



Decision-making of young people in integrity challenges and practical advice on smart decisions

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Content

A. Background	2
B. Literature Review	2
1. Cheating	2
2. Being Free-Rider.....	3
3. Plagiarism.....	4
4. Referencing Fraud	5
5. Fabrication of Data	5
C. Objective	6
D. Methodology.....	6
E. Results of Survey.....	7
1. Phenomenon of Academic Integrity	7
2. Different Challenges.....	8
3. Causes of Challenges.....	11
4. Reactions towards the challenges	11
5. Solutions of the challenges	12
6. Parties for Helping Students	14
F. Recommendations	14
1. Student.....	15
2. Peer	15
i. Establishment of Academic Integrity Committee	15
ii. Inter-School Committee Meetings.....	16
iii. Whistle-Blowers	16
3. School / Teacher.....	16
i. Coordination of Assignments Schedule	17
ii. Checking System	17
G. Conclusion.....	17
H. References.....	18
I. Appendix I: Survey Sample.....	21

A. Background

Young people need to make many decisions every day. In tertiary school-life, they should be well-prepared to handle challenges which infer to future integrity issues when working in society. The most frequent decisions made by them are related to academy, especially academic integrity challenges.

Defined by Alison Kirk (1996), academic integrity is the moral code of academia, including values such as avoidance of cheating or plagiarism; maintenance of academic standards; and honesty in research and publishing. For most students, they tend to commit academic misconduct in form of cheating, plagiarism and being free-rider and so forth.

In fact, most of the universities are being plagued by students' declining academic integrity compared with the past (Chapman, Davis, Toy, & Wright, 2004). Due to technological advancement, enormous amount of information are available to millions of people over the world at a second. Therefore, students can make use of various online search engines and refer to thousands of sources without stated authorship. In Hong Kong, the situation of academic misconduct may be much serious as they may "steal" ideas from Chinese books and translate them into English when submitting their assignments" (Deckert cited in Kwong, Ng, Pan, & Wong, 2010), showing low level of notice on academic integrity.

B. Literature Review

After reviewing numbers of publications, the most prominent cases include cheating, being free-rider, plagiarism, referencing fraud and fabrication of data.

1. *Cheating*

Josien and Broderick (2013) found that 74.5% undergraduate have engaged cheating before 2003. Such cheating behavior was uncovered in both written and electronic online examinations (Chapman, Davis, Toy & Wright, 2004; Kezar, 2004). Some committed cheating

by using high-tech devices such as wireless communication equipment (China reveals underground, 2010;The nation; 6 confess, 2003). Meanwhile, dishonest students used their mobile phone to send the questions and receive the answers.

The students committed such dishonest activities due to the lack of confidence in their ability to accomplish the work. Cheating is a chance to improve their grade (Wright, 2004). Sometimes, students act as cheaters because of the pressure from peers or high faculty expectations (Chapman, Davis, Toy& Wright, 2004; Kezar, 2004; Park cited in Reisenwitz, 2012). Besides, the behavior of cheating would be affected by different factors such as age, gender and Grade Point Average (GPA) (McCabe and Trevino cited in Josien and Broderick, 2013).

Hence, Professor Savage (1986) suggested that students can ask questions in essay form or conduct oral examination to prevent students copying the answers of others. Furthermore, setting up ethics lessons as the compulsory course may increase the self-discipline and students' ethical sensitivity as their critical thinking approach improved (Bernardi, Metzger, Scofield, Hoogkamp& al, 2004;Wright, 2004). Teachers can help via improving teaching skills to ensure students understand the contents.

2. *Being Free-Rider*

In tertiary academy, it is common for students to participate in group projects. However, students may face challenge of being free-riders. They refuse to join the group meeting and finish the work. Findings in Machine Learning (2012) revealed the reasons for students to become free-riders because of selfishness. They can enjoy efficiency gain of good result without sacrificing time and effort (Park cited in Reisenwitz, 2012). Even they have no contribution to the project but the group-mates have done the work for them.

Bushe (2010) suggested methods to avoid this challenge by having stable membership

and standardizing the roles of members. Clever students guide new members and help them to catch up the work. Through assigning different roles, they have clear ideas about own duties.

3. *Plagiarism*

Tertiary students have challenge in plagiarism whether to take advantage on convenience or flourish scholars with originality. Plagiarism refers to copying the exact wordings from written or online materials, quoting others' innovative ideas in different phrases as own thoughts and using ideas from family or friends (Kwong, Ng, Pan& Wong, 2010; Pricer, 2009). In other words, plagiarism is not only subjected to copy-and-paste activities but extended to “stealing” ideas.

Scholars suggested numerous possible reasons for Hong Kong students to plagiarize in viewpoints of students and tutors. For students, they have insufficient familiarity with the notion of plagiarism, the level of assignments is far beyond their ability and direct copying brings convenience. However, tutors may also promote plagiarism (Kwong, Ng, Pan& Wong, 2010; Pricer, 2009; Scanlan, 2006). When they merely select some assignments for marking or do not require students to submit the work to plagiarism detection tools, students are likely to copy the work from other students, books or internet.

To address this challenge, it is essential to set up a comprehensive plagiarism checking system tracking the direct copies and expressions using online translation tools in different wordings. Before handing in the work, students should sign honesty declaration form. By setting student honor code and electing student to be whistle blowers, students are bound to cultivate academic integrity (Puka, 2005; Scanlan, 2006). For teachers, they need to arrange higher order thinking assignments and avoid repeating same questions or topics for consecutive years (Chapman, Davis, Toy & Wright, 2004). Moreover, the faculty has to offer a formal warning to the students in plagiarism rather than only lowering their mark (Puka,

2005; Scanlan, 2006). Through the collaboration of these 3 parties, the scholars believe that it enhances students' academic integrity.

4. *Referencing Fraud*

One challenge students usually overlooked is the ignorance of accurate citations, references or clear statements of sources (Yeo cited in Kwong, Ng, Pan & Wong, 2010). Apart from omitting the standard academic citations for “borrowing” others' ideas, some may cite wrong references which are not the true sources (Kwong, Ng, Pan, & Wong, 2010; Wright, 2004). They copied the citations without having in-depth understanding or reading the publications.

A research revealed that the most common reason for committing referencing fraud is the overwhelming of academic work (93%). The cause comes next is students are “lazy to do it the right way” (92.4%). Besides, most of tertiary students have joined many extra-curricular activities and part-time jobs which ask for large devotions of time and effort (Kezar, 2004; Kwong, Ng, Pan, & Wong, 2010). Since ensuring the accuracy of each citation also requires a huge effort and time, students tend to forgo the preciseness.

Scholars suggested that this challenge can be minimized by adopting better time management of the students. To achieve this, tertiary academy can provide courses about effective approaches in utilizing their time. In addition, to deal with the problem of overwhelming projects, teachers should first coordinate with each other to ensure the students have enough time on doing assignments of different subjects (Kezar, 2004; Kwong, Ng, Pan, & Wong, 2010). With a comprehensive schedule, students can allocate time on quoting accurate references.

5. *Fabrication of Data*

Fabrication of data refers to intentional falsification or invention of misleading

statistics and information in academic research (Wright, 2004). Especially for the “deadline fighters”, they face the challenge to manipulate the results by themselves without actual facts or supports. The reasons for compromising are attributed to the insufficient time to handle various projects simultaneously and laziness to finish the whole research process (Kezar, 2004; Kwong, Ng, Pan, & Wong, 2010; Wright, 2004). Instead of collecting all the data from the research, some students prefer to untruly report the outcome.

The scholars believed that providing courses about time management for the students is crucial. More importantly, the coordination among tutors can alleviate students to rush all the projects at the same time and spend more time on collecting data (Kezar, 2004; Pricer, 2009). The resulting schedule may become a useful tool to overcome this challenge.

C. Objective

In this report, research about how Hong Kong students in tertiary education, who are generally being regarded as having sufficient intelligences to take their self-responsibilities, to make decisions in academic integrity challenges would be done. On the basis of bringing sufficient benefits without harming others’ interests, some smart decisions concerning improvement of academic integrity would be suggested.

D. Methodology

In order to get accurate data, this report uses primary and secondary approach. By using questionnaire, it can analyze the facts of current and real situation. About 120 students are invited to answer our questionnaire posted on www.qualtrics.com by using snowball approach. Afterwards, SPSS will be used to analyze and summarize the data. For secondary approach, online resources such as websites, newspapers and videos are used to support our findings on primary approach. Besides, as to gain understanding on academic integrity and increase the credibility of this report, professional journals and literatures will be used.

E. Results of Survey

After collecting the data via questionnaire, the data is analyzed by using SPSS. And the following part is the results.

1. *Phenomenon of Academic Integrity*

In figure 1, 45% and 38% students think that they have high and general academic integrity respectively. Most of the students (83%) think that they contain certain degree of average or above on academic integrity issue. However, 82% students think that others contain degree of average or less on that issue in figure 2. It shows that most students think their behavior is ethical though the reality is in doubt. Also, they think that others cannot resist with the academic integrity challenge like themselves.

Figure 1 - The degree of students' academic integrity

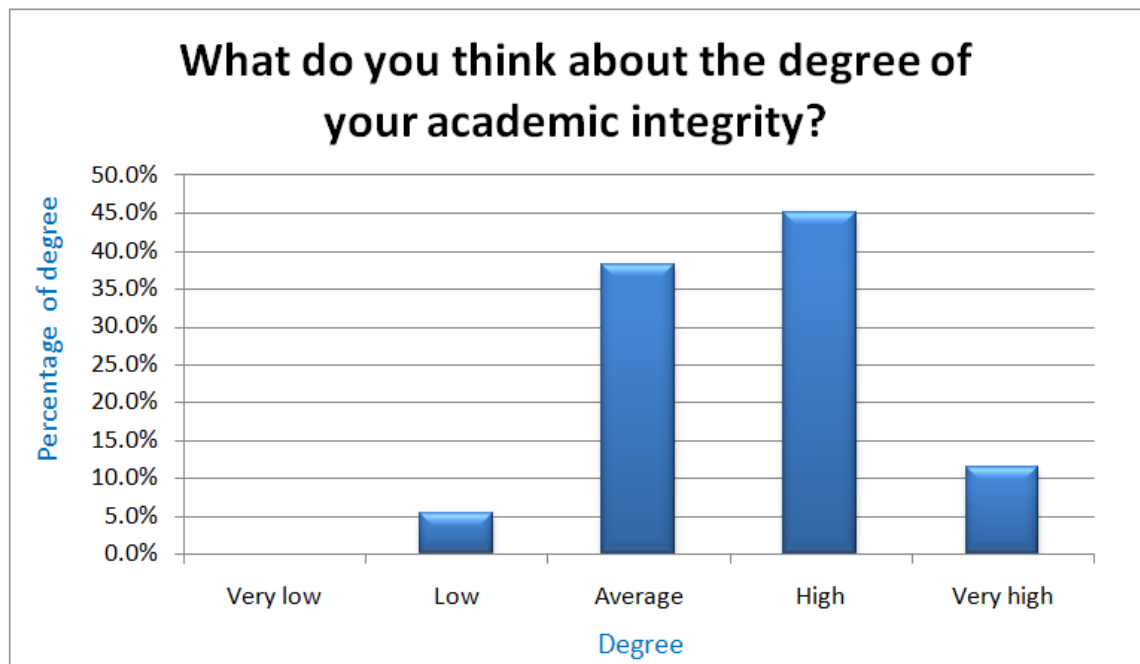
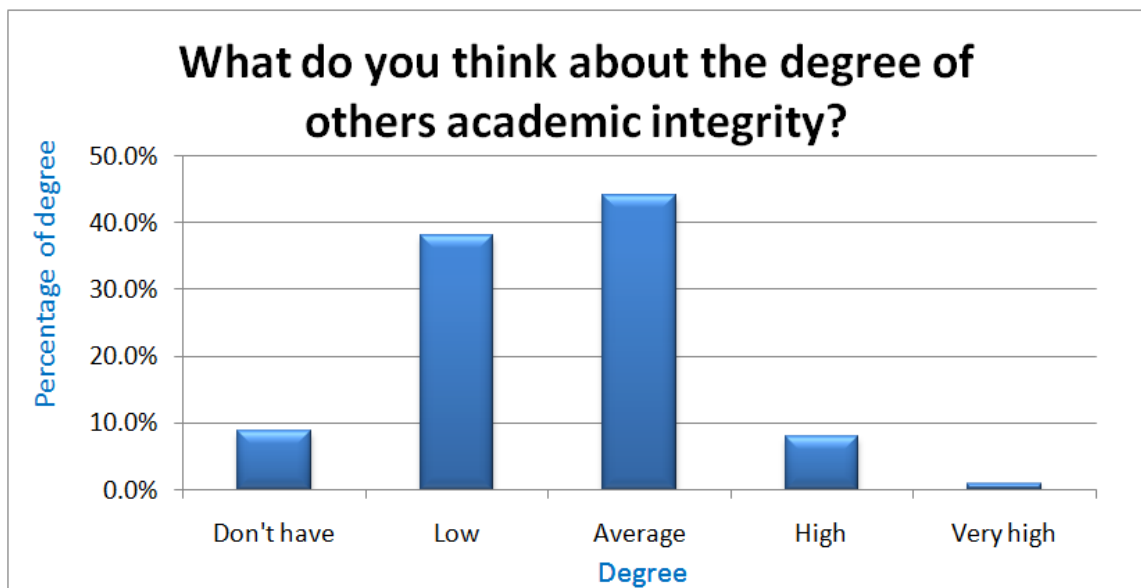


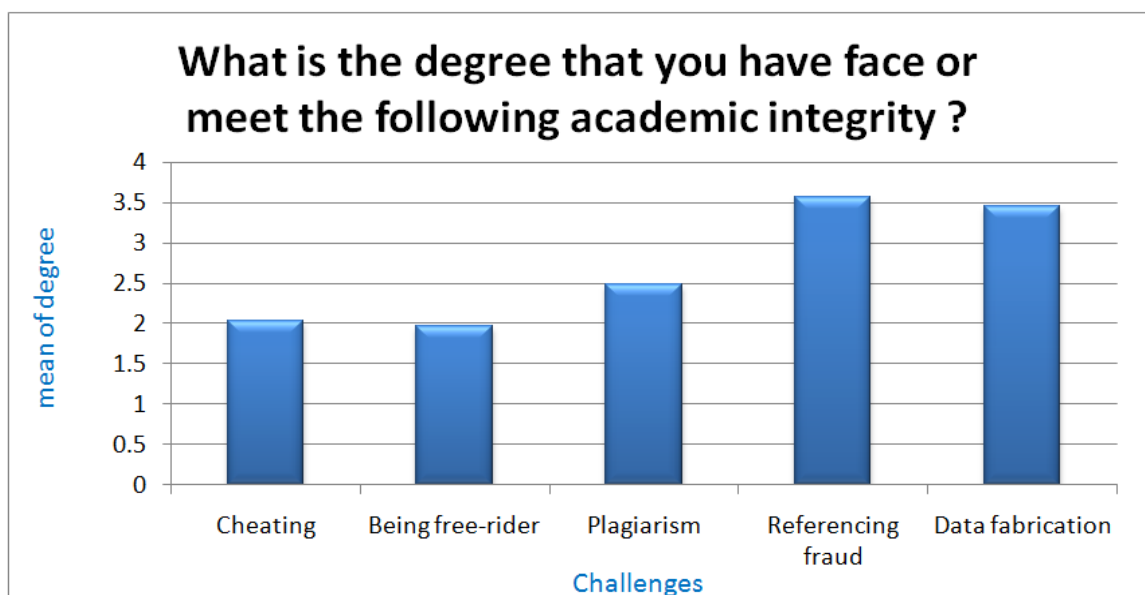
Figure 2 - The degree of others academic integrity



2. Different Challenges

In general, students will face and meet the academic integrity challenges which shown in figure 3. It shows that referencing fraud and data fabrication which have relatively higher means of 3.57 and 3.45 respectively among five common academic integrity challenges. This figure represents the frequency of facing these challenges. Therefore, most students have the challenge of referencing fraud and data fabrication which are the main focuses of this paper.

Figure 3 - Degree that students have face or meet academic integrity



There is difference between male and female in facing these challenges. Independent samples test is used to analyze the data which shown in table 1. As the significant numbers of all challenges are larger than 0.05, the data of “equal variances assumed” in T-test is considered. It shows that the significant numbers (2-tailed) of referencing fraud and data fabrication is larger than 0.05 which means that there are differences between male and female.

**Table 1 –Findings on the difference of gender towards academic integrity
(Independent Samples Test)**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means
		Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)
Cheating	Equal variances assumed	0.2	0.666
	Equal variances not assumed		0.657
Being Free-rider	Equal variances assumed	0.152	0.384
	Equal variances not assumed		0.375
Plagiarism	Equal variances assumed	0.853	0.242
	Equal variances not assumed		0.244
Referencing fraud	Equal variances assumed	0.297	0.003
	Equal variances not assumed		0.004
Data Falsification	Equal variances assumed	0.941	0.02
	Equal variances not assumed		0.021

After knowing the differences existed on referencing fraud and data fabrication, in table 2, it correlates different sex with different challenges. It shows that both means of males are larger than female. It shows that male will do or face more challenges on referencing fraud and data fabrication than female.

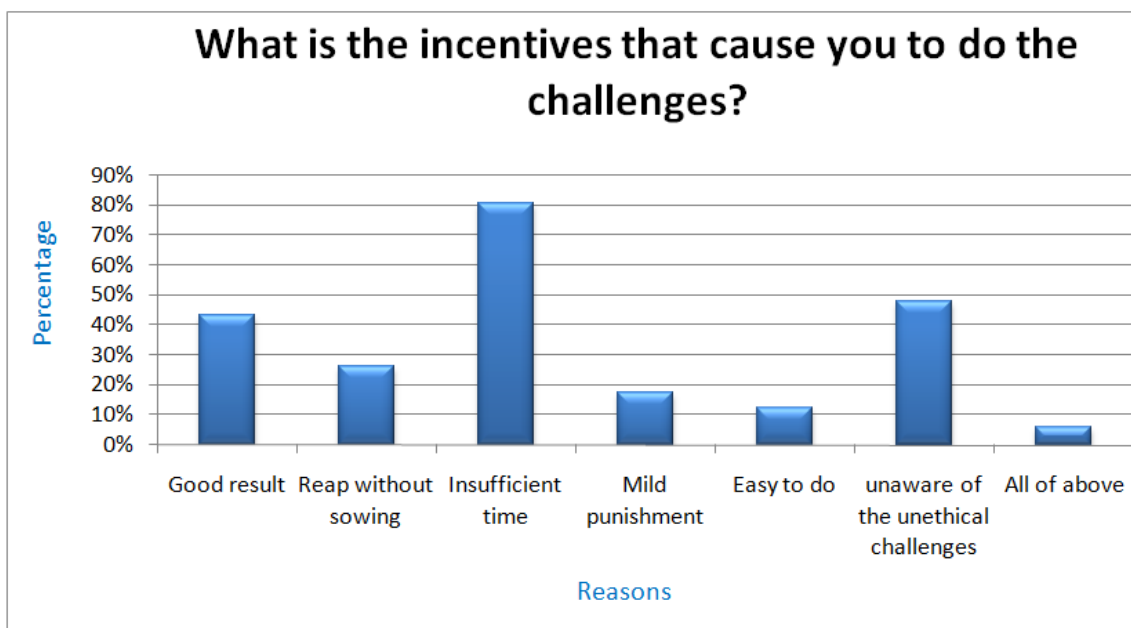
**Table 2 –The means of different challenges on different sex
(Group statistics)**

Challenges	Sex	Mean
Cheating	Male	1.98
	Female	2.06
Being free-rider	Male	2.04
	Female	1.89
Plagiarism	Male	2.36
	Female	2.58
Referencing fraud	Male	3.94
	Female	3.3
Data falsification	Male	3.79
	Female	3.21

3. *Causes of Challenges*

Apart from discussing the phenomenon of the challenges, it is also vital to study the causes of the challenges. From figure 4, it shows that 81% students commit the challenges because of insufficient time. Therefore, professors may discuss with students about deadline of projects together. And 48% students are unaware of the challenges. It means that they do not think that the behavior they did is unethical. Therefore, different parties, for example school and teachers, should educate the students and help them to define whether their actions is ethical or not.

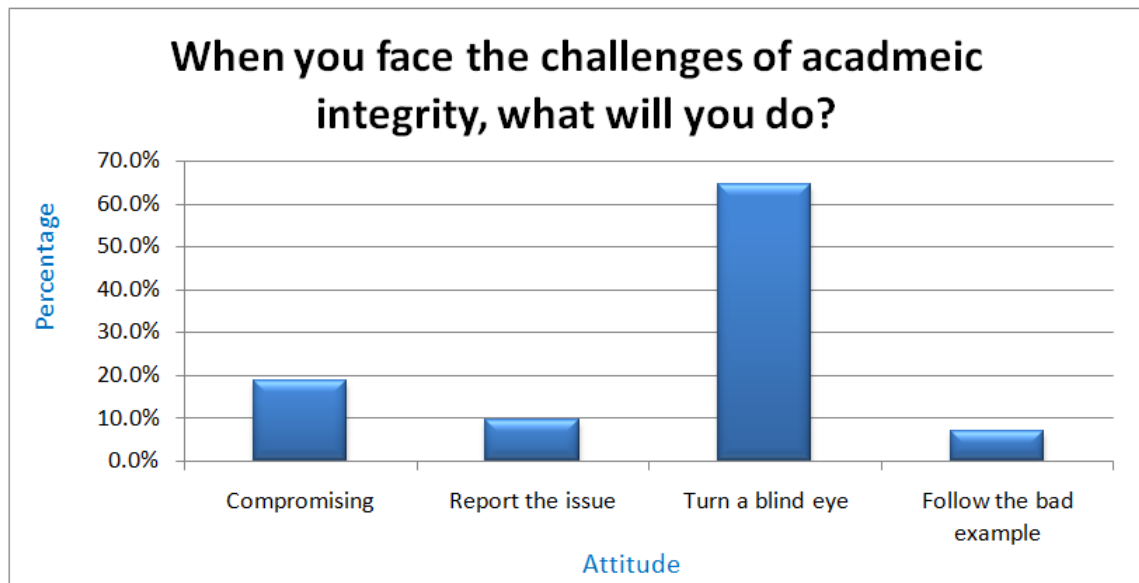
Figure 4 - The incentives that cause students to do the challenges



4. *Reactions towards the challenges*

In figure 5, it shows that 65% students will turn a blind eye in the unethical issue and 19% students will compromise the issue. Not more than 10% students will report the issue to school or teachers. Therefore, school and teachers should encourage the ethical students to convince the unethical one to have more awareness on the challenges.

Figure 5– The action that students will do when they face challenges



5. *Solutions of the challenges*

As aforementioned, the most common academic integrity challenge is referencing fraud and data fabrication, so the solutions of these two challenges will be discussed. Correlations from SPSS between the challenges and the solutions are shown in table 3.

**Table 3 –The solutions on these challenges
(Correlation)**

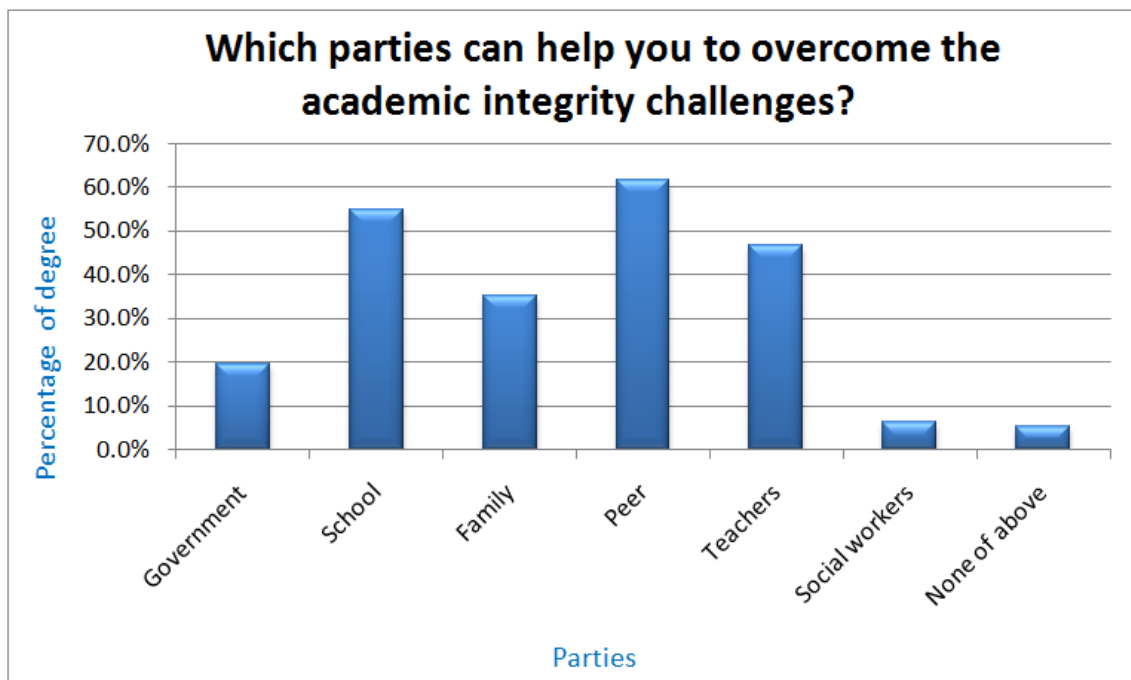
Solutions	Correlation	Referencing fraud	Data falsification
1. Build discipline-specific ethics course	Correlation	0.240*	0.239*
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.01	0.011
2. Good teaching to reduce the intention of unethical behaviors	Correlation	-0.318**	-0.264**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.001	0.005
3. Stable membership	Correlation	-0.19	-0.295**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.044	0.002
4. Peer evaluation	Correlation	-0.172	-0.238
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.068	0.011
5. Use checking system (eg. veriguide)	Correlation	0.357**	0.242**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0	0.01
6. Improve comprehensive checking system	Correlation	0.236*	0.117
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.012	0.219
7. Sign declaration form	Correlation	-0.06	-0.114
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.526	0.23
8. Strict enforcement on penalty	Correlation	0.039	-0.031
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.684	0.742
9. Elect student ambassadors to be whistle blowers	Correlation	0.151	0.154
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.111	0.105
10. Provide code of conduct	Correlation	0.221*	0.313**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0.019	0.001
11. Professors should coordinate time schedule for students to hand in assignments	Correlation	0.334**	0.274**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	0	0.003

For referencing fraud, it shows very strong correlation with good teaching, use of checking system and coordination of time schedule within professors. Building discipline-specific ethics course and improving comprehensive checking system also has strong correlation. It infers that most students think that these solutions can reduce the challenge of referencing fraud. For data fabrication, good teaching, stable membership, use of checking system, code of conduct and coordination of time schedule within professors shows a very strong correlation. Different parties should be aware on the solutions related to the challenges and try to help students to overcome the unethical issues.

6. *Parties for Helping Students*

62% students think that peers can help them to overcome the challenges. It infers that if the peers nearby are ethical, it may possibly reduce the probability that students commit academic integrity problem. Also, teenagers are not alone. School and teachers, which is 55% and 47% respectively, can also show a helping hand to them. Schools can have more promotions about ethical issue. Teachers may show caring on the students which may try to understand the causes of challenges and help them to solve the problem together.

Figure 6 - Parties can help students to overcome the academic integrity challenges



F. Recommendations

Resulting from the survey, school/teachers and peer are two major parties can significantly help students in facing academic integrity challenges. More importantly, some steps in decision-making are suggested to the individuals. While smart decisions include the ideas of specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound, some practical

recommendations based on these criteria will be suggested.

1. *Student*

To decide whether behavior to be done is ethical or not, young people shall have a clear mindset before they take the final decisions. First, they should judge whether the behavior to be done match with personal ethical value. If it is ambiguous, they may try to evaluate the nature of the behavior in aspects such as principles, values, assumptions, and think about benefits, burdens and risks that will be brought to each stakeholder. Besides, youths can consider code of conduct to find any existing concrete guidelines for the situation faced. If they still have doubt in the behavior to be done, they may refer to other stakeholders' opinions and advices. In other words, young people may seek help from teachers, relatives or friends. After they have made decisions, they shall monitor and modify the decision, so as to evaluate the influences caused by behavior done. They can prepare to revise plan or take a different tool of action and adjust to new information. By taking all these steps, young people may have a proper blueprint for making smart decisions concerning academic integrity challenges.

2. *Peer*

Peers also play an important role in assisting teenagers to make smart decisions as the results of survey showed that tertiary students agree that peers can be a useful helper.

i. *Establishment of Academic Integrity Committee*

Students from each tertiary school can establish own academic integrity committee specifically handling the integrity issues discovered in school, providing on-going training courses and periodically reviewing the honor codes. For instance, the committee evaluates or uncovers new challenges via conducting surveys once in the mid-term of semester. Hence, they can collect the timely information about the situations. Some training courses with relevant themes can be launched afterwards.

ii. *Inter-School Committee Meetings*

Academic integrity challenges can be found beyond individual school. To get a comprehensive picture, inter-school meetings of committees should be regularly held. The representatives of various schools have the opportunity to share several successful strategies in addressing academic integrity and identify possible policies that can be implemented on school-wide basis. Through the conference at the end of semester, the results will probably be interpreted and carried out immediately for the next semester. Take the guideline of academic integrity as an example. In recent, there is immense number of cases with blurred boundary that cannot be obviously regarded as dishonesty or not. The significant examples figured out from the survey are referencing fraud and data fabrications which the interviewees are always unaware of. When the students cannot ensure whether the behavior is problematic, they tend to make the decision on staying at the “grey area”. As a result, it is crucial for students from different schools to update clear definitions with corresponding policies. Thanks to the aid of guidance, at least the smart students gain a correct view towards smart decision-making.

iii. *Whistle-Blowers*

In addition, peer acting as whistle-blower is another alternative in helping students to make smart decisions. It will be effective as the students know that they will be privately supervised by peers, thus they often carefully take own behavior into account. Students will have an in-depth consideration about the consequences before deciding to engage in academic dishonesty. Although the survey revealed that there is only little correlation of being whistle-blower is a solution of referencing fraud or data fabrication, this practice is a conceivable method can provide an inherent instruction to students.

3. *School / Teacher*

According to the aforementioned results, most students regard coordination of assignments schedule and the use and improvement of checking system as the most helpful

solutions in dealing with academic integrity challenges.

i. *Coordination of Assignments Schedule*

For coordination of assignments schedule, the practices require the communication between teachers in various subjects as well as students. To make this suggestion to be effective, teachers shall have earlier coordination at the beginning of the semester, and review the effectiveness of the schedule at the end of semester, finding out the most suitable schedule. Hence, students may have better time management and eliminate the common cause of insufficient time.

ii. *Checking System*

Tertiary institutions may use checking system in checking the level of similarity of students' assignments with existing academic sources, so as to minimize the ease of committing academic dishonesty. In Hong Kong, some tertiary students are required to submit their assignments to the checking system, Veriguide, developed by The Chinese University of Hong Kong. To make smart decisions, students may regularly detect whether they are in academic challenges via the checking system with the predetermined standard set by the school. At the same time, checking systems are mainly applied for detecting plagiarism in current. The school may further develop or update the system regularly as to have comprehensive analysis on students' work concerning translations.

G. Conclusion

After reviewing the publications and conducting survey, youths easily commit referencing fraud and data fabrication which they are unaware of. Though the limitation in survey is most interviewees are Shue Yan University students, it is believed that suggestions on macro- and micro-prospective can guide teens to make smart decisions on integrity.

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I. Appendix I: Survey Sample

有關學術誠信挑戰問卷

1. 你有多大程度做過/遇過以下的學術誠信挑戰嗎?

	從不	很少	間中	時常	極經常
1.1 作弊 "出貓" (Cheating)					
1.2 自由人 (Free-rider)					
1.3 抄襲 (Plagiarism)					
1.4 錯誤使用參考出處 (Referencing fraud)					
1.5 數據作假 (Data Fabrication)					

2. 你覺得你擁有多大程度的學術誠信?

2.1 沒有 2.2 低 2.3 一般 2.4 高 2.5 非常高

3. 你覺得你身邊的人擁有多大程度的學術誠信?

3.1 沒有 3.2 低 3.3 一般 3.4 高 3.5 非常高

4. 你認為以下的建議處理方法有多大程度能夠解決上述所選的學術誠信挑戰?

	不能解決	很少程度	一般程度	很大程度	非常大程度
4.1 開設有關學術誠信 的道德課程					
4.2 良好的教學以消除 / 降低學生作出不誠實 行為的誘因					
4.3 固定組員					
4.4 同學互評 (Peer					

evaluations)					
4.5 使用防抄襲 / 檢查系統 (eg. Veriguide)					
4.6 完善防抄襲 / 檢查系統					
4.7 簽署學術誠信聲明書					
4.8 加強處罰					
4.9 委任學生大使為告密者 (whistle blowers)					
4.10 提供清晰學生守則					
4.11 教授間協調學生交功課時間表					

5. 你覺得以下哪一個團體可以幫助你面對學術誠信挑戰? (可選擇多於一項)

5.1 政府 5.2 學校 5.3 家庭 5.4 同輩 5.5 老師 5.6 社工 5.7 以上的團體都不能幫助我

6. 遇到上述的學術誠信挑戰時，你會如何解決?

6.1 妥協 6.2 告發 6.3 視而不見 6.4 同流合污

7. 你認為有什麼誘因令你去做上述的學術誠信挑戰呢? (可選擇多於一項)

7.1 獲得優良的成績 7.2 希望不勞而獲 7.3 時間緊迫

7.4 懲罰不夠嚴厲 7.5 容易作出上述不誠實行為

7.6 未覺察到學術誠信問題 7.7 以上皆是

個人資料

8. 閣下的性別:

男 女

9. 閣下的年級:

Year 1

Year 2

Year 3 (Non-final year)

Year 4 / Final year