



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

INFLUENCE OF NEGATIVE PARENTAL ATTACHMENT STYLES, SELF-EFFICACY AND MORAL COMPETENCE ON ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN SELANGOR, MALAYSIA

LEE GWAN YEW

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By

LEE GWAN YEW

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science**

April 2019

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Abstract of the thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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April 2019

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Academic dishonesty is a rising trend in the current academic world, especially in tertiary education levels. Undergraduates will resort to cheating for the sake of their CGPA, to maintain their scholarship or to even secure their work opportunity upon graduation. The objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between negative parental attachment styles (anxiety and avoidant), self-efficacy, moral competence and academic dishonesty among undergraduates in Selangor, Malaysia.

The respondents for the study were 244 undergraduate students recruited from two public universities in Selangor. The questionnaires that were distributed were the Perceptions and Attitudes towards Cheating among Engineering Student Survey 2 (PACES-2) to assess the academic dishonesty, the Experiences in Close Relationship-Revised (ECR-R) to assess for anxiety or avoidant attachment, General Self-Efficacy scale to assess self-efficacy and Moral Competence Test to assess moral competence. The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 24. Spearman's correlation was performed to assess the relationship between the independent variables of negative parental attachment styles (anxiety and avoidant), self-efficacy and moral competence have any correlation with academic dishonesty. In addition, Mann-Whitney U test was performed to assess gender differences in academic dishonesty among the undergraduates. Kruskal-Wallis analysis was performed to investigate the differences on academic dishonesty based on year of study. Stepwise multiple regression analysis was then performed to determine the unique predictors of academic dishonesty.

The present study found that there was a negative significant relationship between self-efficacy with academic dishonesty ($r = -0.10; p \leq 0.05$). In addition, year of study was found to have a positive significant relationship with academic dishonesty ($r = 0.11; p \leq 0.05$). However, gender ($r = 0.04; p > 0.05$), anxiety attachment ($r = 0.03; p > 0.05$), avoidant attachment ($r = 0.02; p > 0.05$) and moral competence ($r = 0.02; p > 0.05$) were not significant with academic dishonesty. Similarly, The Mann-Whitney U test revealed no gender differences ($U = 3720, p = 0.49$) between male and female in academic dishonesty. In addition, the Kruskal-Wallis analysis found no differences in year of study ($H(2) = 4.96, p = 0.08$) with regards to academic dishonesty. The stepwise regression analysis found that self-efficacy ($\beta = -0.18, t = -2.82, p = 0.05$) predicted academic dishonesty among respondents.

In conclusion the study found that self-efficacy was a good predictor of academic dishonesty among the undergraduates in Selangor, Malaysia. Self-efficacy proves to reduce the unethical behaviour through the cognition of an individual by acting as a rational point for a behaviour.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

PENGARUH GAYA PERAPATAN IBU BAPA NEGATIF, EFIKASI KENDIRI DAN KOMPETENSI MORAL TERHADAP KETIDAKJUJURAN AKADEMIK DALAM KALANGAN MAHASISWA DI SELANGOR, MALAYSIA

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Ketidakjujuran akademik, ialah trend yang semakin meningkat dalam dunia akademik kini terutamanya di peringkat pengajian tinggi. Mahasiswa sanggup menipu untuk mengekalkan CGPA, mengekalkan biasiswa ataupun memastikan mereka mendapat peluang kerja selepas tamat pengajian. Objektif kajian ini ialah untuk mengkaji perkaitan antara gaya perapatan ibu bapa negatif (*anxiety* dan *avoidant*), efikasi sendiri, kompetensi moral dan penipuan akademik dalam kalangan mahasiswa di Selangor, Malaysia.

Responden kajian ini ialah 244 mahasiswa dari dua universiti awam di Selangor, Malaysia. Borang soal selidik yang diedarkan ialah *Perceptions and Attitudes towards Cheating among Engineering Student Survey 2 (PACES-2)* untuk menilai penipuan akademik, *Experiences in Close Relationship-Revised (ECR-R)* untuk menilai gaya intimasi *anxiety* atau *avoidant*, skala keberkesanan diri untuk menilai efikasi sendiri dan ujian kompetensi moral untuk menilai kompetensi moral.

Data tersebut dianalisis dengan menggunakan *Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)*, versi 24. Korelasi *Kendall tau* digunakan untuk menilai perkaitan antara pembolehubah bebas gaya perapatan ibu bapa negatif (*anxiety* dan *avoidant*), efikasi diri, serta kompetensi moral dengan penipuan akademik. Selain itu, ujian *Mann-Whitney U* dijalankan untuk menilai perbezaan jantina dalam penipuan akademik dalam kalangan mahasiswa. Analisis *Kruskal-Wallis*, dijalankan untuk mengkaji perbezaan dalam penipuan akademik berdasarkan tahun pengajian. Analisis regresi berganda *Stepwise* dijalankan untuk menentukan peramal unik bagi penipuan akademik.

Kajian ini mendapati bahawa terdapat perkaitan signifikan yang negative antara efikasi sendiri dengan ketidakjujuran akademik efikasi diri secara negatif dikaitkan dengan ketidakjujuran akademik ($r = -0.10$; $p \leq 0.05$). Tambahan pula, tahun pengajian mendapati bahawa terdapat perkaitan positif dengan ketidakjujuran akademik ($r = 0.11$; $p \leq 0.05$). Walau bagaimanapun, jantina ($r = 0.04$; $p > 0.05$), lampiran kecemasan ($r = 0.03$; $p > 0.05$), kompetensi moral ($r = 0.02$; $p > 0.05$) tidak signifikan dengan ketidakjujuran akademik. Begitu juga, ujian Mann-Whitney U tidak menunjukkan perbezaan dalam ketidakjujuran akademik ($U = 3720$, $p = 0.49$) antara lelaki dan perempuan. Di samping itu, analisis Kruskal-Wallis tidak menemui perbezaan dalam ketidakjujuran akademik berdasarkan tahun pengajian ($H(2) = 4.96$, $p = 0.08$). Analisis regresi *Stepwise* mendapati bahawa efikasi sendiri ($\beta = -0.18$, $t = -2.82$, $p = 0.05$) meramalkan ketidakjujuran akademik kalangan responden.

Kesimpulannya kajian mendapati bahawa efikasi sendiri merupakan peramal yang baik bagi ketidakjujuran akademik dalam kalangan mahasiswa di Selangor, Malaysia. Efikasi sendiri membuktikan untuk mengurangkan tingkah laku yang tidak beretika melalui kognisi seseorang dengan bertindak sebagai titik rasional untuk tingkah laku.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Anxiety	Anxiety Attachment
Avoidant	Avoidant Attachment
C Index / C Score	Moral Competence Index Scoring
Gender	Gender
Year	Year of Study
PACES-2	Perceptions and Attitudes toward Cheating among Engineering Student Survey 2
MCT	Moral Competence Test
SE	Self-efficacy (Scale / Score)
ECR-R	Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised
UKM	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Academic dishonesty has plagued the academic world for years, often driven by students who desire to compete with their peers, make their parents proud or even to deliver an impressive resume to potential employers in the form of accomplishments. This behaviour is not bound to the academic field alone but it seeps into society and the workforce causing various social illnesses. Academic dishonesty is defined as “the use of unauthorized assistance with the intent to deceive instructors or people who are assigned to evaluate the student’s work to meet course or degree requirements” (The Regents of the University of Colorado, 2017). Examples of what constitutes academic dishonesty included plagiarism, stolen works and others.

This behaviour continues to pave its way into the academic field which may lead to a reformation of the present academic field into a centre point of mass production of individual with dishonest behaviours to be released in the workforce. Although it may seem like a minor ripple in the academic field, it will start making waves in the workforce leading to events such as the Enron scandal. In fact, academic dishonesty was found to have an association with general criminality among those who have reported engaging in the behaviour (Williams & Williams, 2012).

In Asia, cases of academic dishonesty that were reported by media range from cheating in national licensing tests, sex for grades, inefficiency of plagiarism checking software and ghost writers (Ahmad, Chin, & Chia, 2019; BBC, 2015; Hunter, 2015; Singapore Press Holdings Ltd., 2014). These cases of unethical behaviour raise questions on the academic integrity of the education system and policies. Playing truant regarding academic dishonesty may lead to severe consequences on education systems which happened to a prestigious university in Cambridge which led to its suspension of services for a year to ease investigation and reforming new honour codes to be implemented (Pérez-Peña, 2013). The event affected not just those who cheated whom were expelled but to those who were not involved as well as they were forced to wait for one year before continuing their study.

There are various factors that contribute to academic dishonesty. However most studies investigated on the demographics aspects (Sideridis, Tsaousis, & Al Harbi, 2015) and moral competence (Singh & Thambusamy, 2016) which were found to be highly influential on academic dishonesty. Thus, the present study investigated on the variables that were uncommonly studied with regards to academic dishonesty.

The variables that were investigated in the present study are the negative parental attachment styles, moral competence and self-efficacy. These variables despite the rarity of studies published regarding their influences was found to support their influence on academic dishonesty either to reduce it or to increase it. In terms of attachment styles, past findings supported that the anxiety attachment are the most prominent to engage in academic dishonesty while the avoidant and secure attachment will not participate in it (Miller & Ronit, 2017; Qualls, Figgars, & Gibbs, 2017). Most studies of the effects of moral competence on academic dishonesty found that it reduces academic dishonesty significantly (Singh & Thambusamy, 2016). Similarly, self-efficacy reported similar findings to reduce academic dishonesty (Alt, 2015). The three variables are found to have a strong influence on academic dishonesty, therefore, were used in the present study too investigate their influences among Malaysian undergraduates.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Academic dishonesty has been reported to be on the rise in Malaysia and steadily growing in numbers. Fairly recent findings on statistics of academic dishonesty occurrence in Malaysia reported approximately 52.5% undergraduates in healthcare and non-healthcare students reported that their peers had performed academic dishonesty (Tiong, Kho, Mai, Lau, & Hasan, 2018). This is alarming as the numbers of cheaters being reported has slightly went past the 50% mark which indicated that there will be more eventually after them. In fact, the numbers whom reported to engage in academic dishonesty among nursing students in academic dishonesty in academic settings and clinical settings were reported to be 82.1% and 74.6% respectively (Abusafia, Roslan, Mohd Yusoff, & Mat Nor, 2018). This is rather alarming as indicates that the present education system may or may not be compatible with student in present times or the ways to curb this unethical behaviour is not prevailing.

Ideally, academic dishonesty should be in check and kept under control or even reduced. As it would pose to be a dangerous threat if these unethical individual were left to run important task that governs people or manage people's lives as they will try unethically to resolve matters. This may lead to a downfall of ethics in present society and lead to the rise of unethicalness. Therefore, in the present study it was proposed to investigate the demographic of the undergraduates (age, gender and year of study), the negative parental attachment styles experienced by the undergraduates, their moral competence and self-efficacy.

Attachment styles which are anxiety attachment and avoidant attachment were correlated with academic dishonesty. The studies found that those that are raised with anxiety attachment styles are prone to academic dishonest behaviours (Qualls et al., 2017). However, the avoidant attachment styles individuals were found to be dishonest but rarely involves themselves in fraud (Miller & Ronit, 2017). This indicated that the negative parental attachment styles specifically anxiety attachment has a strong influence on academic dishonesty as compared to avoidant attachment.

Older findings on the effects of moral competence towards academic dishonesty found that university students have not fully developed their moral competence where they are unable to determine what is ethically right and wrong (Rooney, 2015). An ethical dilemma involving the professional role of the student may waver their moral competence to perform the unethical behaviour (Henning et al., 2013).

Previous findings on the relationship between self-efficacy and academic dishonesty found that it decreases the unethical behaviour. Studies on this variable found that it decreases the chances of the occurrence of the behaviour when the student's self-efficacy levels are higher (Fida, Tramontano, Paciello, Ghezzi, & Barbaranelli, 2016). Thus this raises the question how strong does self-efficacy influences one's academic integrity and reduce the likelihood to commit academic dishonesty.

To summarize, negative parental attachment style, both anxiety and avoidant attachment styles, self-efficacy and moral competence were found to be influential factors to academic dishonesty. An increase in any four of the variables may influence the occurrence of academic dishonesty among undergraduates.

1.3 Research Questions

In order to answer the problems stated in the problem statement on the roles of the four independent variables on the dependent variable, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What are the relationships between negative parental attachment styles, self-efficacy, moral competence and academic dishonesty?
2. How does academic dishonesty differ according to the gender and year of study of the undergraduate students?
3. What are the unique predictors of academic dishonesty?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1.4.1 General objective

This study aims to investigate the relationship between negative parental attachment styles (anxiety and avoidant), self-efficacy, moral competence and academic dishonesty among undergraduates in Selangor, Malaysia.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

- Objective 1: To describe the demographic variables, academic dishonesty, negative parental attachment styles (anxiety and avoidant), moral competence and self-efficacy among respondents.
- Objective 2: To determine the relationship between negative parental attachment styles (anxiety and avoidant), moral competence, self-efficacy and academic dishonesty among respondents.
- Objective 3: To determine gender differences in academic dishonesty among respondents.
- Objective 4: To determine year of study differences in academic dishonesty among respondents.
- Objective 5: To determine unique predictors of academic dishonesty among respondents.

1.5 Hypotheses of the Study

- Objective 2: To determine the relationship between negative parental attachment styles (anxiety and avoidant), moral competence, self-efficacy and academic dishonesty among undergraduates.

- H₀1: There is no significant relationship between gender and academic dishonesty among undergraduates in Selangor, Malaysia.
- H₀2: There is no significant relationship between year of study and academic dishonesty among undergraduates in Selangor, Malaysia.
- H₀3: There no significant relationship between anxiety attachment and academic dishonesty among undergraduates in Selangor, Malaysia.
- H₀4: There is no significant relationship between avoidant attachment and academic dishonesty among undergraduates in Selangor, Malaysia.
- H₀5: There is no significant relationship between self-efficacy and academic dishonesty among undergraduates in Selangor, Malaysia.
- H₀6: There is no significant relationship between moral competence and academic dishonesty among undergraduates in Selangor, Malaysia.

- Objective 3: To determine gender differences in academic dishonesty among respondents.

- H₀7: There is no significant difference in academic dishonesty by the gender of the undergraduates.

- Objective 4: To determine year of study differences in academic dishonesty among undergraduates.

- H₀8: There is no significant differences between the year of study of the undergraduates and academic dishonesty

Objective 5: To determine unique predictors of academic dishonesty among respondents.

H₀₉: All independent variables entered into the stepwise regression models does not significantly predict academic dishonesty among undergraduates in Selangor, Malaysia

1.6 Definition of Terms

Academic Dishonesty

Conceptual Definition: Academic dishonesty can be defined as a culture which students complete academic work by dishonest means or use deception to avoid academic work which is at odds with the value of integrity of many post-secondary institutions wish to develop (Hensley, Kirkpatrick, & Burgoon, 2013).

Operational Definition: Academic dishonesty refers to the respondent's score on the Perception and Attitude toward Cheating among Engineering Students Survey, version 2 (PACES-2) on mean number of times cheated (Harding, Mayhew, Finelli, & Carpenter, 2007). The subscale measures mean number of times of cheating.

Negative Parental Attachment Styles

Conceptual Definition: Attachment styles can be defined as an enduring and affectional bond of substantial intensity (Bowlby, 1969). Negative parental attachment styles are defined as the attachment anxiety and the avoidant attachment experienced by a child or individual from their parents

Operational Definition: Negative parental attachment refers to the score obtained on the subscales of anxiety attachment and avoidant attachment from the Experiences in Close Relationships-Revised (ECR-R) scale (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan, 2000). High score measured from either the anxiety attachment or avoidant attachment indicates the attachment style experienced.

Self-Efficacy

Conceptual Definition: Self-efficacy can be defined as an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviours necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1977, 1994, 2012).

Operational Definition: Self-efficacy refers to the respondent's score on the General Self-efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) where a higher score on the scale signifies a higher level of self-efficacy.

Moral Competence

Conceptual Definition: Moral competence can be defined as the capacity to make decisions and judgements which are moral (i.e., based on internal principles) and to act in accordance with such judgement (Kohlberg, 1964, 1984)

Operational Definition: Moral competence refers to the scores on the Moral Competence Test (MCT) which is known as the Competence Index (C Index) and is defined as "the ability of a subject to accept or reject arguments on a particular moral issue consistently in regard to their moral quality even though they oppose the subject's stance on that issue" (Lind, 2008, 2017a) where a higher competence score (C Index) signifies higher levels of moral competence.

1.7 The significance of the Study

The findings of this study will support the theory proposed in the study, the social cognitive theory which is further supported with the neutralization theory. The concept of learning behaviour through our cognition, environmental factors and behavioural factors further justify that the theory has more to offer to study on behaviour

development. By including the neutralization theory, exploration of the effects of these variables to neutralize a certain behaviour can be understood as well. Thus student counsellors, educators, parents and psychologist may utilize these findings to further understand how unethical behaviour is developed based on the theories and provide an alternative method which makes use of these variables to change the odds of the unethical behaviour from developing to become a positive or ethical behaviour.

The study may provide knowledge advancements in the field of academic integrity. As the variables studied paves the way to understand how certain negative variables affect one's judgement in terms of academic integrity and how one's acceptance of the behaviour varies based on their attachment styles experienced during childhood. Therefore, through the study, the field of academic integrity may further be expanded to better understand how to promote honesty among undergraduates not only in the education field but in their own family as well. In addition, the knowledge of the variables studied may further expand the knowledge pool of the variables and open up more possibilities for future researches in the field.

The study will provide help for practitioners in the fields of education in designing education programs to meet and promote academic honesty among undergraduates. The education field constantly changes with the students over the years which resulted in dishonest behaviours when they're unable to cope due to their struggle in education. Through a better understanding of academic dishonesty and the factors influencing it, the study will provide guidance to design academic programmes to further enhance student's self-efficacy and moral competence to promote academic integrity.

The findings of the study are a concern for parents, students, education systems and society as a whole. Attachment styles experienced by children leaves a lasting impression on their development of individual behaviour. As such negative parental attachment styles may leave negative behaviour developments while positive attachment style leaves positive behaviour development in individuals which is of an importance to be understood. In addition, self-efficacy and moral competence may be used to counter the balance implied by the negative parental attachment styles and be utilized as a pillar of support for these individuals to develop positive behaviours. The factors of cognition from self-efficacy and moral competence may provide changes in the ways individuals think and act as such it should be a concern for parents, students, education systems and society to harness and promote these cognition factors in individuals.

1.8 Theoretical Background

The present study was guided by the assumptions of the social cognitive theory to explain academic dishonesty (Bandura, 1986, 1989, 1999) which was used to explain how the cognitive factor and environmental factor influences the behaviour. Furthermore, the cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1962) was taken in to explain the relationship of academic dishonesty, negative parental attachment styles, moral

competence and self-efficacy. The theories were discussed in relation to the dependent variable of academic dishonesty.

1.8.1 Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1989)

The premise of the social cognitive theory is that human behaviour is the result of a triadic reciprocal determinism in which behaviour, cognition and environment influences and operate with one and another one in a bidirectional relationship as shown in Figure 1.1 (Bandura, 1989). According to Bandura (1989), the reciprocal causation is not defined, as the sources of influence are of equal strength nor that the reciprocal influences will occur simultaneously as it will take some time for the causal factor to exert its influences.

Bandura defined the cognitive factors consists of expectations, beliefs, self-perceptions, goals, intention and biological properties of the organism. As such, it is a type of cognition or a mental schema formed by the individual as a human being. The environmental factor consists of personal characteristics and environmental influences (Bandura, 1989). Bandura also believed that “human expectations, beliefs and emotional bents and cognitive competencies are developed and modified by the social influences that convey information and activate emotional reactions through modelling, instruction and social persuasion” (Bandura, 1986). As such the environmental factor may alter the cognition of an individual and vice versa in which the cognitive factor may alter the environmental factors as well. The behavioural factor consists of the skills, practice, vicarious experiences and self-efficacy. In addition, Bandura asserted that behavioural factors may either shape or be shaped by the environmental factors depending on the situation it is presented as such that the people are the product and producers of the environment (Bandura, 1989).

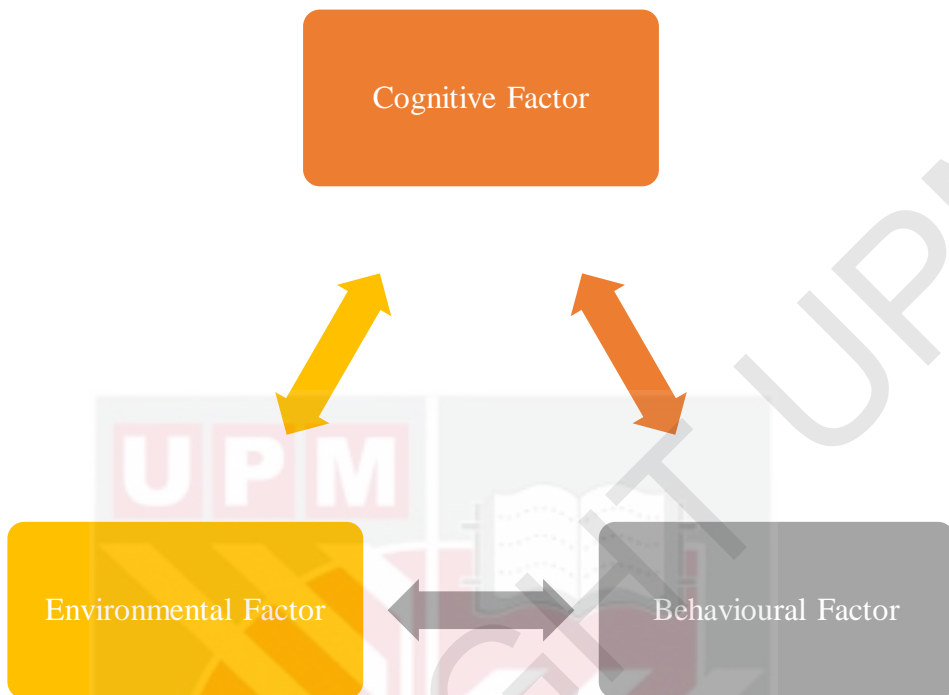


Figure 1.1 : Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory

For the present study, the main constructs of the cognitive factors are the undergraduate's levels of moral competence and their levels of self-efficacy, the environmental factor that was being studied is their negative parental attachment styles which they had experienced and their demographics (gender and year of study) while the dependent variable, academic dishonesty as a behavioural factor. Self-efficacy as described by Bandura (1994) that it serves as a thought process or perception of the individual in their capabilities to accomplish a task. Similarly, the term, "moral competence" which Kohlberg (1964, 1984) proposed is a cognitive process or a capacity to make a decision which is ethical and to act in accordance with that decision. In social cognitive theory, it is suggested that peers and family may represent the environmental factor (Bandura, 1989). Attachment styles being the environmental factor as the unique bond formed between the parent and child influences their behaviour including their demographics as it plays a role in their levels of maturity and understanding of morality. As for the behavioural factor, the academic dishonesty is a behavioural factor as it is a clearly understood that individual who cheat may influence their ideology of it being an acceptable behaviour.

This theory proposes that every factor has a bidirectional relation where an increase in one factor induces the change in another factor but not so drastically or instantaneously. Academic dishonesty as a whole are influenced by the individual cognitive factors such as moral judgement and self-efficacy. The environmental factor which is the attachment

styles which the individual was raised in may change their view with regards to the behaviour.

To summarize, the social cognitive theory proposes that every factor has a causal relation to one another where each factor influence one another in a cycle among behaviour, cognition and the environment. Therefore, it is understood that a change in one factor may cause a change in another factor but not so drastically or immediate as it would take time to gradually alter.

1.8.2 Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957, 1962)

The theory of cognitive dissonance was proposed by Festinger (1957, 1962) which suggest that every individual has a cognition that they hold true to and should a conflicting attitudes, beliefs or behaviour occur, it would lead to a feeling of discomfort which causes one's cognition to be altered to accept it. To integrate it with the present study, it is believed that undergraduates will experience cognitive dissonance to perform academic dishonesty as such they will try to quell the dissonance through their negative parental attachment styles, moral competence and self-efficacy.

The theory of cognitive dissonance suggest that every individual has an inner drive to hold all their attitudes and behaviours in harmony and avoid disharmony which came to known as cognitive consistency (Festinger, 1957, 1962). Thus, when the cognitive consistency is threatened, something will need to be done to quell the dissonance that is being experienced. Thus, there are three ways cognitive dissonance may be reduced which is shown in Figure 1.2.

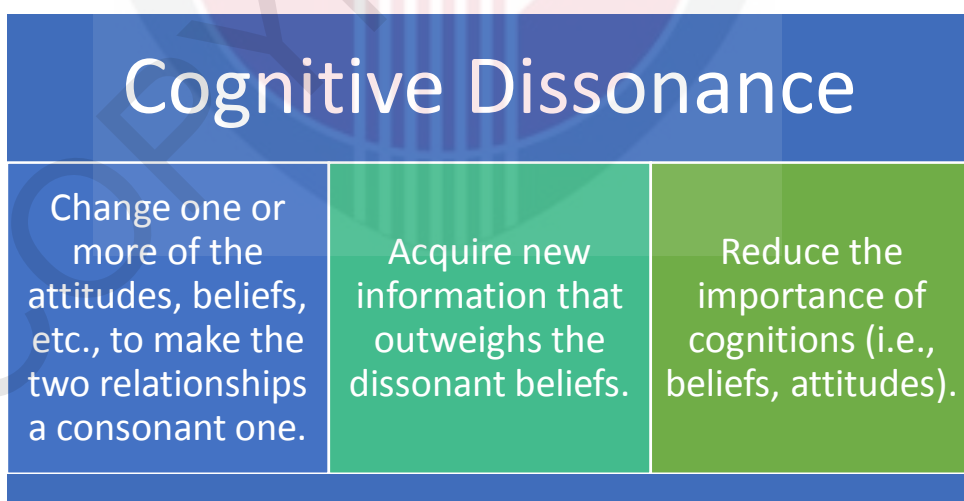


Figure 1.2 : Ways to reduce cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957, 1962; McLeod, 2018)

The first method to reduce cognitive dissonance is to change on or more of the attitudes, beliefs, etc., to accept the conflicting beliefs, attitudes or behaviour (Festinger, 1957, 1962; McLeod, 2018). In this situation, an individual may attempt to make changes on their principles and begin to accept the new actions that contradicts with their principles. However if this method does not work, they may attempt to gather new information to counter the dissonant beliefs. In this situation, they will try gather information from the environment as a reason for their action. For example in the present study, should the undergraduates find others cheating as well, they may use that information to accept that cheating is acceptable in the university and execute it despite their principles. The third method is to reduce the importance of cognition in which an individual may attempt to lower their cognitions and try to accept the attitudes, beliefs or behaviour that has occurred in the situation (Festinger, 1957, 1962; McLeod, 2018). In this situation, the cognition or one's principles were lowered to accept the behaviour which is by the individual themselves and not others.

In the present study, it is believed that when undergraduates perform academic dishonesty they may experience cognitive dissonance from their negative parental attachment styles, moral competence and self-efficacy. The occurrences of the dissonance may cause them to feel uncomfortable to perform the cheating behaviour as such they will seek ways to reduce its effect to accept the behaviour. However, it may also work in opposite where the dissonance may overwhelm the conflicting behaviour, preventing the behaviour from occurring.

1.8.3 Integration of Theories

There is no single theory that can explain how the cognitive and environmental factors contribute to the behaviour. Therefore, the two theories proposed earlier are to be integrated to comprehensively explore the cognitive and environmental factors influence on academic dishonesty. The present study was guided by the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) and the cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957, 1962). The present study's theoretical framework is shown in Figure 1.3.

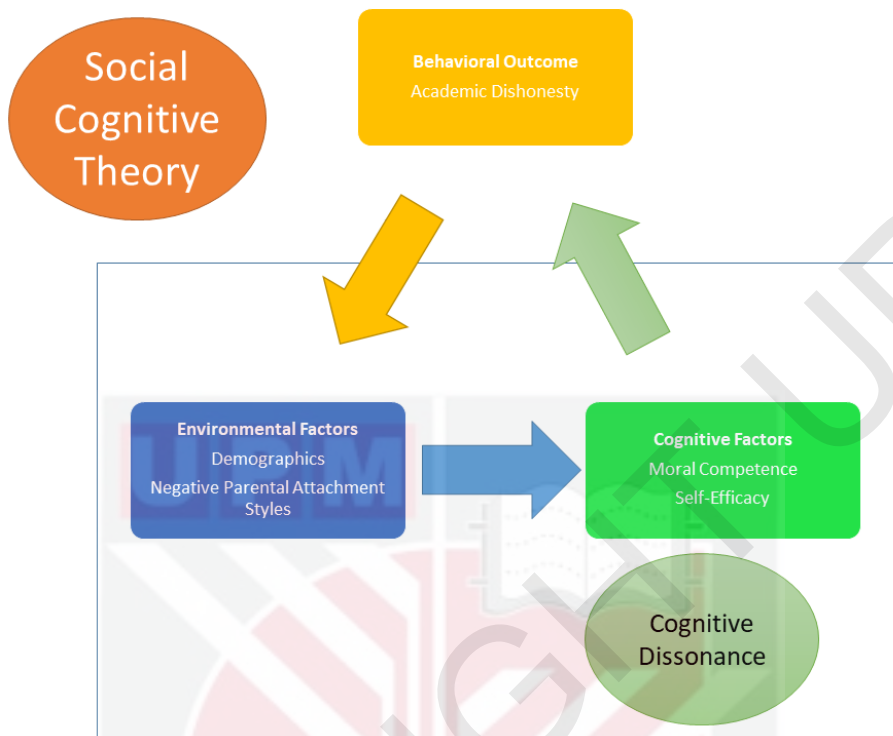


Figure 1.3 : Theoretical framework of the study

The present study theoretical framework was derived from the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) and the Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957, 1962). The Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) suggested that the environmental factors and the cognitive factors plays a huge role in behaviour development. The environmental factor as a form of a teacher, where their development at the present was the result of their learning and interaction with the environmental factors. The undergraduate's attachment with their parents during the early stages of life are important to them as they form the base to understand the world. Furthermore, the cognitive factors plays a huge role on their development outcomes. Individuals with low levels of self-efficacy develop a maladaptive sense of inabilities to perform tasks given to them either a simple task or a difficult task. In addition, individuals with lower moral competence may develop a sense of acceptance of unethical behaviour. Thus, the aim and purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationship between the cognitive factors (moral competence and self-efficacy) and environmental factors (demographics and negative parental attachment styles) on the behavioural outcome (academic dishonesty).

According to the Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957, 1962), an individual may experience dissonance in the form of cognition where their beliefs and principles contradicts with their actions. Thus, in the present study, academic dishonesty was explored from the cognitive factor which included moral competence and self-efficacy

and the environmental factors which includes demographics and negative parental attachment styles.

1.9 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the present study was constructed with the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) and the Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957, 1962). With reference to Figure 1.4, the present study consist of six main variables which are the demographics (gender and year of study), moral competence, negative parental attachment styles (anxiety and avoidant) and self-efficacy. The dependent variable is academic dishonesty which is the behavioural outcome and the main focus of the study. The conceptual framework of the present study is presented in Figure 1.4.

The conceptual framework of the present study is based on the integration of the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) and the Cognitive Dissonance Theory (Festinger, 1957, 1962). The Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes on how the behaviour outcome was the result of the interactions between the cognitive factor ad the environmental factor. As seen in Figure 1.4, the behavioural outcome is academic dishonesty. The environmental factors are represented by negative parental attachment styles. The undergraduate's gender, year of study and attachment styles exert their influences on the undergraduate's development based on gender roles, their peers and their bond with their parents. In addition, the cognitive factors are represented by moral competence and self-efficacy. These variables plays a huge role in decision making and affects the decision to commit academic dishonesty.

Furthermore, based on the Cognitive Dissonance Theory, the variables are investigated in terms of the influence of the environmental factor and cognitive factor creating the dissonance towards the behavioural outcome. The variables namely moral competence, negative parental attachment style and self-efficacy plays a strong role in creating the dissonance towards academic dishonesty. As such an alteration in any of these variables may cause them to accept and perform academic dishonesty.

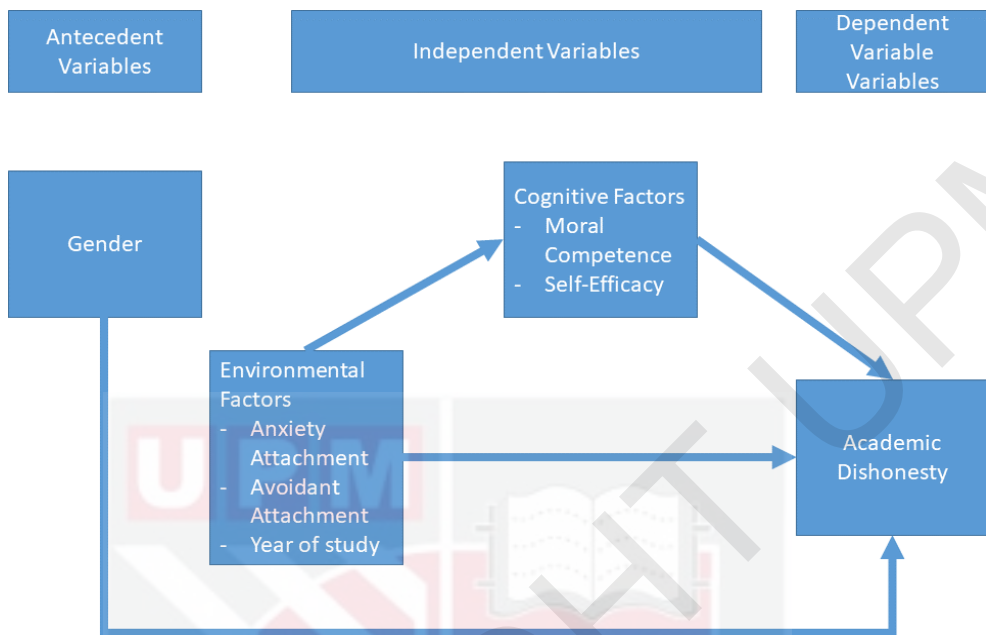


Figure 1.4 : Conceptual Framework of the Study

Past studies have found that both attachment styles of anxiety and avoidant attachment have been found to be correlated with academic dishonesty but the differences that were found between the two was that the avoidant attachment rarely involves themselves in fraud despite being involved in academic dishonesty (Miller & Ronit, 2017; Qualls et al., 2017). Self-efficacy was found in previous studies was found to be an inhibitor (Alt, 2015; Fida et al., 2016) of academic dishonest behaviours which leads to how does this particular variable affect academic dishonesty. Moral competence was found to inhibit academic dishonesty similarly as self-efficacy (Rooney, 2015; Singh & Thambusamy, 2016). In addition, year of study was found to have an effect on academic dishonesty either contributing to it (Henning et al., 2015) or reducing it (Musau & Boibanda, 2018).

1.10 Summary

Chapter 1 introduces the background of the study and the problem statements for the present study. It closely followed by the general and specific objectives, hypothesis, definition of terms and significance of the study. Lastly, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of the present study were illustrated. The following chapter are the reviews of past literatures to support the present study.

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