



# Role of Self Efficacy and Personality in Academic Dishonesty of Undergraduate Students: Implication for Future Careers

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## Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author FLA conceptualized the study and worked as principal investigator, author BSOP proofread the manuscript and performed methodology. Authors FLA, BSOP and JAG did data analysis. Author JAG drafted the manuscript, did ethics and proofread the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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## ABSTRACT

Various terms describe academic dishonesty, including academic fraud, cheating, and misrepresentation. This paper investigated the forms and prevalence of academic dishonesty among Ghanaian undergraduates students. It also examined how self-efficacy and personality type predict academic fraud within on-campus settings. The study employed a cross-sectional questionnaire-based design, surveying a sample of 453 students. Three scales addressed the hypotheses and research questions. Descriptive statistics (percentages, means, frequencies,

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standard deviations) were used to answer the research questions, while standard linear regression tested the hypothesis. The results indicated high levels of self-efficacy and conscientiousness among students, yet academic dishonesty was still present. Conscientiousness, openness, and self-efficacy were found to predict academic fraud. One key implication is that such students may carry the negative habits into their future careers. The paper concluded by examining some strategies for mitigating academic dishonesty within the educational context.

*Keywords: Academic dishonesty; academic fraud; corruption; personality traits; misrepresentation; self efficacy.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Universities worldwide face a significant challenge: academic dishonesty [1]. This problem extends beyond students, ensnaring even high-ranking personnel like lecturers, department heads, and university/college staff [2]. Alarmingly prevalent, academic dishonesty appears to have a persistent nature. A study published in the Journal for Education and Business (1993) found a troubling link: students who cheat early in their education are more likely to continue this behaviour throughout their academic careers. This suggests that even graduates from prestigious institutions are not immune to academic misconduct.

The desire for faster academic advancement, higher salaries, prestige, promotions, and personal fulfilment can all motivate individuals to cheat within the education system. Additionally, a lack of vigilance from supervisors allows cheating to flourish [3]. Academic dishonesty encompasses various behaviours, with terms like academic fraud, cheating, and misrepresentation used to define its nature depending on the context [3].

The consequences of academic dishonesty are far-reaching. It not only undermines the integrity of educational institutions but also harms students who engage in it. A damaged reputation can follow both the cheater and the institution they represent. Getting caught can lead to lasting humiliation, as several high-profile cases demonstrate.

Examples abound: in Nigeria, a former parliamentary speaker faced removal and imprisonment for possessing a fake PhD [4,5]. Similarly, in Germany, a former defense minister and a former vice-president of the European Parliament resigned after plagiarism was discovered in their doctoral dissertations. The London School of Economics in the UK investigated allegations of plagiarism in a

prominent world leader's PhD thesis. In Pakistan, over a hundred parliamentarians were found to have fake degrees, and a university registrar in the UK received a suspended sentence for trading fake degrees for sexual gratification [6].

Research suggests a link between academic dishonesty and broader ethical issues. Stone and Starkey [7] found a connection between corrupt practices, unethical behaviour, and cronyism among highly educated company leaders and their customers. The findings suggest that academic dishonesty may contribute to lower ethical standards in customer interactions. The academic community and the public were shaken in 2009 by the "climate gate" scandal by the unauthorized access to researchers' correspondence, manipulation of data to support the theory of global warming [8].

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The inspiration for this research emerged from a disturbing incident reported in a news article in Chirikov, Shmeleva, & Loyalka, [9]. In this case, a faculty dean was dismissed after submitting a paper for publication that contained plagiarized material from a student's dissertation. This blatant act highlights the pervasive issue of academic dishonesty within educational institutions. These individual cases point to broader systemic problems. The West African Examination Council (WAEC) in Ghana regularly reports instances of examination malpractice, leading to withheld or canceled results and even legal action against examinees [10,11]. These incidents underscore the urgent need to investigate the factors that contribute to academic dishonesty among students.

Unfortunately, the current research on academic dishonesty in Ghana remains limited. While studies explore this issue, they often focus on different regions and student populations Alleyne and Phillips [12], Artani, [13] and Blachnio et al. [14]. This research aims to fill this gap by

specifically investigating how personality type and self-efficacy influence academic dishonesty among Ghanaian tertiary students. Through this focused approach, we hope to gain a deeper understanding of this complex issue and develop effective strategies to promote academic integrity within Ghanaian higher education.

## 1.2 Self-efficacy and Personality

Psychology sees personality as the complex and relatively stable patterns of behaviour, thoughts, and emotions that distinguish one person from another. Psychologists offer various definitions of personality [15] define it as a relatively stable collection of traits and mental processes that influence how an individual responds to their physical, mental, and social environment. This definition highlights key concepts like an individual's mental structure, consistency in traits over time, the variations that make each person unique, responses to stimuli, and the influence of the external world. In essence, personality shapes our actions, how we think, and how we interact with others.

Albert Bandura [16] introduced the concept of self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to succeed in a specific task. This belief extends beyond simply feeling confident; it encompasses the conviction that one has the necessary skills, perseverance, and strategies to achieve a desired outcome within a particular context. Self-efficacy is often developed to excel in specific areas, such as employment or academic settings. People can possess high self-efficacy for some tasks while having low self-efficacy for others. For instance, a student might feel confident taking notes in lectures (high self-efficacy) but struggle with interview presentations (low self-efficacy). As Heslin and Klehe [17] point out, self-efficacy is a more powerful predictor of task performance than either self-confidence or self-esteem. This highlights the importance of self-efficacy in understanding how individuals approach and achieve goals.

### 1.3 Self-Efficacy: Avenues for Development

Heslin and Klehe [17] identify three key ways self-efficacy develops: enactive mastery experiences, vicarious learning through role models, and verbal persuasion.

**Enactive mastery experiences:** This involves the satisfaction gained from successfully

completing parts of a task, motivating further progress. For example, a student's ability to solve a simple arithmetic problem like  $2 + 3 = 5$  encourages them to tackle  $8 + 7 = 15$ . Constructive feedback from teachers or peers plays a crucial role in guiding students towards academic success.

**Vicarious learning:** Students learn by observing others succeed in a task. For example, in their early years, children learn to speak by imitating the language used by their parents or siblings. Corrections and encouragement from those around them help the child gradually develop fluency. Similarly, a child might select a role model to guide them in learning artistic skills like dancing or cycling. Regular practice under their guidance helps the child achieve mastery. This explains why parents often invest in specialized lessons, such as piano or gymnastics training, for their children.

**Verbal persuasion:** Experts use words of encouragement to motivate learners. An example is a parent praising their child for successfully spelling two-letter words; this builds confidence and fuels the desire to read three- or four-letter words. The positive reinforcement acts as "positive self-talk" for the learner, motivating them to strive harder.

Researchers like Kocjan et al. [18] categorize personality traits into three key components: behaviours, emotions, and cognitions. Personality stability allows researchers to make some predictions about a child's future behaviours, thought patterns, and feelings based on their current tendencies. Theories of personality, such as psychoanalytic and humanistic theories, use the trait approach. Individual distinctions are highlighted, and each person's personality is the product of the interplay and combination of multiple features. The trait theory therefore focuses on discovering and characterising these different personality features [19]. Religion and culture also play a role in defining who a person is and how they are formed; according to this school of thought, human personality is always shaped by divine force [20].

The Big Five factor model of personality, widely adopted by psychologists since its development in the 1980s [21,22], uses five key characteristics to classify personality types: neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience. Open individuals

are known for their intellectual curiosity and willingness to explore new experiences. They often tackle challenges beyond their comfort zone, demonstrating their depth in problem-solving [23]. Agreeable people, on the other hand, tend to be kind-hearted and easily persuaded, earning them a reputation for trustworthiness and social likeability [24]. Conscientious individuals excel in their careers due to their thoughtful approach to decision-making. They possess strong impulse control and focus, allowing them to carefully manage needs, aspirations, and ego. Extraversion describes an individual's social tendencies and openness to interacting with their environment. Extroverts are assertive, sociable, and excel in building and maintaining friendships. They gain energy and thrive in group settings, often expressing themselves through humour, conversation, and outgoing behaviour. Neuroticism refers to an individual's emotional stability and their tendency to perceive situations as threatening or challenging. Those with high neuroticism might exhibit moodiness, sadness, self-doubt, and withdrawal [25].

#### 1.4 Academic Dishonesty

This phenomenon describes actions within an educational setting where individuals attempt to gain an unfair advantage through unlawful means [26]. These illicit practices encompass a wide range of behaviours, including purchasing essays, concealing notes in exams, impersonating others during tests, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration on assignments, copying answers from fellow students, writing exams for others, altering scores after marking, writing theses for others, fabricating data, stealing intellectual property, and falsifying official records [14,27]. Whistley & Keith-Spigel [28] and Pavela [29] identify four main categories of academic dishonesty: cheating, sabotage, data fabrication and plagiarism. Academic dishonesty encompasses a spectrum of unlawful behaviours employed by students to gain an unfair advantage. Cheating includes acts like using unauthorized calculators in exams or copying answers from peers. Sabotage involves deliberate actions to hinder another student's work, such as destroying a laboratory experiment or artwork. Additionally, failing to contribute to group projects can also be considered sabotage. Data fabrication refers to the creation of false results, encompassing actions like falsifying admissions data, altering identification documents, or manipulating research data.

Finally, plagiarism involves presenting another person's work, ideas, or creative content as your own without proper attribution. This includes copying and pasting materials from online sources or other individuals' work and presenting them as original for grades or publication Whistley & Keith-Spigel [28].

However, the concept has broader interpretations. Bowers [30] emphasizes the involvement of academics in illicit activities beyond plagiarism, cheating, and influencing others for personal gain. Similarly, Jones [31] defines academic dishonesty as a deceitful attempt to bypass established practices, rules, and norms to gain an unfair advantage or conceal the actions of others who have done so.

Moeck [32] expands the definition of academic dishonesty to encompass the abuse of privileges and academic materials. This includes acts like altering or destroying library resources (e.g., removing pages from books), cheating during exams, and directly copying another's work without proper citation. Essentially, academic dishonesty involves any behaviour that disrupts fair access to resources or undermines the integrity of academic work. A plethora of studies has shown the prevalence of academic dishonesty among scholars. This paper defines academic dishonesty as any unethical act or behaviour used to gain an unfair advantage, such as cheating on exams, quizzes, or homework, plagiarism, or falsifying information to obtain grades, promotions, or recognition. Ercegovic and Richardson [33] delineated factors such as external and internal motivation, achievement and academic pressures as social factors that draw people into academia to be dishonest. Personal factors that lead to cheating or dishonesty are the desire to achieve instant popularity, social recognition, excel in class, little knowledge about academic dishonesty, and for unknown reasons [34,35].

Several studies highlight the prevalence of academic dishonesty in universities. Case. In Pakistan, over a hundred parliamentarians were found to hold fake degrees [36]. Similarly, the "climate gate" scandal of 2009 sent shockwaves through academia and the public. Ultimately, academic fraud breeds a generation of semi-educated professionals, jeopardizing the well-being of current and future societies, Booker [37].

Liu and Alias [38] cross-sectional study involving 1,624 Chinese university students revealed that

nearly half admitted to engaging in academic misconduct like exam cheating or plagiarism during the previous year. Interestingly, the study found that men and students nearing graduation were more likely to be involved. Similarly, a meta-analysis by Zhao et al. [39] examining 38 samples from Western universities between 1941 and 2021 found high rates of peer cheating among undergraduates. This suggests student behaviour influence their peers to act dishonestly. Finally, Surahman and Wang's [40] review of 52 articles published between 2017 and 2021 identified three levels of academic dishonesty in research: planning, conducting, and reporting studies. They further highlight the internet's role in facilitating dishonest behaviour.

Research highlights the prevalence of academic dishonesty among students in various fields. McCabe [34] found concerning levels of plagiarism and cheating in exams among nursing students, suggesting a decline in ethical standards within this profession. Similarly, Cochran et al. [41] self-reporting survey of US sociology students revealed that low self-esteem, parental influence, and lack of self-control play key roles in facilitating dishonest behaviours. Artani [13] investigated how self-efficacy influences academic misconduct among accounting students in Bali, the study concluded that opportunity and student capability positively correlate with academic dishonesty. However, self-efficacy, pressure, and rationalization appeared to have no effect on the prevalence of cheating in this specific population.

Research highlights the complex relationship between self-efficacy, personal beliefs, and academic dishonesty. Baran and Janason's [42] study of 390 Polish undergraduate students indicated that self-efficacy influences cheating behaviors. Similarly, a computer-monitored exam of 65 undergraduates revealed that low self-efficacy correlates with higher rates of cheating, while religious orientation appeared to deter dishonest behavior. Ismail and Omar [3] research with 2447 Malaysian university students suggests a link between personal beliefs and academic dishonesty but found no significant relationship between faith or relativism and cheating. They posit that faith and idealism discourage dishonesty among their respondents. Finally, Giluk & Postlethwaite [43] employed metadata analysis to identify agreeableness and conscientiousness as key "Big Five" personality predictors of academic dishonesty in secondary and tertiary students. The study concluded that

personality traits play a significant role in why students engage in academic dishonesty.

Several studies have explored the influence of various factors on student dishonesty. Research by Crown and Spiller [44], McCabe and Trevino [45], and Whitely (1998) suggests that personality traits beyond self-efficacy, such as age, gender, and conscientiousness, may also play a role in predicting academic misconduct. Beyond personal characteristics, non-personal factors like institutional rules, disciplinary actions, and risk detection methods are also known to correlate with dishonesty among students [46]. Bicer [46] further explored the "Fraud Triangle" framework, investigating the relationship between personality and dishonesty. The findings suggest that rationalization is a key driver of student academic misconduct. Students may justify cheating by believing it's acceptable if others do it without consequences.

The literature from around the world [9,47] reports instances of academic dishonesty among students and faculty; nonetheless, there is still a gap in research regarding the specific factors that contribute to this problem in the context of higher education in Ghana. By investigating the significance of personality factors in predicting academic dishonesty among university students in Ghana, this study aims to close this gap. This study aims to provide these knowledge aspects so that interventions and prevention methods can be more focused.

### 1.5 Objectives of the Study

1. To evaluate the dominant personality traits among higher education students.
2. To evaluate the levels of self-efficacy among undergraduate students.
3. To evaluate the dominant academically dishonest behaviours among undergraduate students.
4. To determine if personality traits and self-efficacy will predict academically dishonest behaviours among undergraduate students.

### 1.6 Research Questions and Hypothesis

- i) What are the dominant personality traits among higher education students in Ghana?
- ii) What are the levels of self-efficacy among undergraduate students?
- iii) What are the dominant academically dishonest behaviours among undergraduate students?

H1: Personality traits and self-efficacy will predict academically dishonest behaviours among undergraduate students.

student perceptions of self-efficacy using a 5-point Likert scale with responses ranging from "not true" to "exactly true."

## 2. METHODS

The analytical cross-sectional survey was used involving online questionnaires (convenience sampling), to collect data at a single point in time – a method often used for broad population studies [48]. Cross-sectional studies is used to characterise traits, viewpoints, or frequencies of variables within a population. The design aided in recognising possible relationships between various elements. Data analysis occurs at a single point in time using data from the population or a representative subset of the population [49]. The sample consisted of 453 (females= 153, males= 300) teacher-trainee students from Ghanaian universities, drawn from a population of 480,000, with a mean age of 30 years (SD = 93.64).

**Research Instruments:** This research employed three validated instruments to gather data: Unethical Academic Behaviour Inventory [50]: This 16-item, uni-dimensional inventory uses a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1-"not serious" to 5-"severe") to assess student engagement in academically dishonest practices. The Big Five Inventory (BFI-10 by Rammstedt & John, [51]): This inventory measures personality traits along the five key dimensions of openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism, and agreeableness. It uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1-"Strongly Disagree" to 5-"Strongly Agree.". The Perceived Teacher Self-Efficacy Inventory: This instrument assesses

The combined reliability of the sample was .84, which is considered very strong and suitable for analysis, according to Cattell, Eber, and Tatsuoka [52].

**Data Analysis:** To address the research questions, We used descriptive statistics, including percentages, frequencies, means, and standard deviations. For testing the study's primary hypothesis, we employed standard linear regression.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data generated was analysed and presented in the following paragraphs:

**Class Levels:** Table 1 displays the presentation of the respondents' class or the number of years spent at university. The sample of 453 respondents provided the number of years they spent at university (as indicated by their class level). Second-year students dominated the number of respondents (level 200, n = 381, 84%, level 100, n =20, 4.4%, level 300, n = 20, 4.4.%). The respondents with the lowest education were in their first and third years.

### RQ1: What are the dominant personality traits among higher education students in Ghana?

The question sought to identify the predominant Personality trait exhibited by Ghanaian college students.

**Table 1. University class levels**

| Levels       | Frequency  | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| 100          | 20         | 4.4            |
| 200          | 381        | 84.1           |
| 300          | 20         | 4.4            |
| 400          | 32         | 7.1            |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>453</b> | <b>100.0</b>   |

**Table 2. Prevalence of personality traits among undergraduate students**

| Personality Trait | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|-------------------|------|--------------------|
| Conscientiousness | 4.70 | 1.48               |
| Neuroticism       | 4.23 | 1.83               |
| Agreeableness     | 4.06 | 1.51               |
| Extraversion      | 3.87 | 1.95               |
| Openness          | 3.10 | 1.74               |

From Table 2, it is observed that the students showed all the personality traits: openness, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. However, a lot of students exhibited the conscientiousness personality trait ( $m = 4.70$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ ). The least exhibited personality trait by the students was openness ( $m = 3.10$ ,  $SD = 1.74$ ). This finding contradicts the finding by Mason, Roodenburg, and Williams [53], Singh [54], which showed that the students used in their study exhibited neuroticism and were lower on extraversion. The research report of Arif, Rashid, Tahira, and Akhter [55] showed that students were high on openness as opposed to the other personality traits among Pakistani students.

**RQ2: What are the levels of self-efficacy among undergraduate students?**

The students' levels of self-efficacy were assessed through this question. The results of this research question are displayed in Table 3. Ten items from the self-efficacy measure were utilised to accomplish this. The results exhibited high levels of self-efficacy. High self-efficacy means the students will be willing to undertake school activities and want to perform creditably in school programmes, activities, and schedules, as exhibited by the notion that they will achieve an academic goal ( $m = 3.70$ ). The finding is consistent with Eshun et al., [56]. However, De

Feyter et al., [57] reported lower levels of self-efficacy among students.

**RQ3: What are the dominant academically dishonest behaviours among undergraduate students?**

Table 4 displays the data for answering RQ 3. The third research question sought to ascertain the prevalence of academically dishonest behaviour among undergraduate students. From Table 4, the students showed that they all had some level of academic dishonesty. Examples of self-reported cheating behaviours among Ghanaian students are copying during examinations, selling copies of leaked exam questions, and impersonation during examinations. This could be due to several factors, such as the desire to achieve and excel in academic life and graduate within a certain time frame, or because institutions failed to tell them about the negative consequences of cheating or showed indifference towards academic dishonesty. Nazir and Aslam [58]. However, the prevalence of academic dishonesty among respondents was low. The low disposition to commit academic dishonesty can be explained by the higher levels of self-efficacy. A position supported by literature, Alleyne, and Phillips [12], McCabe and Trevino [45], and others, for example, found lower levels of academic dishonesty among college students.

**Table 3. Level of Self-Efficacy among undergraduate students**

| Statements  | Mean | SD   | N   | %    |
|---|------|------|-----|------|
| I am convinced that I can successfully learn all relevant subject content even if it is difficult.                            | 3.14 | 0.92 | 350 | 77.3 |
| I know that I can maintain a positive attitude toward this course even when tensions arise.                                   | 3.43 | 0.86 | 391 | 86.3 |
| When I try hard, I can learn even the most challenging content.   | 3.51 | 0.77 | 403 | 99.8 |
| I am convinced that, as time goes by, I will continue to become more and more capable of learning the content of this course. | 3.61 | 0.69 | 420 | 92.8 |
| Even if I get distracted in class, I am confident that I can continue to learn well.  | 3.38 | 0.85 | 386 | 85.3 |
| I am confident in my learning ability, even if I have a terrible day.   | 2.92 | 0.96 | 312 | 68.9 |
| If I try hard enough, I can obtain the academic goals I desire.   | 3.70 | 0.64 | 426 | 94   |
| I am convinced that I can develop creative ways to cope with the stress that may occur while taking this course.              | 3.41 | 0.77 | 401 | 88.6 |
| I know that I can stay motivated to participate in the course.  | 3.60 | 0.68 | 420 | 92.7 |
| I know that I can finish the assigned projects and earn the grade I want, even when others think I cannot.                    | 3.64 | 0.68 | 423 | 93.3 |
| Mean of Means   | 3.43 | 0.79 |     |      |

**Table 4. Dominant academically dishonesty behaviour**

| Statement  | NS    | SS    | FS    | VS    | MS    |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| I sometimes copy from someone else during a test.  | 63.8% | 21.0% | 9.9%  | 2.2%  | 3.1%  |
| I sometimes take an examination for another person.  | 83.4% | 4.6%  | 7.1%  | 1.5%  | 3.3%  |
| I sometimes submit an assignment that was written by someone else                            | 76.8% | 10.8% | 7.7%  | 1.5%  | 3.1%  |
| I sometimes use technology illegally to answer examination questions during examination time | 78.1% | 8.4%  | 7.1%  | 3.1%  | 3.3%  |
| I sometimes use unauthorized lending materials in class                                      | 77.7% | 8.4%  | 6.6%  | 3.3%  | 4.0%  |
| I sometimes make photocopies of examination questions to sell to my colleagues               | 85.9% | 4.0%  | 5.7%  | 1.8%  | 2.6%  |
| I sometimes copy leaning material form the internet and submit it as my work.                | 59.6% | 18.1% | 13.2% | 5.3%  | 3.8%  |
| I sometimes falsify information for the details of someone on an examination paper           | 80.4% | 7.7%  | 7.3%  | 1.8%  | 2.9%  |
| I sometimes allow other people in my class to copy from me during an examination             | 57.8% | 18.3% | 15.2% | 4.2%  | 4.4%  |
| I sometimes copy learning materials form a published source without acknowledging them.      | 58.3% | 16.6% | 14.8% | 4.6%  | 5.7%  |
| I sometimes write assignments for a friend who submits them as his/her work.                 | 66.7% | 15.9% | 10.8% | 2.4%  | 4.2%  |
| I sometimes collaborate on an assignment when asked for individual work in class.            | 48.3% | 18.5% | 17.9% | 6.2%  | 9.1%  |
| I sometimes collaborate on an assignment when asked for individual work in class.            | 67.3% | 18.5% | 17.9% | 6.2%  | 9.1%  |
| I sometimes reproduce examination questions and share them with friends in class.            | 67.3% | 10.8% | 11.9% | 5.3%  | 4.6%  |
| I sometimes obtain questions form a previous examination in school.                          | 40.6% | 15.5% | 18.5% | 11.3% | 14.1% |
| I sometimes wrongly use family crises to get an extension on a school examination            | 75.1% | 8.6%  | 10.6% | 3.1%  | 2.6%  |
| I sometimes do not contribute to group work or assignments                                   | 70.4% | 8.6%  | 8.6%  | 4.6%  | 7.7%  |

\*\*NS- Not serious, SS- slightly serious, FS- fairly serious, VS-very serious, MS- most serious

**Table 5. The predictability of the variables**

| Model | R                  | R <sup>2</sup> | Adj. R <sup>2</sup> | Sd, Error | F <sup>2</sup> Δ | Change statistics |     |      |               |
|-------|--------------------|----------------|---------------------|-----------|------------------|-------------------|-----|------|---------------|
|       |                    |                |                     |           |                  | F Change          | Df1 | Df2  | Sig. F Change |
| 1     | 0.334 <sup>a</sup> | 0.112          | 0.110               | 11.64589  | 0.112            | 56.769            | 1   | 45.1 | 0.000         |
| 2     | 0.358 <sup>b</sup> | 0.128          | 0.125               | 11.54875  | 0.0`17           | 8.619             | 1   | 450  | 0.003         |
| 3     | 0.375 <sup>c</sup> | 0.141          | 0.135               | 11.47896  | 0.012            | 6.488             | 1   | 449  | 0.011         |

a. Predictors: (Constant) Self-Efficacy; b. Predictors: (Constant), Self-Efficacy, Constant Theories, c. Predictors: (Constant), Self-Efficacy, Conscientiousness

Also, 'verbal seeking behaviour' is common among the respondents; this could be attributed to the fact that the students might have witnessed others who ask questions during examinations or seek help to do assignments. This has the potential to give a negative reportage to their schools, as academic

dishonesty is frowned upon at all levels of education, an assertion supported by Mensah et al. [59]. This behaviour is likely to influence self-efficacy components like enactive self-mastery, role modelling, verbal persuasion, and personality in academic dishonesty.



**Table 6. Coefficients correlations of the variables**

| Model |                   | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | T     | Sig.  |
|-------|-------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|-------|
|       |                   | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |       |       |
| 1     | (Constant)        | 52.658                      | 3.524      |                           | 14.94 | 0.000 |
|       | Self-Efficacy     | -0.763                      | 0.101      | -0.334                    | -7.54 | 0.000 |
| 2     | (Constant)        | 45.642                      | 4.233      |                           | 10.78 | 0.000 |
|       | Self-Efficacy     | -0.770                      | 0.101      | -0.337                    | -7.66 | 0.000 |
|       | Conscientiousness | 1.081                       | 0.368      | 0.129                     | 2.94  | 0.003 |
| 3     | (Constant)        | 42.895                      | 4.344      |                           | 9.88  | 0.000 |
|       | Self-Efficacy     | -0.785                      | 0.100      | -0.344                    | -7.85 | 0.000 |
|       | Conscientiousness | 0.963                       | 0.369      | 0.115                     | 2.61  | 0.009 |
|       | Openness          | 0.797                       | 0.313      | 0.113                     | 2.54  | 0.01  |

a. Dependent variable: Academic dishonesty.

**H1: Personality traits and self-efficacy will predict academically dishonest behaviours among undergraduate students.**

The purpose of testing this hypothesis was to ascertain how personality traits and self-efficacy levels could predict academically dishonest behaviour among undergraduates. The personality traits and self-efficacy (IVs) served as the predictors, and academic dishonesty served as the (DV) criterion. From Table 5, it was deduced that openness (1.74%) and consciousness (1.48%) were the only traits that predicted academic dishonesty. Moreover, another factor that predicted academic dishonesty was self-efficacy, which produced the highest predictor of dishonesty when it came to academic integrity (11.2%) accounting for the variance. This result is in harmony with Eshun et al., [56]. But the current finding is a sharp contrast to the studies of Wong and Carducci [60], Mazar, Amir, and Ariely [61], and Baumeister et al., [62], which concluded that lower self-efficacy leads to academic dishonesty in students. Another study by Donnellan et al., [63] also reported that students with low self-efficacy resort to violence, aggression, and other anti-social behaviours. Furthermore, table 5, displays the predictability of the variables used in the study.

Table 6 displays the correlations of the IV (Personality traits and Self-efficacy) and DV (Academic Dishonesty) of the variable used in the analysis of the study. It can be inferred that at ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) both the IVs positively correlated, and the DV showed moderate correlation values of 0.334 and 0.375.

**4. IMPLICATION FOR CORRUPTION IN FUTURE CAREERS**

Unchecked academic dishonesty among students can have a ripple effect, potentially influencing their future careers and impacting others. Nazir and Aslam [58] remind us that academics are held to a high ethical standard. Therefore, it's crucial to safeguard academic integrity within educational institutions. Academic misconduct, in any form, poses a fundamental threat to the integrity of education, our social fabric, and the teaching profession. As educators, we must strive to understand the root causes of this corruption [64].

Unchecked academic dishonesty poses a significant threat to society. Graduates with fraudulent qualifications, whether teachers, doctors, engineers, or financial analysts, can have a devastating impact. Orim and Glendinning [65] documented a range of corrupt practices, including forged admissions, fake credentials, and plagiarism among academics. The report further highlights the inadequacy of quality assurance measures in some universities to effectively tackle academic misconduct. These corrupt activities often occur underground, making detection difficult. The use of middlemen in foreign student recruitment creates another avenue for exploitation. Ultimately, such practices endanger lives, hinder productivity, and spread diseases – a recipe for social disaster [67-69].

Academic fraud and cheating in educational institutions pose a grave threat to the future of our society. Long-term planning depends on analytical minds capable of anticipating national challenges and offering effective solutions. Graduates with fraudulent qualifications, however, lack the necessary skills and

knowledge, potentially jeopardizing the well-being of current and future generations [70-75].

#### **4.1 Ways to Counter Academic Fraud in Higher Institutions of Learning**

As suggested by Satterlee [66], teachers and administrators can combat academic fraud at the school level by instituting and enforcing honour codes, matching coursework, and assignments to students' academic competence, ensuring that no opportunity exists to cheat, and making the consequences of cheating clear to school personnel.

### **5. CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY**

This study reveals that undergraduate students engage in various forms of academic dishonesty across the Big Five personality dimensions. These findings highlight the urgent need for action from educational stakeholders. Policymakers, administrators, and lecturers must collaborate to develop effective strategies to curb cheating within higher education. Counselling services should be strengthened to address the issue. With self-efficacy identified as relatively high among students, counsellors can build upon this to encourage ethical engagement in examinations and academic activities. Furthermore, examination coordinators must remain vigilant during assessments, while admissions and human resources departments should verify student documentation to prevent the infiltration of fraudulent qualifications. By implementing these measures, institutions can work collaboratively to safeguard academic integrity.

This research found a correlation between three key personality traits – conscientiousness, openness, and self-efficacy – and the likelihood of Ghanaian university students engaging in various forms of academic misconduct. These forms of cheating include copying, impersonation, falsifying documents, and completing assignments for others in exchange for payment or favours. Academic dishonesty poses a significant threat, not just to individual students but to entire nations. It tarnishes the reputations of both the cheater and the institution, potentially leading to lasting disgrace if exposed. Educators must prioritize understanding the root causes of this academic dishonesty and work to stop it.

### **ETHICS DECLARATION**

The authors of this article declare that this study was conducted following ethical principles of research and that all data collected was used solely for research purposes. The data is saved on a password-protected electronic file, which is maintained in confidence by the study's principal investigator and can be obtained freely on request.

### **DATA AVAILABILITY**

Data generated or analysed during this study are available from the principal authors on request.

### **CONSENT**

Participants provided informed consent.

### **ETHICAL APPROVAL**

Ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the University of Education, Winneba's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

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### **COMPETING INTERESTS**

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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