

The Effect of Perceived Fairness Violations on Academic Cheating Intentions among Chinese High School Students

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Abstract

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Among the predictors of academic cheating, such as individual predispositions and group dynamics, the role of contextual factors—particularly the academic environment—remains understudied. The present research comprises two studies examining how perceived violations of fairness in teacher treatment influence students' intention to cheat. In Study 1, we validated a questionnaire designed to assess perceptions of fairness among Chinese high school students ($n = 216$). In Study 2, we conducted an in-class experiment with a different sample of high school students ($n = 149$), in which participants were given an impromptu assessment under two preparation conditions (5-minute vs. 10-minute) to manipulate perceived fairness. Although test performance did not differ significantly between conditions, students in the 5-minute condition reported significantly higher intentions to cheat than those in the 10-minute condition. These findings highlight the importance of situational injustice in shaping unethical decision-making, demonstrating that students' intentions to engage in academic dishonesty are driven more by perceived unfairness than by actual performance differences.

Keywords: Perceived Fairness; Academic Cheating Intention; Academic Dishonesty; Situational Injustice