

Academic Integrity: Influence on the Research Skills of the Pre-Service Teachers

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Abstract: Academic integrity plays a critical role for the achievement of the students. It is also a principle that students should uphold in dealing with every academic activity. However, some of the students fail to follow the standards yet; they still achieved and completed their academic work. This paper determined the level of academic integrity and research skills according to the perspectives of the pre-service teachers. This study employed descriptive correlational research design. The first part of the study focused on the self-evaluations of academic integrity of the pre-service teachers. The second part dealt with the self-report research skills. The researchers used modified and constructed questionnaires to gather the needed data. The findings of this study revealed that the pre-service teachers perceived that they exhibit a high level of academic integrity and a high level of research skills. The analysis further revealed that there is a significant relationship between the variables. Universities should foster within students to uphold academic integrity in writing research papers and other school requirements. It is highly significant to maintain standards in scientific and technical writing thereby universities should enhance mechanism and policies for academic honesty. There are no studies that relate academic integrity on research skills. Based on the result, the pre-service teachers need to engage in exercises to identify the literature gap analysis for them to be guided in analyzing the recent gaps of scholarly issues for their research to be appropriate and responsive to the needs of society.

Key-words: Academic Integrity, Research Skills, Pre-service Teachers, Teacher Training, Higher Education.

1. Introduction

Academic integrity is crucial for the achievement of the students. It is also a principle that students should uphold while engaging in every academic

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activity. However, some of the students fail to follow the standards set by the university.

Malpractices, such as cheating practices are one of the major problems for the administrators, institutions, and faculty (Maramark and Maline, 1993). Likewise, the same is true in a school community because it is prevalent among the students due to ignorance and confusions regarding what behaviors constitute dishonesty.

Okanović, Okanović, Mitrović, and Majstorovi (2013) conducted their recent study in Serbia, involving a large sample of students. They examined eight classes of attitudes towards school misbehavior which include attitudes towards exam cheating, truancy, falsifying school documents, rationalizing violence towards teachers, bribery and corruption, school nepotism and general attitudes towards misbehavior. The study reported that many students do not consider such behavior as an offense, but is a trend or even a recommended behavior.

It is already established that the term academic integrity is the standard for completing academic work (Grites and Rondeau, 2009) which build a set of values and skills that can influence the attitudes of the family, peer pressure, taught skills and modeling. With the purpose of attaining the academic integrity of the students, there is a need for them to follow ethical standards that should be integrated in the syllabus as part of the course requirements.

Research activity, as described by Griffith University (n. d) is the core activity in all universities which can increase the understanding and knowledge done by systematic investigation of issues, questions, phenomena or problems. The research skills of the graduates also involve generating and evaluating pertinent data and testing ideas, hypothesis, and theories.

In line with this, the pre-service teachers of the College of Education from Mindanao State University- General Santos City, Philippines should maintain being a catalyst of integrity while becoming a competent human resource. Regarding academic integrity in doing research, most pre-service teachers are able, and some are unable to do any form of malpractices for a reason that paraphrasing a context may result to confusions and vague statements, so they opt to change the synonyms of the words instead. They are aware of the consequences of doing any forms of malpractices, but they still tend to risk. Due to the stated realities, the researchers were prompted to undertake this research study.

2. Objectives of the study and framework

This study aimed to find out whether the self-evaluated academic integrity can influence the perceived research skills of the pre-service teachers of Mindanao State University, General Santos City during the academic year

of 2016-2017. Hopefully, the result of this study would be significant and would be a great help for the school head, teachers, parents, students, and research enthusiast.

The study of Fielden and Joyce (2008) discussed a multi-stakeholder and multi-level theoretical framework to analyze the selections of 125 published papers on academic integrity, all with Australasian authors. The respondents of their study had the same opinion with respect to the precise rules or guidelines required to produce a research output with integrity. However, in the papers reviewed if active or direct searching was the most unproductive searching technique (Bates, 2006), there was no consideration of the underlying factor. Additionally, Fielden and Joyce (2008) stated that there were inclusions on the teaching of the set of rules and guidelines. Therefore, all academic writers must know how to write correctly and would therefore not plagiarize or commit any academic dishonesty practice. Those who breaks the set of rules and guidelines will, therefore, be punished.

On the study of Kattenbraker (2007) where a total of six hundred six (606) research grantees and ninety- one (91) institutional representatives responded to the survey who reported a hierarchy of unethical research behaviors. This was cited from the study of Korenman, Berk, Wenger, and Lew (1998) and stated that the mean malfeasance or illegal rating was not related to the characteristics of the investigator performing the proposed act or its consequences. A malfeasance rating higher than 8.6 was due to fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism, and almost all thought they were unethical. A rating between seven and eight was received because of failure to give proper attribution or misleading statements about a paper. Others obtained a malfeasance rating between five and six because of sloppiness, conflicts of interest, oversights, and failure to share.

Conceptually, academic integrity refers to a relatively stable tendency to exhibit honest behavior during academic education (Okanović, Okanović, Mitrović, & Majstorović, 2013). As used in this study, this is the common standard of the University that fosters honesty in the scholastic studies/ researches by which all the pre-service teachers are expected to practice and uphold on the entire duration of their course. Hence, on this study, the pre-service teachers were asked of their self-evaluations on whether they engaged in specific dishonest behaviors. Whilst, research skill is defined as the systematic study of trend and scientific investigation of phenomena which includes careful collection, presentation, analysis and interpretation of qualitative data or facts that links an individual's speculation with reality (Ariola, 2006). In this study, research skills refer to the self-evaluation of the skills of pre-service teachers in writing their thesis as completion of the research requirements of the University from one to two-year research course undertaking. The conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1 below.

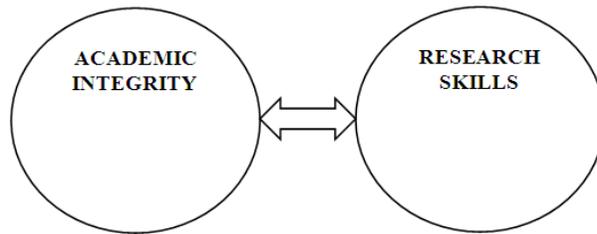


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The relationship between attitude and behaviour, according to later research, confirmed its existence and theories were developed which claims to account for the association. This commonly used concept was called as Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), but eventually, this was later developed into the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). This theory asserts that cheating happens because a student already has the intention to engage to cheat in the first place. Hence, in doing research and thesis writing, students should equip themselves with different skills that will aid their knowledge, while upholding their academic integrity standards. In doing so, they will perform thesis writing without plagiarizing and fabricating information that is used, though there are opportunities that will exist. Moreover, the policies and rules imposed by the school and the faculty members are essential in following the academic integrity standard. There is a need to exert efforts to reduce the opportunity to cheat, perhaps strengthening vigilance during exams, using additional proctors and exam versions, increasing education on the value of integrity and honesty, and the like.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-correlation design to determine if there was a significant relationship between the perceived academic integrity and research skills of the pre-service teachers of Mindanao State University, General Santos City. This study involved all one-hundred sixty (160) population of the third year Education pre-service teachers major in Bachelor in Elementary Education, and who were officially enrolled in Mindanao State University, General Santos City, Philippines. The researchers conducted this research during the academic year of 2016-2017. The instructors required these pre-service teachers to propose and defend action researches and term papers as part of their course requirements.

3.2 Instruments

The researcher used modified and constructed questionnaires based on the literature to determine the relationship of academic integrity and research

skills of the pre-service teachers. Three experts in their field of study were asked to validate the instruments. Thereafter, the instruments underwent pilot testing to secure the reliability of the questionnaires. The first part of the questionnaire dealt on the academic integrity of the students. This was modified from the McCabe Academic Integrity Survey Report (DuPree and Sattler, 2010). There was a modification of the academic integrity questionnaire due to the use of the pronouns “I” to make those complete statements. Likewise, the academic integrity questionnaire focused only on the specific behavior which was the last part of the original questionnaire since that covered already the need for focus of this study and this was also made to contextualize the instrument based on the local settings of the respondents. This had undergone validity which generated a total rating of 4.5 which yielded that the questionnaire was very highly valid as research experts rated it and had a Cronbach’s alpha index of reliability of 0.885.

The second part of the questionnaire was on the research skills of the students. It garnered a validity of 3.7 which meant that the questionnaire was highly valid. Based on the Cronbach’s alpha index of reliability, it generated a total rating of 0.976 which indicated that the questionnaire had excellent reliability.

After the conduct of the study, the data gathered were statistically analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlational statistics specifically weighted mean and Pearson r. The researchers tested the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The researchers used weighted mean to determine the level of academic integrity and research skills of pre-service teachers. Moreover, they employed Pearson r to determine if there is a significant relationship between the academic integrity and research skills of the pre-service teachers.

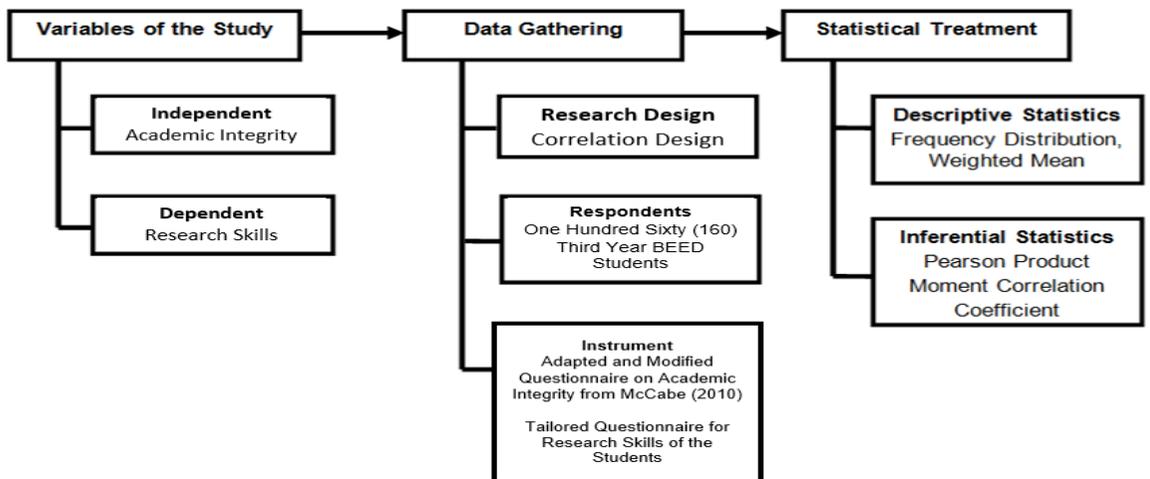


Figure 2. Research Design of the Study

4. Results and discussion

The following tables display the perceived academic integrity and research skills of pre-service teachers. Table 1 shows the extent of academic integrity of the pre-service teachers of Mindanao State University, General Santos City.

The pre-service teachers rarely use an electronic/digital device as an unauthorized aid during an exam (M=4.19) and digital technology such as text messaging to get unpermitted help from someone during a test or examination (M=4.18). It can be inferred that pre-service teachers may use their android phones to save documents, portable document formats, captured formula and even create a group chat but the result indicates a minimal resort to cheating using technology.

In 2005, McCabe surveyed college and university students. The results showed that there were 5% of undergraduates, 2% of graduate students and 11% of faculty who were engaged in the behavior. However, another result from a survey stated that thirty-five percent (35%) of students admitted using a cell phone to cheat.

Nonetheless, many students do not realize these behaviors are unethical because numerous students are involved in the culture of information that is free and always available on the Internet. For instance, a study showed that twenty-three percent (23%) of respondents did not think that storing notes on a cell phone was cheating, while, twenty-two percent (22%) said that texting friends during the examination is never a mistake (Common Sense Media, 2009).

Indicator	M	SD	Description
1. fabricate a bibliography.	3.91	1.002	Rarely true of me
2. work on an assignment with others when the instructor asked for individual work.	3.18	1.115	Sometimes true of me
3. work on an assignment with others via email or Instant Messaging when the instructor asked for individual work.	3.47	1.138	Rarely true of me
4. get questions or answers from someone who has already taken a test.	3.58	1.049	Rarely true of me
5. copy another student's program rather than writing my own in computer works.	3.99	.984	Rarely true of me
6. help someone else of my classmate cheat on a test.	3.81	.966	Rarely true of me
7. fabricate the results of the data.	4.06	1.071	Rarely true of me
8. fabricate research data.	3.93	1.100	Rarely true of me
9. copy from another student during a test or examination with his or her knowledge.	3.65	.946	Rarely true of me
10. copy from another student during a test or examination without him or her knowing it.	4.11	1.038	Rarely true of me
11. use digital technology such as text messaging to get unpermitted help from someone during a test or ex-	4.18	1.121	Rarely true of me

amination.			
12. receive unpermitted help on an assignment.	3.99	.955	Rarely true of me
13. copy (by hand or in person) another student's homework.	3.70	1.008	Rarely true of me
14. copy by using digital means such as Instant Messaging or email from another student's homework.	3.96	.961	Rarely true of me
15. paraphrase or copy a few sentences of material from a written source without footnoting or referencing it in a paper.	3.61	.891	Rarely true of me
16. submit a paper I obtained from a web site and claim it as my own work.	4.05	1.002	Rarely true of me
17. turn in a paper obtained in large part from a term paper website.	3.92	.938	Rarely true of me
18. paraphrase or copy few sentences of material from an electronic source - e.g., the internet - without citing it in a paper.	3.70	.889	Rarely true of me
19. use unpermitted crib notes or cheat sheets during a test.	4.14	1.021	Rarely true of me
20. use electronic crib notes stored in PDA, phone, or calculator to cheat on a test or exam.	4.09	1.045	Rarely true of me
21. use an electronic/digital device as an unauthorized aid during an exam.	4.19	1.090	Rarely true of me
22. copy material, almost word for word, from any written source and turning it in as my own work	4.11	1.013	Rarely true of me
23. turn in a paper copied, at least in part, from another student's paper, whether or not that student is currently taking the same course.	4.06	1.001	Rarely true of me
24. use a false or forged excuse to obtain an extension on a due date or delay writing an exam.	4.05	.996	Rarely true of me
25. cheat on a test in any other way.	3.82	1.027	Rarely true of me
Total Mean	3.89	.644	Rarely true of me

*1.00-1.80 (always true of me); 1.81-2.60 (Often true of me); 2.61-3.40 (sometimes true of me);
3.41-4.20 (rarely true of me); 4.21-5.00 (never true of me)

Table 1. Academic Integrity of Pre-Service Teachers

They also rarely use unpermitted crib notes or cheat sheets during a test (M=4.14). Using crib notes had been a tactic that students use to cheat yet using these during a test or examination was viewed as either not cheating or deliberate cheating (Balbuena & Lamela, 2015). There has been insufficient literature that address about situational and routine activities approach to rule breaking like how students actually plan, manage and execute the complex ways of importing the crib notes during the examination. They use it while avoiding the detection from proctors and perhaps a kind of confusion about the severity of using these during an exam or test. Also, they collaborate with peers because it has a clear advantage over solitary cheating. A student can distract the professor and another student has enough time and opportunity to get and place the crib notes in a strategic location without the fear of being caught or detection (Shon, 2006).

The pre-service teachers copy a test or examination from another student without the idea of the other person ($M=4.11$). James, Olatona, and Samuel (2015) asserted that the so-called “giraffing” is one of the most common methods that occur in any examination, which involves stretching of the student’s neck to copy from another student with or without the latter’s consent. Research also reported that out of nine hundred forty-three (943) students, there was thirteen percent (13%) who practiced this form of behavior. However, this form of behavior ranked twelve (12) out of twenty-one (21) common forms of behavior (Greasley, 2011). Likewise, in 2016, the study of Oko and Adie showed that 70% of the respondents agreed that copying others’ scripts through spying, also known as “giraffing,” was the most commonly used form of examination malpractice.

Overall, the pre-service teachers reported that they have a great extent of academic integrity which obtained a total mean of 3.89. It can be inferred that these pre-service teachers value academic integrity in their scholastic undertakings since two of the core values of the University includes integrity and excellence. These results support the findings of Jones (2011) during the Fall Semester on 2010 among forty-eight (48) students who were enrolled in an online business communication course. Regarding cheating, 41 percent of the students said they would never cheat, and 33 percent of the students said they would never plagiarize an assignment because of ethics. Likewise, 50 percent of the students from the students at the University of Central Florida thought the students did not cheat.

Considering that the general public commends students to pursue knowledge and report their discoveries truthfully, they expected that any misconduct or dishonesty destabilizes the stature of a university. Moreover, the fundamental purposes and processes of an academic community are deliberately interfered when academic authorities tolerate such actions. Incorporating the code of academic integrity, as the University of Vermont (2015) confirmed, “reaffirms the principle of student academic achievement coupled with personal responsibility and accountability for individual action and the consequences of that action.”

Moreover, Table 2 displays the perceived level of the research skills of pre-service teachers of Mindanao State University, General Santos City. The pre-service teachers often formulate the process in gathering the data with an ethical procedure ($M=4.08$). The pre-service teachers asked for the consent forms of the parents of the elementary learners and assent forms of the elementary learners themselves to secure ethics in their research process.

Likewise, prior to conducting their research studies in public elementary schools, they asked 3 to 5 technical experts to validate their questionnaires and after which pilot test their instruments to secure validity and reliability of the questionnaires. Most, Craddick, Crawford, Redican, Rhodes, Rukenbrod, & Laws, (2003) confirmed that regardless of its field of study or

preference for identifying the data, whether quantitative or qualitative, the accuracy of data collection is a priority to maintain the integrity of research because inappropriate data collection instruments will increase the likelihood of errors occurring.

Englander (2012) pointed out that it is essential to articulate methodologically the research process in ways that data collection and data analysis is part of a single unified procedure with the same underlying theory of science to achieve the same rigid quality as a scientific research document.

Additionally, the pre-service teachers often choose the exact locale of the study (M=4.03). Students choose the exact locale of the study since they have the knowledge of the area they are studying available for them. They conduct pre-surveys and interviews in their locale to verify that societal problems exist to make their studies relevant, appropriate and responsive to the needs of their society. They believed that the locale is vital in their research since they have to make decisions on what specific subject they will need to research and what location they will conduct their study in (Joynson, n. d). It is also focused on issues like sample selection, use of instruments, the expected comparison and many more (Bechhofer and Paterson, 2000).

Indicator	M	SD	Description
1. identify the literature gap of my study.	3.57	.936	Often
2. identify the general statement of my study.	3.70	.937	Often
3. formulate my introduction carefully to catch the reader's attention.	3.69	1.017	Often
4. formulate statement of the problem based on the title of my study.	3.83	1.047	Often
5. formulate the statement of the problem that will be investigated in my study.	3.85	1.004	Often
6. formulate the reasons and beneficiaries in conducting my research.	3.81	1.031	Often
7. state the scope and delimitation of my research and the topics that are supposed to be included and excluded in my study.	3.91	.996	Often
8. identify the reliable sources, facts and ideas that are needed to support my study.	3.85	1.035	Often
9. identify the unfamiliar key terms used in the study with brief but clear definitions.	3.83	1.029	Often
10. define the key terms operationally and conceptually.	3.83	1.043	Often
11. identify the research methodology that is applicable for my study.	3.88	1.078	Often
12. describe the respondents comprehensively to fit the purpose and provide the needed data of the study.	3.96	1.048	Often
13. solve the respondents of my study with exact numbers needed for my study.	3.94	1.048	Often
14. choose the exact locale of the study.	4.03	1.107	Often
15. state the reasons in the locale of the study why I need to conduct it in the specific place.	3.97	1.121	Often
16. select appropriately the instruments that are used to collect the needed data for my study.	3.99	1.028	Often
17. follow different steps on what to do in conducting my research.	4.02	1.049	Often

18. formulate the step by step procedure in gathering the data with ethical procedure.	4.08	1.040	Often
19. can determine the statistical method that I will use to treat the data gathered.	3.93	1.059	Often
Total Mean	3.88	.840	Often

*1.00-1.80(never); 1.81-2.60(rarely); 2.61-3.40(sometimes); 3.41-4.20(often); 4.21-5.00(always)

Table 2. Level of Research Skills of Pre-Service Teachers

The pre-service teachers often follow different steps on what to do in conducting their research (M=4.02). They are exposed to the research process prior to their proposal defense as part of the class exercises. Blankenship (2010) explained that “scientific process is a multiple-step process where the steps are interlinked with the other steps in the process”. To attain this, if students will make changes in one step of the process, they must go back to the previous procedures and review all the other steps to make sure that they follow properly the scientific ways throughout the process.

Likewise, the pre-service teachers can often identify the literature gap of the study (M=3.57). However, the pre-service teachers still need further training since they had difficulty in this skill as its mean showed the lowest compared to other means. Based on Akindele’s (n. d) study, out of the 20 graduate students, there were graduate students of whom 35 percent of Education, 40 percent of Humanities, and 52 percent of Social Sciences were unable to demonstrate the critical thinking and evaluation skills in their review of related literature. Their study did not show gaps that exist in previous studies.

Creswell (2012) pointed out that students should study the problem if their study fills a gap or void in the existing literature. In this way, their study fills a void by covering topics not addressed in the published literature.

Overall, the pre-service teachers reported that they have a high level of perceived research skills with a total mean of 3.88 result. This demonstrated that the pre-service teachers perceived that they have well-developed research skills due to numerous research requirements that they had undergone as part of the teacher education curriculum. This result is supported by the findings of Ismail and Meerah (2011) who evaluated the research competencies of doctoral students. Possessing the five components of their ability to conduct research, research capacity, reflection skills, problem-solving skills, communication skills, and research methodology skills, the research showed a high level which obtained a mean of 3.67 achievements. However, their skill on research methodology was at moderate level. Universiteit Leiden’s prospectus displayed that thesis writing seminar offers a platform to the students. This allows the students to present their thesis and discuss it with their fellow students and professors or the speakers. Moreover, the significant topics are discussed in the class. Some of these include defining the subject, formulating the research question and hypothesis, testing the theory and methodology,

seeking out reliable sources, building out bibliography, and structuring the thesis.

Further, Table 3 presents the relationship between perceived academic integrity and research skills of the pre-service teachers of Mindanao State University, General Santos City. The results showed that there is a low positive correlation between academic integrity and research skills of the pre-service teachers with the over-all result of $r=.212$ and p-value of $.007$. A p-value of less than 0.05 explains that only 5% of the variations attributes to the research skills of pre-service teachers. The other 95% of the variations in research skills is due to other variables. Based on the self-evaluation of the pre-service teachers, the result implies that the academic integrity of the pre-service teachers influences their research skills. The positive value of the correlation coefficient indicates that the greater the extent of academic integrity of pre-service teachers; the higher is their research skills.

Pre-Service Teachers				
Variables Correlated	r	r²	p-value	Remark
Academic Integrity and Research Skills of Pre-Service Teachers	.212	.045	.007	Significant

Table 3- Relationship between Academic Integrity and Research Skills as Perceived by

Since there are no literatures and studies conducted that show the relationship of this study, a relative article of Emerson, Rees, & MacKay (2005) highlighted in their study, entitled “Scaffolding Academic Integrity: Creating a Learning Context for Teaching Referencing Skills” that a student who acknowledged 24 percent of her secondary sources proved no plagiarism because she used too much quotations in the scientific report. Despite this, she showed competence in her acknowledgment of secondary sources. On the contrary, there were two students who had minor plagiarism problems because they only had 8 per cent of secondary source material. The study indicated that the plagiarism was unintentional and a misunderstanding of the misconduct. Nonetheless, the students should have indicated the proper use of paraphrasing and quoting secondary materials.

4. Conclusions

Based on the findings, the study concluded that the pre-service teachers of the College of Education perceived that they have a high level of academic integrity. They also perceived that they have a high level of research skills since they underwent research for two to three consecutive years during their study in the university. Therefore, this study confirmed that the academic integrity has an influence on the perceived research skills of the pre-service

teachers. However, it should be taken note that the pre-service teachers should work collaboratively or individually especially in doing assignments. They should also identify the literature gap analysis for them to be guided in analysing the recent gaps of scholarly issues. The result demonstrated that students need improvements in their research skills because the result of the study was mainly based on their self-evaluations and perceptions. Hence, there is a need to evaluate outcomes of their research knowledge and they need to undergo further research workshops and trainings.

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