

Perceived Scholastic Competence and Academic Deceit among Form Four Students in Baringo County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Academic deceit has been a common occurrence in Kenya's education system in recent years. The present study aspired to establish the relationship between sense of scholastic competence and academic deceit among form four students in Baringo County, Kenya. The study adopted correlational research design. All 4,414 form four students from three selected sub counties constituted the accessible population from which a systematic sample of 396 participants were chosen. Questionnaires including Patterns of Adaptive Learning scale and Sense of Competence Scale were adapted and used for data collection. A pilot study and peer review was utilized to assure validity and reliability of the instruments. Respondents were required to sign a consent form. Descriptive statistics obtained were used to describe and summarize the data. Pearson correlation analysis was done to test the relationship between perceived scholastic competence and academic deceit. It was found out that respondents rated their perception of scholastic competence as high. In addition, an inverse and significant relationship was established between sense of scholastic competence ($r = -.32, p < .05$) and academic deceit. Thus, it was recommended inter alia that teachers be equipped with skills on how to foster sense of competence which may assist in reducing incidences of academic deceit.

Keywords: Scholastic competence; Academic deceit; Examination; Baringo County; Kenya

INTRODUCTION

Globally, examinations are used to measure whether learning process has occurred or not. Its results are used by teachers and other stakeholders to improve in areas where learners have not performed well. Dolin et al. (2018) claimed that assessments are used to cage what the learners have learned and able to demonstrate so as to make conscious decisions on the steps that need to be undertaken for progress. However, when the results are not reflecting whether learning has taken place, teachers may not be able to know the areas of pedagogy delivery adjustments. One of the reasons that impede a successful assessment of learning is academic deceit. According to Igbal et al. (2021), academic deceit results into flawed grades which are not reflective of learners skills and knowledge. Further, Kay??o?lu and Temel (2017) who observed that academic deceit outputs do not reflect the actual achievement of a classroom assessment. The foregoing therefore calls for investigation into the reasons why students engage in academic deceit.

The description of academic deceit has been varied. Odongo et al. (2021) described it as: writing on parts of one's body; taking illicit material to an examination hall; using technology to cheat; and sitting in a position which makes students to share information. Chirumamilla et al. (2020) classified academic deceit as: impersonation; using unlawful materials in examination rooms; glancing at responses of other learners; peer collusion; getting help from outsiders; and collusion among students and staff members. Because of the varied descriptions of what constitutes academic deceit, the present study adapted some descriptions from Odongo et al. (2021) and Chirumamilla et al. (2020). Therefore, academic deceit referred to: using

illegitimate written materials in examination rooms; deceit in classroom assignments: and helping other students cheat.

The phenomenon of academic deceit has been reported to be a common occurrence throughout the globe. Igbal et al. (2021) contended that it is an immoral activity affecting many education systems in the world. Park et al. (2013) found that 50% to 78% of nursing students in South Korea got involved in fraud in examination and assignments. Another study by Fida et al. (2018) in United Kingdom reported that academic deceit behaviors occurred among 43.9% to 90.8% of the respondents. In Africa, Mugala et al. (2022) reported that 25.3% of their respondents had engaged in plagiarism.

In Kenya, Wamalwa et al. (2020) reported that 71.6% of their respondents had involved themselves in academic deceit. In the year 2015, there was a sharp rise in cases of deceit in Kenya's national examination. Those who were affected by cancellation of their results increased from 1254 cases in the year 2012 to 5101 in the year 2015. As a result of this rise, Kenya's national examination board was dissolved. In Baringo County, some students in one school had their 2015 Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) results cancelled because they scored a grade "Y" in physics subject because of academic deceit. In the year 2017, from 1205 students whose KCSE results were cancelled, 31 came from Baringo County. The consequence was prosecution of the culprits in Kabarnet law court (Kangogo, 2017). The foregoing therefore means that academic deceit is prevalent in all educational systems hence there is need to bring to an end this menace of academic deceit.

The reasons of academic deceit have been enumerated by many researchers. Some like Kay??o?lu and Temel (2017) have blamed its occurrence on rote learning education system, standard evaluation system as well as attitudes towards deceit. Others like Wamalwa et al. (2020) attributed it to lack of lecturers who could have implemented the examination rules and regulations. Despite these studies making their recommendations on what should be done, there is no conclusive solution to this menace. Therefore, the present study sought to focus on other personal reasons that may assist in reducing the prevalence of academic deceit.

Student's feelings of competence in an academic task could be one of the possible reasons of engagement in academic deceit. Harter (1982) defined perceived competence as perceptions of ability in broad scholastic areas. It was described as a basic psychological need which should be achieved by students in school (Wanlass, 2000). According to Cornelius-Ukpepi et al. (2012), students who do not feel competent in their scholastic abilities commit academic breaches so as to be at par with students high in perceived competence. For example, when students are given assignments by their teachers, students who feel that they may not be able to do the homework appropriately copy from other students. Peter et al. (2019) reported in a sample of 1818 university students in Kiambu County that 28.5% who were unable to comprehend the subject matter had higher chances of engaging in academic deceit. Therefore, could these results apply to secondary school students?

In yet another study, Hussein et al. (2018), using Pearson correlation analysis reported lack of competence was related to test and assignment deceit. However, regression analysis revealed that a lack of competence was not related to test and assignment deceit. This therefore means that the results related to feelings of scholastic competence and academic deceit could be inconclusive. Therefore, there was need to conduct more research in order to achieve some clarity. The present study may add to the existing literature on the role of perceived competence and academic deceit among secondary school students in Baringo County.

Statement of the Problem

Academic deceit potentially impacts the learning process, albeit negatively. Studies have found that the graduates who have succeeded in deceit in their academics do not have the knowledge and skills necessary

to perform tasks as per the grade achieved. In addition, the studies have established that academic deceit predicts future engagement in similar behaviours. Although various methods have been deployed to curb the vice, the vice has continued to be a common occurrence. In Kenya, the government has developed policies that are followed during setting, distribution and administration of examinations. Apart from the policies, heavy human capital as well as colossal amount of money has been deployed by the government to guard the integrity of exams. Despite all these efforts, cases of academic deceit continue being reported in Kenya as evidenced by the statistics reported between the years 2015 and 2020. This therefore calls for a paradigm shift so as to curb the vice. Therefore, the present study sought to establish: “the relationship between perceived scholastic competence and academic deceit”.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have been undertaken to establish the link between sense of scholastic competence and deceit. For instance, in a quantitative study by Hussein et al. (2018) among 364 (73.6% female) purposely selected public university students in Malaysia, Pearson correlation analysis results revealed that a lack of competency was related to involvement in test and assignment deceit. However, regression analysis results gave a contradictory output as lack of competency had no significant effect on test and assignment deceit. Their results could have been influenced by the nature of their sample that was predominantly female.

In a study by Nazer et al. (2016) on the role of academic self-efficacy in tendency to cheat and deceit attempt among 260 (Male = 48.5%, Female = 51.5%) high school students in Iran, it was found that the belief about an individual's academic capacity explained 20% of variance in deceit among male students and 15% among their female counterparts. Since Nazer et al.'s study was done in Iran, the present study sought to find whether perceived competence in academics plays a role in determining academic deceit among high school students in Africa who are of different cultural settings as students in Iran.

Onyedibe et al. (2016) conducted a study on academic confidence, and psychopathy as factors related to academic deceit among 173 (M = 23.32 years) undergraduate students in Nigeria. They reported that confidence in academics had a significant albeit negative relationship with academic dishonesty. They asserted that beliefs in one's ability to handle an academic task could potentially reduce the chances of involvement in academic dishonesty. However, their study reported that academic confidence accounted for only 17% of variance in academic deceit. Therefore, the present study sought to establish whether perceived competence in academics could explain more variance in academic deceit among secondary school students in Baringo County, Kenya.

Research by Peter et al. (2021) among university students in Kiambu County, Kenya reported that 28.5% of respondents who cheated had problems mastering the subject contents. This therefore means that they engaged in deceit so as to cover up for their deficiencies.

In brief, the literature reviewed disclosed that sense of scholastic competence is instrumental in determining one's engagement in academic deceit. However, most of the studies were conducted using student samples drawn from universities. That being the case, there was a need for the present research to be done using samples drawn from Kenyan schools so that their perspectives concerning degree of relation between perceived scholastic competence and academic deceit could be established.

METHODOLOGY

The study utilized quantitative method and correlational research design. Correlational design was deemed ideal because the center of interest was in establishing the relationship between perceived scholastic competence and academic deceit. According to Creswell (2012), when the measurement of the degree of

association between two or more variables is required, then, correlational design is appropriate. In support, Sorensen et al. (2010) pointed out that correlational design gives information concerning the magnitude of relationships among study variables.

Population and Sampling

The target population was all 4,414 form four students in three purposively selected sub-counties in Baringo County, Kenya. The choice of form four students was informed by Singh et al. (2015) who asserted that academic deceit appears to start when students are in middle school. To obtain a small and representative sample, stratified sampling was carried out resulting to a selection of 10 schools. From the 10 schools, 45 respondents were systematically chosen per school giving a total number of 450 respondents. Forty five was arrived at based on Ndethiu et al.’s (2016) finding that class sizes in Kenya range from 40 to 59 students. In addition, selection of 450 respondents was in line with Yamane (1967) sample determination criteria given by the method: $n = N / [1+N (e)^2]$ where n = size of the sample, N = size of the population and e = accuracy level. Though Yamane’s criteria yielded 366.76, oversampling was done to cater for respondents who may return incomplete questionnaires. This line of thought was advanced by Otanga (2016) who added 30% of the recommended sample size to cater for nonresponse.

Though 450 questionnaires containing five items measuring academic deceit and five perceived scholastic competence were issued to the 450 respondents, 412 were returned to the researcher out of which 16 were expunged because they had not filled well. The results are shown on Table 1.

Table 1: Return Rate

Type of school	Questionnaires issued			Questionnaires returned		
	Male	Female	TT	Male	Female	TT
CE	45	45	90	34	33	67
BO	180	-	180	159	-	159
GO	-	180	180	-	170	170
TT	225 (50)	225 (50)	450 (100)	193 (42.89)	203 (45.11)	396 (88)

Note. CE = Co-educational; BO = boys only; GO = girls only; TT = total; () = indicates the percentage of totals

Based on Table 1, the final sample constituted 396 respondents (aged 16 to 21 years) representing a return rate of 88%.

Research Instruments

Academic deceit scale contained three items adopted from Midgley’s et al. (2000) patterns of adaptive learning scale and another two developed by the researcher. A sample of items include: “*I occasionally look at other student’s answers and write them during a test*”, “*I sometimes copy answers from notes sneaked into examination room during a test*”. The scale was a five point Likert type and the response ranged from: *never = 0 to very often = 4*. The results from a pilot study conducted before administration of the instrument returned an acceptable Cronbach alpha of $\alpha = .66$, thus the scale was deemed reliable as per Fontaine et al. (2020).

Perceived scholastic competence scale was adopted from Harter (1982) sense of competence scale. Sample

items include: “Some pupil’s post good performance in their class work” yet “Other pupils don’t perform well in their class work”. Expert judgment was used to see if the items were valid. Descriptive and inferential analyses were performed and data displayed using tables. Pearson correlation analysis was used to test the relationship between perceived scholastic competence and academic deceit.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Perceived competence scale had five items and was four point Likert type with scores ranging from one to four. A respondent scoring one was deemed to have low perception of his/scholastic competencies. Since the scale contained five items, the least score for a respondent was five while the highest was 20. Academic deceit scale was measured using a five point Likert scale with scores ranging from 0 to 4 where; 0 = *never*, 1 = *rarely*, 2 = *sometimes*, 3= *often*, 4 = *very often*.

RESULTS

Of the 396 respondents 51.3% were female while 48.7% were male. These figures mean that male and female students were equally represented. Addition of scores in perceived scholastic competence scale, revealed that 99(25%) of the participants scored between five to 10 implying that they were not feeling competent in their academics. The respondents who scored between 11 and 15 were 177 (44.7%) whereas those whose scores were above 15 and the maximum 20 were 120 (30.3%) as divulged in Table 2.

Table 2: Case Summaries for Scholastic Competence

Scholastic Competence Scores	N (%)
5 – 10	99(25)
11-15	177(44.7)
16-20	120(30.3)

Note. N = 396; () indicates percentage of N

From the Table 2, it is indicated that a bulk (75%) of the informants scored above average in sense of scholastic competence scale. This may mean that majority of respondents perceived that they can handle an academic task successfully. Furthermore, the mean scores for the items in perceived competence scale were calculated and the results presented on Table 3.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Perceived scholastic Competence Scale

Statement	M	SD	Skew	Kur
I take long time to finish my classwork	2.74	1.23	-.319	-1.51
I perform well in my classwork	2.74	1.22	-.301	-1.49
I experience difficulties finding answers in class	2.57	1.15	-.086	-1.43
I am very intelligent	2.66	1.16	-.191	-1.44
I am smart person in my academics	2.57	1.19	-.119	-1.49

Note. N = 396; M= Mean; SD= Standard deviation; Skew = Skewness; Kur = Kurtosis

The results shown in Table 3 indicate that the mean of all items measuring perceived scholastic competence was above two out of a maximum of four. This means that respondents scored above average in how they rate their feelings of academic confidence. Also, the skewness for all statements was negative supporting the finding that the scores were above the mean.

The frequency counts that respondents carried out acts that violated academic rules were also tabulated. Table 4 discloses that 12.1% of the participants had never carried out any form of academic deceit while 59.6% engaged at least once in acts of academic deceit. On top of that, only 1.5% of the participants engaged very often in academic deceit.

Table 4: Number of Times Participants Engaged in Academic Deceit

Number of times	% N
Never	12.1
Rarely	59.6
Sometimes	24.8
Often	2.0
Very often	1.5
<i>Note. N = 396</i>	

Cumulatively, Table 4 showed that most (87.9%) participants have engaged in academic deceit at some point. The result was slightly lower than the findings of Galloway (2012) in which 93% of their respondents had engaged in academic deceit at least once. However, they are higher to what Ahmed and Sheikh (2016) found as 55.1% of their respondents carried out acts of academic deceit single or multiple times.

Bivariate correlation analysis was also carried out and the results are shown in Table 5

Table 5: Results from Bivariate Correlation Analysis between Sense of scholastic Competence and Academic Deceit

Statement	Pearson's <i>r</i>	Sig.
Looking at other student work during a test	-.28**	.000
Copying assignments from textbooks	-.17**	.001
Copying assignments from other students	-.27**	.000
Copying examination using sneaked notes	-.19**	.000
Help classmates cheat in an examination	-.19**	.000
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)		

From the results indicated in Table 5, there was an inverse and significant relationship between sense of scholastic competence and all statements related to academic deceit. This implied that perceived scholastic competence was inversely associated with commitment of various acts of academic deceit. In other words,

an increase in feelings of scholastic competence was associated with a decrease in academic deceit. That is, an individual's feeling of competence determined whether or not the person takes part in academic policy violations. The highest correlation was between copying from other students during an examination while copying assignments from textbooks had the lowest correlation with perceived academic competence.

In a nutshell, the results from correlation analysis revealed that perceived scholastic competence had a significant negative relationship with academic deceit ($r = -.32^{**}$, $p < .05$) as illustrated on Table 6.

Table 6: Correlation coefficients of Scholastic Competence and Academic Deceit

Pearson r	N	Sig (2-tailed)
-.32**	396	0.000

Note. $r(394) = -.32$, $p < .05$; ** $p < 0.01$ level

Since perceived scholastic competence was negatively related to academic deceit as evidence Table 6, the conclusion that perceived competence in academics was related to academic deceit was arrived at. The result implies that an individual who is confident in his capacity to do well in an academic task has less probability of engaging in academic deceit.

DISCUSSION

The present study sought to establish whether perceived scholastic competence was related to academic deceit. Perceived competence scores were above the mean suggesting that respondents feel that they are competent in handling academic tasks. The results from correlation analysis indicated that perceived scholastic competence had a significant negative relationship with academic deceit. This implied that a feeling of competence in successful completion of academic tasks like tests and assignments reduces the chances of engaging in academic deceit. The results may be explained by Chickering and Reisser's (1993) Identity development theory which postulated that it is a prerequisite for one to be competent for integrity to be achieved. This implies that perceived scholastic competence could be of significant importance in attainment of academic honesty.

The results are also similar to the findings of Peter et al. (2021) who reported that difficulties in mastery of subject contents predicted deceit among 28.5% of the informants. This may mean that respondents who are not able to grasp what is taught look for other ways including deceit which can potentially make them do well in examinations.

The results are somewhat similar to the findings of Hussein et al. (2018), who indicated that perceived competence related significantly with deceit behaviours in tests. Conversely, deceit in assignments had no relation to respondents' perceived competencies. The ongoing study reported significant relationships with both deceit in tests and assignments.

In brief, the current study affirms the place of student perceived scholastic competence in relation to academic deceit. This therefore calls for a concerted effort by all stakeholders in education to ensure that student perception of scholastic competence is boosted as it may go a long way in reducing the incidences of academic deceit.

CONCLUSION

The study established that sense of competence was inversely related to academic deceit. This is to say that when students feel competent, then they may find no reason to take part in committing academic

transgressions. This therefore suggests that fostering sense of competence is critical in building students confidence in their abilities to handle scholastic activities. In consequence, incidences of academic deceit may reduce.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since majority of the respondents engaged in academic deceit, there is need to have quality delivery of the curriculum which may make students understand what is being taught, consequently boosting their feelings of competence to handle scholastic tasks. This study thus recommends that students be helped to prepare themselves adequately through quality and timely completion of the syllabus.

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