# Analysis on the Influencing Factors of the Honesty Level of Chinese College Students

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**Abstract:** This study examines the integrity status of Chinese college students and its influencing factors in order to understand the best practices of Chinese colleges and universities on the issue of integrity cultivation, which is critical to the quality of higher education in China. University management plays an important role in the integrity of students. The main influencing factors are the thinking mode that suits the needs of students, the motivation that caters to the diversified interests of students and the educational environment of integrity. The interaction of the three factors affects the integrity level of Chinese college students.

*Keywords*: integrity, college students, university management, China

## 1. Introduction

The growing concern about the integrity of students in higher education can be attributed in part to the increasing number of reported cases, stories and scandals of corruption, academic misconduct and other breaches of integrity in universities and colleges worldwide (Kisamore et al., 2007; Macfarlane et al., 2014). Studies have shown that possible causes of the integrity crisis include, but are not limited to, the expansion of higher education, changes in the values underpinning higher education, the marketization of higher education, and the evolution of the Internet and social media (Kezar, 2004; McNay, 2007; Prasakariu and Shah, 2016; Sefcik et al., 2020). Integrity has become a significant issue because it affects the reputation and credibility of higher education institutions to achieve educational goals (Macfarlane et al., 2014; Simola, 2017; Moyo and Sadie, 2019; Fudge et al.) and the Charter Between Higher Education and Society (Kezar, 2004).

A large number of studies have been conducted to understand the factors associated with academic dishonesty and misconduct using the individual difference approach and the situational difference approach (Kisamoreetal., 2007; Simola, 2017). These methods focus on demographic variables, personality construction, student behavior, and the influence of situational factors such as teachers and peers. Academic integrity is the most concerned, not only in Western countries, but also among Chinese scholars, people's discussion of higher education is becoming more and more important. The focus of research on academic integrity is driven by recent policies in China, which reflects the priority of strengthening academic ethical culture in the development of China's higher education system (Macfarlanetal., 2014). Many universities and colleges in China have set up independent units or designated professionals to educate, prevent and respond to integrity violations (Guo, 2017; Week, 2019). Integrity, as one of the most important components of traditional Chinese values, has been attached importance in higher education policies and management practices (Chen, 2007; Liu, 2011). The purpose of this study is to understand the integrity status of Chinese college students and answer the research question: What are the relevant factors affecting the integrity of students?

## 2. Theoretical framework

In the context of higher education, academic integrity is an indivisible quality that refers to the values of commitment to honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage in learning, teaching, and research (Moyo and Saidi, 2019). Academic integrity encompasses multiple structures of student behavior related to university rules and procedures, such as academic misconduct. Academic misconduct, interchangeably academic dishonesty, can be defined as fraudulent conduct involving some form of academic anomaly or deception in which a person's work is misrepresented (Kisamoreetal., 2007; Eaton, 2017). Some examples of academic misconduct and academic dishonesty are exam cheating, plagiarism, and inappropriate collaboration. In addition to academic integrity, the study of student integrity is often reflected in moral and ethical education, which is an important part of higher education in China. According to Meindl et al. (2018), "morality" refers to "thoughts, desires, or actions that violate or inhibit one's own interests in order to promote the interests of others; It may be for the benefit of the individual, the group or the collective."

Integrity includes the virtues of honesty and morality, which implies a set of principles that includes a commitment to self and others responsibility (Wong et al., 2016; Reybold and Halx, 2018; Moyo and Sadie, 2019). Based on specific definitions and interpretations, this study applies academic integrity to the understanding of Chinese college students' integrity.

# 3. Integrity Education

Research shows that integrity education can have a positive impact on students' knowledge, opinions, attitudes and behaviors (Simola, 2017; Sefcik et al., 2020; Miron et al., 2021; Fudge et al., 2022). College and student understanding of integrity requires clarification and support at an institutional level to uphold integrity and further improve the quality of higher education. "Provide clear and transparent guidelines in institutional policies so that stakeholders can understand their responsibilities and remain responsible for embedding a culture of integrity in their daily work" (Fudgeetal., 2022). Similarly, in order to avoid the breach of integrity that can constitute credibility, "collaborative efforts and commitment by all stakeholders in higher education, namely students, academics, non-academics, and society at large" are required (Moyo and Saidi, 2019). Creating a healthy and supportive learning environment for students and academics and establishing institutional policies require the joint efforts of all stakeholders in higher education. Integrity is more likely to be followed when students are exposed to the knowledge of integrity and see a commitment to it by all parties (Gottadlow and Karabag, 2022).

Thinking mode suitable for students' needs: The occurrence of academic integrity incidents is partly due to students' consideration of which kind of decision they choose is the most beneficial to themselves. Suppose that in the same exam, some students choose honesty exam and others choose cheating, but the final result is that the students who choose cheating are not only not found out but also get high scores. This makes the net benefit of the disciplined students much lower than that of the cheating students, and they will think that their benefit from hard revision is much lower than that of the students who cheated on the exam without hard revision, The appearance of this situation often induces the students who originally abide by the examination discipline to choose the cheating behavior that maximizes their own interests regardless of the requirements of honesty and ethics and examination discipline. Taking homework plagiarism as an example, some college students think that they can take advantage of the convenient access to numerous academic resources, and they do not need to spend energy on homework, and they can spare energy to engage in the things they are interested in. Moreover, the school and teachers do not strictly check students' plagiarism, and their classmates' plagiarism homework is not discovered by teachers. They believe that the benefits of direct use of other people's research are far greater than their own research. In this case, students will think that copying homework is the most beneficial strategy for them.

Students' motivation to cater to the diversified interests of students: the age of college students is generally between 18 and 25 years old. From the perspective of psychology, college students are in the stage of the establishment and formation of individual values. At this stage, the characteristics of college students are very distinct. They have a strong insight into new things, are eager to gain the recognition of classmates, teachers and family members, are eager to make achievements, have a strong ability to think independently, and are easily affected by the external environment. Due to the lack of correct and honest education guidance, it is easy to appear extreme behavior. College students have strong self-consciousness, mostly self-centered, and weak sense of responsibility to the society and the collective. Due to the lack of rich social experience and life experience, they lack the ability to discriminate when facing honesty, and they are at a loss when facing the surrounding bad integrity atmosphere and making choices, and choose dishonesty with the herd mentality. Overvaluing the desire for success, once the needs cannot be achieved through formal means, they will make irrational decisions in order to reduce the inner pressure of success.

Integrity education environment: With the continuous development of market economy, the whole society is facing the severe challenge of integrity crisis, and colleges and universities are also involved in the tide of the market. In the process of competition, some colleges and universities also expose dishonesty while pursuing interests, which also makes college students shake their adherence to integrity, and the words and deeds of some teachers and parents also subtly affect the integrity of college students. People's life is inseparable from the environment, and people's thoughts and behaviors are formed and developed in a certain environment. As social beings, college students are in the critical period of the formation of their outlook on life, values and world outlook. Their immaturity in thought and physiology makes them easy to be affected and misled by negative social factors.

As the main front of honesty education for college students, colleges and universities should continue to adhere to moral education as the first to solve the problem of lack of honesty. For students, by receiving honesty education, they can improve their honesty ability and level in daily activities. Integrity education in colleges and universities should pay attention to the content of integrity education and the actual life of college students, such as employment integrity in job hunting, economic integrity in paying tuition fees, academic integrity in completing homework exams, etc.

College students themselves should also pay attention to the cultivation of integrity and moral cultivation, improve the level of self-integrity education, and enhance the ability to make correct solutions to honesty problems. College students need to set up the right three views, by the right three views guide themselves to make the right choice, college students themselves to set up the right purpose of life, in the personal character to set an example of integrity, maintain their own positive attitude of integrity, have the courage to criticize all kinds of dishonest phenomena, practice integrity. Do not use dishonest way to meet the interests of individuals, in the face of integrity, always take the interests of society as the priority, to achieve the goal through the right values, do not take shortcuts, such as to get good grades, must be through hard work.

Credit cognition refers to the cognition of the relevant concepts, principles and meanings of credit, which is manifested as the judgment of credit behavior and the mastery of credit knowledge, which is the objective basis for practicing credit behavior and the key to cultivating good credit of college students. Only when the cognition of college students themselves reaches a certain level, they will consciously externalize into specific honest behavior. College students need to cultivate honest thinking, otherwise, when affected by the environment and people around them, they will unconsciously commit dishonest behaviors and have cognitive difficulties, knowing that dishonest behaviors are wrong. Therefore, we must use honesty thinking to help ourselves make the right behavior, perceive the behavior of individuals around us, actively reflect on whether there is deviation in our behavior, correct our behavior, and constantly consolidate the cognition of honesty. Constantly strengthen self-education to improve the level of integrity cognition, self-education can speed up their own integrity cognition level, correct the shortcomings of integrity cognition, test their own integrity level, form a practical self-integrity education method, and improve the level of integrity cognition.

## 4. Conclusion

In short, in order to effectively solve the problem of college students' integrity, we must cooperate in many aspects and levels. At the social level, we should create a good integrity education environment, strengthen the construction of campus integrity culture and cultivate the correct integrity motivation at the university level, establish the correct three views at the university level, and constantly improve their own integrity cognition level through learning. Only with the joint efforts of society, colleges and universities, can we solve the problem of college students' integrity.

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