	10%
3	3.52	1.25	208	10%
4	1.86	1.20	110	5%
5	3.55	1.30	210	10%
6	1.96	1.11	116	5%
7	2.69	1.46	159	7%
8	2.91	1.34	172	8%
9	2.72	1.36	161	7%
10	3.96	1.09	234	11%
11	3.47	1.13	205	9%
12	2.89	1.01	171	8%
Total	36.66	14.75	2167	100%
	3.05	1.22	181	82%

As shown in table 4 the total mean score of the second components is 3.05 with a standard deviation of 1.22, the highest score is for item number 10 and the lowest score is for item number 5 with 82 % for the total component.

Descriptive Statistics of Perceived Behavior Control:

The results obtained according to the third aim of the present study, is finding out the extent to which perceived behavioral control provide rationale for academic cheating. See table 5

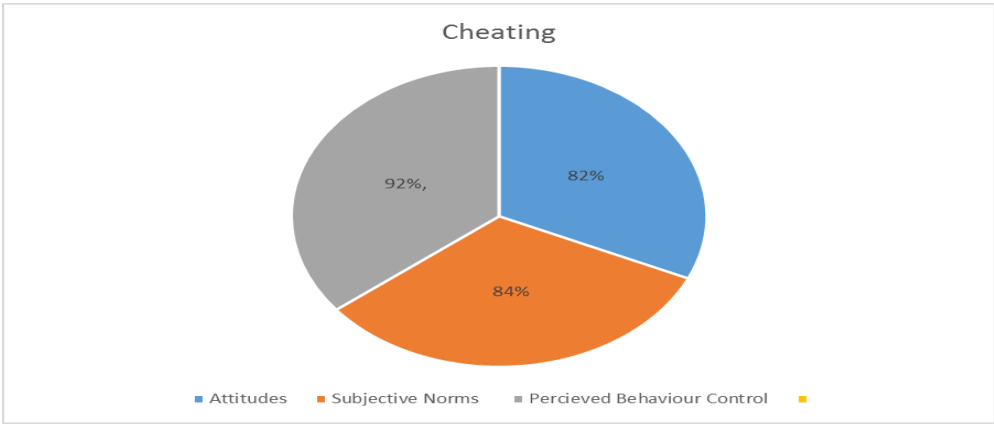
Table 5Perceived Behavior Control and Cheating

items	mean	Standard Deviation	Total	Percentage
1	3.52	1.25	208	13 %
2	3.06	1.44	181	11 %
3	3.30	1.36	195	12 %
4	2.42	1.34	143	9 %
5	3.71	1.18	219	14 %
6	2.79	1.44	165	10 %
7	2.06	0.94	122	8 %
8	3.84	0.90	227	14 %
9	2.67	1.13	158	10 %
Total	27.37	10.98	1618	100 %
	3.04	1.22	180	92%

As shown in table 5 the total mean score of the third components is 3.04 with a standard deviation of 1.22, the highest score is for item number 8 and the lowest score is for item number 3 with 92 % for the total component. The three components are shown in figure 1.

Figure 1

The Three Components of Planned Behavior Theory



The Questionnaire scores interval are showed in table 6

Table 6Scores intervals

	Score	Explanation
1	1 – 59	Strongly disagree
2	60 – 118	Disagree
3	119 – 177	Uncertain
4	178 – 236	Agree
5	237 – 295	Strongly agree

The results associated with the first question of the study, “Do students’ attitudes provide rationale for academic cheating?” where 84% of the participants’ answers showed that attitudes give rationale for academic cheating (see table 3) . With the highest mean score for item number eleven, which indicates that ‘If a student is offered a copy of a stolen test, the offer should be refused’. This answer represent 14 % of the whole component. It means that students strongly agree (280) to that item. The lowest score is for item number two which says “ Some students keep files of old tests to use in predicting what will be on future tests. This is cheating” with 1.44 mean score and 4 % of the whole component. This consists of 85 .

The results associated with the second question of the study, “Do subjective norms provide rationale for academic cheating?” where 82 % of the participants’ answers showed that attitudes give rationale for academic cheating (see table 4) . With the highest mean score for item number ten, which indicates that ‘Students who cheat don't learn as much as others.’ This answer represent 11 % of the whole component. It means that students were uncertain towards (234) to that item. The lowest score is for item number four which says “ A student who hands in a purchased term paper should be expelled from school”., with 1.20 mean score and 5 % of the whole component. This consists of 110 .

The results associated with the third question of the study, “Do perceived behavioral control provide rationale for academic cheating?” where 92 % of the participants’ answers showed that perceived behavioral control give rationale for academic cheating (see table 5) . the highest mean score is for item number five and eight, which indicate that ‘If a student is caught cheating, that student should plead innocent and force the school to prove the accusation.’ This answer represent 13 % of the whole component. It means that students strongly agree to it (219) . Item number eight which indicates that ‘ If a student accidentally sees an answer on someone's paper, that answer should not be used’ . this answer represent 14 % of the whole component, with a total degree that is 227. The lowest score is for item number seneb which says “ Most students who cheat are unethical people ”, with 2.06 mean score and 8 % of the whole component. This consists of 122.

Discussion of the Results

After evaluating the current data, it is concluded that in addition to psychological factors represented by students attitudes towards cheating, social (represented by peer pressure and family) and educational factors (represented by the educational institution) all give rationale to cheating in educational institutions and play a role in prediction of cheating behavior. According to this study, about 86% of students have cheated during their English language exams for different reasons.

The study also proved that the educational institution represented by perceived behavior control is more tolerant of cheating than were attitudes represented by the student and by subjective norms represented by peer pressure and family pressure.

Among the reasons behind academic cheating according to the answers of the objective questions at the end of the questionnaire 88 % of the

answers agreed to self-defending behaviors, anxiety related to performance, unable to handle the responsibilities of being a student, circumstances that support academic dishonesty

Pedagogical Recommendation and Suggestions

As they learn a great deal in the classroom, students' desires are progressively weakening. The information demonstrated that students' reliance on seatmate cheating during tests was mostly brought on by a persistent decline in focus and attention that was fostered by traditional classroom pedagogies.

Academic cheating cannot be justified under any circumstances. Rebuilding a damaged academic reputation may require a lifetime of ethical actions. Students should also be aware of the immorality of cheating in order to counteract the tendency toward it.

In their syllabus, educators must address what constitutes cheating in their classes, the consequences for engaging in such activity, and the importance of maintaining academic integrity.

Addressing attitudes toward cheating, altering perceptions of subjective norms on the rate of cheating, and diminishing students' beliefs of their power over cheating—for example, by emphasizing the risks of getting caught—are some ways to prevent academic misconduct. It is imperative to comprehend and mitigate academic misconduct in order to foster moral conduct and fundamental values heading forth. cultivation of critical thinking abilities as a defense against cheating,

Future studies should employ a longitudinal design to investigate the degree to which workplace cheating and other inefficient job habits are associated with academic cheating.

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