

# Personality Traits and Levels of Self-Efficacy as Predictors of Academic Dishonesty among Higher Education Students in Ghana

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## Abstract

The study focused on the predictive abilities of personality traits and self-efficacy on academic dishonesty among students. After satisfying ethical protocols, the study surveyed 453 higher education students using an analytical cross-section design. Respondents were exposed to respond to three constructs such as personality traits scale, academic self-efficacy scale, and academic dishonesty scale. The data were quantitatively analyzed using means and standard deviations, frequencies and percentages, and regression. The study revealed that conscientiousness was the dominant personality trait. In addition, the study revealed that dishonest academic behaviours were exhibited among students despite their high level of self-efficacy. Furthermore, conscientiousness, openness and self-efficacy significantly predicted academically dishonest behaviours of students. Therefore, it is recommended that students be presented with opportunities to maintain their high level of self-efficacy to help reduce incidents of academic dishonesty. The study's findings appear original as they may serve as panacea for curbing dishonesty in teacher education programs in Ghana to churn credible teachers that might mount the teaching podium to impart knowledge onto the young that serve nations in the future.

## Keywords

Personality, Self-Efficacy, Dishonesty, Higher Education, Students, Ghana

## 1. Introduction

According to the sociological point of view, human beings are interrelated be-

cause they are nested by society to behave in this way. The human society comprises different institutions like family, education, religion, health and economics. Each aspect is affected by uncertainty (Imran & Nordin, 2013; Javed, 2020). Specific to the educational institution in society, there are several problems with academic dishonesty, one of them affecting the smooth running of school and students' success. According to Javed (2020), academic dishonesty comprises attempts made by students to falsify, fabricate or tamper with information, record, and other relevant teaching and learning materials that impedes independence in academic tasks. Jurdi, Hage, and Chow (2012) defined academic dishonesty as any scam method within an educational setting, ranging from piracy (plagiarism) and creation to deception and inducement. It is noted that higher education students have resorted to academic dishonesty by trying to achieve educational targets with the economy of effort; hence the lowering level of individualism could also explain the general passivity among higher education students regarding academic integrity and their hesitance to report any form of academically dishonest behaviour because it is considered not to be their obligation (Clinciu, Cazan, & Ives, 2021). The academic environment cannot ignore the academic dishonesty among students because its implications for the academic world are profound (Javed, 2020; Ratu et al., 2020; Roohi, 2016). To Jensen, Arnett, Feldman, and Cauffman (2002), academic dishonesty has become a pervasive issue in higher education. Kanat-Maymon, Benjamin, Stavsky, Shoshani, and Roth (2015), Stephens (2017), Stephens and Wangaard (2013, 2016), and Yardley, Rodríguez, Bates, and Nelson (2009) note that evidence throughout the last period points to a steady increase in rates of academic dishonesty among higher education students. Research further shows that most students are involved in one or more acts of academic dishonesty (Ives et al., 2017; Nora & Zhang, 2010).

According to data from a study of Malaysian nursing students, 82.1% and 74.6% of 201 students have engaged in at least one act of academic dishonesty in either an academic or clinical environment (Abusafia et al., 2018). Another study found that between 0.9% and 51.2% of nursing students in Greece had engaged in some form of academic dishonesty, with "seeking verbal information from other students" being the most common, and that a large proportion of students (34.8% and 75.9%) had witnessed their peers engaging in academic dishonesty (Kiekkas et al., 2020). According to the statistics, 4.7% to 62.4% of students in Ghana's higher educational institutions (HEI) have ever engaged in academic dishonesty (Mensah & Azila-Gbettor, 2018; Saana et al., 2016).

Yu, Glanzer, and Johnson (2016) assert that the credibility and legitimacy of certificates from higher education institutions are compromised when such institutions become fraught with academic dishonesty. Furthermore, academic dishonesty in higher education institutions threatens established academic standards where their students' qualifications are questioned (Krou, 2019). At its peak, academic dishonesty breeds rot in the job market as many unqualified professionals are likely to be hired, and in the long run, those hired will cause

societal injuries because they may not be able to perform to appreciation (Teixeira & De Fatima Rocha, 2008). Extant literature reports a direct relationship between academic dishonesty and deviant work behaviours (Wahyuningsih, Kusumawati, & Nugroho, 2021). For example, in a study, Carpenter, Harding, Finelli, and Passow (2004) found a positive relationship between academic dishonesty and unethical work behaviours. Biswas (2014), in a study, also found that academic dishonesty, in the end, could lead to substance use and abuse in the lives of the affected. Teferra (2021) also asserts that academic dishonesty is not the only problem for students. However, academics, staff and management are equally complicit, as it has been reported that they engage in immoral acts ranging from manipulating and changing grades, results and reviews to exchanging grades for sexual opportunities.

Academically dishonest behaviours exhibited by higher education students do not occur just like that, but could be caused by several personal, environmental and situational factors. Accordingly, Rafita (2013) and Sagoro (2013) alleged that higher students are compelled to engage in academically dishonest behaviours because of their ability levels, motivation, age, GPA, Personality, morality, self-esteem, self-efficacy, faith rate, friend's influence, circumstances, lecturer factors, and institutional regulations. Despite these varieties of determinants of academic dishonesty among students in higher education institutions, personality traits and self-efficacy are the most reported personalized factors that appear to contribute to academically dishonest behaviours.

The trait theory personality posits that individuals possess distinct fundamental qualities and that the intensity and concentration of these qualities account for personality differences. Over time, psychologists' perspectives on personality-defining traits have evolved. A trait is a personality trait that meets three criteria such as consistency, stability, and variability from individual to individual (Worthy, Lavigne, & Romero, 2020). The trait approach to personality is one of the essential areas of speculation in studying personality. Theories of personality, such as psychoanalytic and humanistic theories, the trait approach emphasises individual differences and each individual's personality results from the interaction and combination of numerous traits. Therefore, trait theory focuses on identifying and quantifying these distinct personality traits (Fajkowska & Kreitler, 2018).

Personality determines essential features and how people relate among themselves (Kline, 1993). According to Harahap (2019), the human Personality is an amalgamation of several qualities. Lim and Melisa (2012) and Nye, Orel, and Kochergina (2013) indicate that Personality is the multidimensional mental hypotheses such as openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism that can influence the way students engage in their learning and academic pursuit. Harahap (2019) notes that Personality is one of the gateways to academic dishonesty among students.

When educational outcomes are decomposed into IQ and Personality, ac-

According to Borghans, Golsteyn, Heckman, and Humphries (2011), personality traits are incrementally valid in explaining variance in educational outcomes, as evaluated by achievement tests and grades. Almlund et al. (2011) examined the stability of personality traits and their predictive capacity, concluding that personality development tends to plateau around thirty. Bartling, Fehr, Marechal, and Schunk (2009) explored self-selection in competition and behavioural and psychological factors.

Personality trait research frequently finds debate concerning the stability of personality traits. According to Wen, Zhao, Yang, Wang, and Cao (2021), higher education's influence on the formation of personality traits is indisputable. However, the issue of students of high educational institutions possessing different personality traits in different academic programmes is what to consider. As students start higher education studies, programmes are chosen based on their interests and aspirations. Generally, when a student progresses through studies, their personality traits are constantly reorganized to meet their current thoughts and convictions (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006).

Goldberg's (1981, 1992), McCrae and Costa's (1987) contributions inform the inclusion of the Big-Five personality traits in this study. Goldberg was the lead advocate for the five fundamental personality factors (Ackerman, 2017). Goldberg's breakthrough influenced McCrae and Costa (1987). They expanded the model with empirical data regarding its validity against the contemporary use of the critical components such as conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness to experience, and extraversion. As a result, the model has received much attention from several scholars from diverse populations and cultures. It is important to note that each aspect of the Big Five personality traits stands for major categories representing various personality-related concepts. In short, the aspects of the model are termed OCEAN.

Openness to experience is about the depth and complexity of an individual's mental life and experiences (John & Srivastava, 1999), and people high in this aspect are highly imaginative and intelligent. Open people try new ventures and explore beyond their comfort (Lebowitz, 2016). On the other hand, conscientiousness is about an individual's ability to control their desires and control them so as they focus on goal-directed behaviours (Grohol, 2019). This aspect of personality traits measures control, inhibition, and persistence of behaviour. People with high conscientiousness are determined, possess forethought and become successful in their tasks (Lebowitz, 2016).

Extraversion reflects the social propensity and strength to which someone seeks interaction with their environment, including their comfort and assertiveness in social situations. Those high on extraversion are generally assertive, sociable, fun loving, and outgoing. They thrive in social situations and feel comfortable voicing their opinions. They tend to gain energy and become excited from being around others (Soto & John, 2012).

The agreeableness aspect concerns itself with how well people get along with

others. Those high in agreeableness can be described as soft-hearted, trusting, well liked, cooperative, trustworthy, and show altruistic behaviours (Soto & John, 2012). More so, neuroticism describes the overall emotional stability of an individual through how they perceive the world. Neuroticism considers how likely a person is to interpret situations as intimidating or challenging (Kutta, Preston, & Maranges, 2020).

It is alleged that many personality traits increase in a predictable pattern over a person's life. Hart, Stasson, Mahoney, and Story (2007) investigated the relationship between personality traits and achievement motivation, finding that conscientiousness positively correlated with intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Ozer and Benet-Martinez (2006) outlined that the Big Five Personality Traits provide a helpful taxonomy of personality traits, which predict a variety of outcomes, including academic success and recognition, physical and mental health and social behaviour. Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham (2008) discovered a negative relationship between extroversion and higher education achievement; they believed this negative relationship was due to students' interpersonal and intrapersonal skills; in other words, highly extroverted students are more likely to spend their time on social and extracurricular activities than less extroverted students. In one study, Peled, Eshet, Barczyk, and Grinautski (2019) established a negative relationship among personality traits such as agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, openness, and academic dishonesty. In a meta-analytic study, using 16 empirical data, Heck, Thielmann, Moshagen, and Hilbig (2018) found all five dimensions (emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience) of personality correlated with academic dishonesty. Barbee (2020), in a study, found a negative relationship between some personality traits such as conscientiousness and academic dishonesty.

Self-efficacy is an epitome of Bandura's (1982) social-cognitive theory, where people possess beliefs and evaluations about their competencies to perform responsibilities and tasks. Bandura believes that self-efficacy is a foremost amendable factor for human behaviour. Therefore, judging someone ineffective in one situation creates more pressure than the quality and characteristics of that situation per se. It is indicated that inefficient people and those perceived with poor self-efficacy have cynical ideas about their competencies (Nazer et al., 2016). According to Riani and Rozali (2014), self-efficacy is divided into two forms: high self-efficacy and low self-efficacy. Therefore, people who have high self-efficacy will tend to be directly involved in a given task, while people who have low self-efficacy tend to avoid the task. The level of self-efficacy beliefs in students can affect their level of motivation in school (Riani & Rozali, 2014). As students experience low levels of self-efficacy, they may experience reduced motivation to learn. The sensitivity of a person's sense of accomplishment will motivate him to seek out various attempts to improve his achievement and well-being. People with a built-in sense of accomplishment are more likely to be

drawn to one thing, become fully immersed in the enjoyment of their hobbies, and cultivate the habits of learning in them (Puteri et al., 2021). People with high self-efficacy see challenging tasks and are driven to complete them (Darmiany & Nurmawanti, 2020). They set challenging goals for themselves and stick to them. They make a concerted effort to combat indolence. When a person with self-efficacy sensitivity fails, he promptly corrects the problem and reorganizes his life. People who mistrust their talents (self-doubt), on the other hand, tend to shun tough jobs. The individual is terrified of demanding work. They have minimal expectations and a low dedication to achieving their objectives (Bandura, 2003). They avoid onerous work, seeing it as an impediment and believing that doing it would waste time. When they fail, they take a long time to improve their self-efficacy because they lack sufficient abilities and are defensive. They do not learn from many setbacks. They are vulnerable to anxiety and sadness.

The presence of current social models helps to strengthen self-efficacy through indirect experience (Bandura, 2002). One will feel a sense of accomplishment similar to others around them when they watch others succeed in their hard work and participate in them. If they see the failure of the people around them, they will view their sense of accomplishment as a failure. Modelling's ramifications increase one's sense of accomplishment as a model. This assumption places a greater emphasis on success and failure. There would be less behaviour and results if one looked at a different notion of a sense of success. Modelling serves as a societal benchmark for evaluating self-efficacy. People with clever models promote competence in order to attain their objectives. They learn how to think, express themselves, notice tactics and skills to develop self-efficacy from their role models. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy affects how a person feels, thinks, motivates himself, acts, and influences the goals they want to achieve. As a result, self-efficacy may play a part in students' confidence in accomplishing their aim of high marks. Students with high self-confidence or self-efficacy are confident in their abilities, and as a result, someone with high self-efficacy does not take shortcuts to achieve their goals, including achieving high grades.

Students can use their faith to help them succeed in the future. Students use what they have learned in the past to help them succeed in the future. According to Bandura (2000), previous successful experiences are used to build a sense of accomplishment. Previous successes will boost one's confidence in their ability to succeed in the future. On this foundation, a person's perception of success is influenced by their previous semester's learning experience; if the previous semester's achievement was high, the current semester's sense of success is likely to be high. When the motivation to learn becomes low in students, they may resort to other unorthodox academic behaviours so that they can pass their courses or subjects. Relatedly, students' low level of self-efficacy leads them to engage in unethical academic behaviours like cheating and dishonesty (Darmia-

ny & Nurmawanti, 2020; He et al., 2021; Ika, Sumarti, & Widodo, 2017). In higher educational institutions, academic dishonesty occurs when students feel unprepared and unsure of achieving good results in an impending examination or academic task. Therefore, it is essential to ascertain the academically dishonest behaviours among higher education students and how their levels of self-efficacy and personality could predict such behaviours in Ghana.

## 2. The Study Context

Academic dishonesty plagues nearly every higher educational institution. According to Boehm, Justice, and Weeks (2009) and Krou (2019), academic dishonesty hinders students' engagement in learning and hampers their development of positive characteristics against higher education institutions' drive to foster integrity and fairness. In the Ghanaian context, the higher education landscape appears to be competitive because the grades attained by students determine success in most courses. In this regard, students will not ponder over the applicability or transferability of what their lecturers teach, but the grades they get (Saana et al., 2016). Once students' success or failure is aligned with the grades they achieve in the courses taken, they are likely to engage in academically dishonest behaviours to avoid failure purposely. Lecturers partly contribute to academic dishonesty behaviours of their learners. According to Gunawan and Pramadi (2018), lecturers' academic competition can fundamentally influence academically dishonest behaviours in learners. Likewise, lecturers who lack pedagogical content knowledge and do not prove the learning process's reputation and student progress might make students engage in academically dishonest behaviours (LaDuke, 2013). In Ghana's case, lecturers in higher educational institutions in Ghana expect and demand more from their students without knowing much about their entry behaviours and success ability levels in the courses they pursue. These high expectations and demands on the part of lecturers without recourse to students' entry behaviours and success abilities could lead them to engage in appropriate behaviours just to pass to progress on the academic ladder. To Anderman et al. (2009), when lecturers demand excessively high standards for students who may not have such ability, the students tend to engage in academically dishonest behaviours.

With an increased complexity and competition for status among most higher education institutions in Ghana, there appears to be a seeming academic dishonesty creeping steadily. As higher education students in Ghana face academic competition and high expectations from their institutions and lecturers, they are likely to find the easiest way to succeed with the assumption that any approach adopted that yields success is commendable in education. Likewise, higher education students in Ghana with a blend of personal and situational factors are exposed to innumerable forms of tests and assessments in school. When they get the opportunities to cheat, they will tend to choose to commit that academic dishonesty, hence breaching academic integrity in their institutions. However,

the choice to cheat or engage in academically dishonest behaviour by any higher education students in Ghana could result from their level of competence in their learning situations. Anecdotal records show that academic dishonesty is present among students in higher educational institutions in Ghana but less to none empirical data are available to support them. Again, extant literature reporting academic dishonesty among higher education students provide skewed focus in terms of perceptions and involvement of students in the act (Anditya, Panggabean, & Hidayat, 2018; Arhin & Jones, 2009; Boateng et al., 2022; Radulovic, 2017; Saana et al., 2016) at the expense of psychological precursors such as personality traits and self-efficacy. Therefore, this study aims to investigate personality traits and levels of self-efficacy as predictors of academically dishonest behaviours among higher education students in Ghana. The following research questions and hypotheses guided the study:

- 1) What is the prevalent personality trait among higher education students in Ghana?
- 2) What is the level of self-efficacy among higher education students in Ghana?
- 3) What is the prevalence of academically dishonest behaviours among the students?
- 4) **H1:** Personality traits and self-efficacy will predict academically dishonest behaviours among higher education students in Ghana.

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1. Design

The study employed an analytical cross-sectional survey design. This is because data were collected from different students in different levels and situations in Ghanaian Public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) during the same period. The design was appropriate because data collection was done at a particular point in time from the participants across the various public higher education institutions in Ghana. Again, the choice of the design was informed by literature. According to Schmidt and Brown (2019: p. 206), “An analytical cross-sectional design is a type of quantitative, non-experimental research design that seeks to gather data from a group of subjects at only one point in time using questionnaire and use the data to make inference”.

#### 3.2. Participants

Through online platforms, the researchers surveyed 453 undergraduate students from levels 100 to 400 in Public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Ghana, where the Public Higher Education Institutions had a population strength of over 480,000 undergraduates. The choice of this cohort or group is informed by the perceptions held by educational managers that most academically dishonest behaviours in Ghana are exhibited by students who are now pursuing undergraduate-related programmes. The participants included male ( $n = 300$ ) and fe-



male ( $n = 153$ ) students. The disparity between male and female participants was because male participants volunteered more to partake in the online survey than female participants did. The ages of the participants were considered with  $M_{\text{age}} = 29.87$  and  $SD_{\text{age}} = 93.64$ . The average age of 29.87 is possible because most of the respondents are professional teachers with diploma certificates and have enrolled in education-based institutions to pursue degree programmes.

### 3.3. Instruments

The researchers adopted three sets of scales concerning personality traits, academic dishonesty and self-efficacy to survey participants using their online learning platforms (VClass) for six months (July to December 2021). First, personality traits were assessed using the 10-items Brief Big-Five Personality Inventory (BFI-10) Scale (Rammstedt & John, 2007), which was scored on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) with a reliability coefficient of 0.73. The scale had five dimensions: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism, with two items each. However, items 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7 were reversely scored because they portrayed negative impressions of the participants. Next, academic dishonesty was assessed using the uni-dimensional 16-items Unethical Academic Behaviours Scale (UABS) (Peled, Eshet, & Grinautski, 2013), which was scored on a five-point Likert scale (1 = not serious, 5 = severe) with a reliability coefficient of .93. Finally, self-efficacy was assessed using the 10-items Perceived Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale, which was scored on a five-point Likert Scale (1 = not at all true, 5 = exactly true) with a reliability coefficient of .86.

### 3.4. Analysis

The data were collected using the academic online learning platforms where Excel files were transported into SPSS files. The data were cleaned to eliminate any outlier. The statistical assumptions for the analyses were all met. Specifically, frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used for the research questions, while standard linear regression was used to test the hypothesis.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Demographic Information of Respondents

In this study, gender/sex of the respondents was considered. It was found that male respondents dominated with a sample of 300 (66.2%) while female respondents had a sample of 153 (33.8%). By implication, male respondents' participation in the online survey was higher than female respondents. Again, the class levels of the respondents were considered in this study. The study revealed that level 200 students participated more in the online survey ( $n = 381$ , 84.1%) while level 100 and 300 students participated less in the online survey ( $n = 20$ , 4.4%). **Table 1** and **Table 2** present the results.

**Table 1.** Gender (sex).

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	300	66.2
Female	153	33.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 2.** Class levels.

Levels	Frequency	Percent
100	20	4.4
200	381	84.1
300	20	4.4
400	32	7.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>100.0</b>

#### 4.2. RQ1: What Is the Prevalent Personality Trait among the Students?

The question sought to determine the dominant Personality exhibited by higher education students in Ghana. In answering the question, 10-items on the Brief Big-Five Personality Inventory were used. The items were scored on a five-point scale ranging between strongly disagree = 1 and strongly agree = 5. In establishing the dominant personality trait, the five components of the measure were transformed, and analysis was performed using means and standard deviation. From it can be concluded that most students possessed the conscientiousness personality trait compared to other traits. Notwithstanding, very few of the students possessed an openness trait. The findings of the current study appear contrary to what the literature indicates. In some studies conducted among psychology students, it was found that neuroticism was the most dominant personality trait in them (Bash & Urban, 2013; Hassan, 2017; Lai et al., 2015; Singh, 2014; Wen et al., 2021). The differences in the dominance of personality traits could be context-specific, as no single situation or context could account for differences in personality traits that are exhibited by students. **Table 3** presents the results.

#### 4.3. RQ2: What Is the Level of Self-Efficacy of the Students?

The question sought to determine the levels of self-efficacy among students. In doing this, 10-items on the self-efficacy measure were used. First, the measure scored five points between strongly disagree = 1 and strongly agree = 5). Based on the score range, an average mean ( $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5 = 15 \div 5 = 3$ ) was calculated to determine whether students were low, moderate, or high on self-efficacy. Using the criterion value of three, any score below implies a low level of self-efficacy, and any score implies a high level of self-efficacy. Using a scoring of

1 - 5 for self-efficacy, it is believed that students' self-efficacy was high among higher education students, as depicted in **Table 4**. The revelation implies that students will get themselves involved in any given task in school rather than avoiding such a task (Riani & Rozali, 2014). Furthermore, with the high levels of self-efficacy found in students, they may experience sustained motivation to learn independently and show a sense of commitment and accomplishment in their academic endeavours (Damri et al., 2017; Djabidi, 2016). **Table 4** presents the results.

**Table 3.** Prevalence of personality traits among students.

Personality Trait	Mean	Standard Deviation
Conscientiousness	6.70	1.48
Neuroticism	6.23	1.83
Agreeableness	6.06	1.51
Extraversion	5.87	1.95
Openness	5.10	1.74

**Table 4.** Level of self-efficacy among higher education students.

Statements	Mean	SD	n	%
I am convinced that I can successfully learn all relevant subject content even if it is difficult.	3.14	0.92	350	77.3
I know that I can maintain a positive attitude toward this course even when tensions arise.	3.43	0.86	391	86.3
When I try hard, I can learn even the most challenging content.	3.51	0.77	403	88.9
I am convinced that, as time goes by, I will continue to become more and more capable of learning the content of this course.	3.61	0.69	420	92.8
Even if I get distracted in class, I am confident that I can continue to learn well.	3.38	0.85	386	85.3
I am confident in my learning ability, even if I have a terrible day.	2.92	0.96	312	68.9
If I try hard enough, I can obtain the academic goals I desire.	3.70	0.64	426	94
I am convinced that I can develop creative ways to cope with the stress that may occur while taking this course.	3.41	0.77	401	88.6
I know that I can stay motivated to participate in the course.	3.60	0.68	420	92.7
I know that I can finish the assigned projects and earn the grade I want, even when others think I cannot.	3.64	0.68	423	93.3
<b>Mean of Means</b>	<b>3.43</b>	<b>0.79</b>		

#### 4.4. RQ3: What Is the Prevalence of Academic Dishonesty Behaviour among the Students?

The question sought to establish the prevalence of academically dishonest behaviours among higher education students in Ghana. The prevalence was made possible using the 16-items of the Unethical Academic Behaviours Scale. The scale was scored on a five-point ranging between not serious = 1 and most serious = 5. The analysis was performed using frequencies and percentages. The study found that academic dishonesty prevails in students' academic work, but the situation was not high. Several studies' revelations support the findings of the current study. For example, [Abusafia et al. \(2018\)](#) study among Malaysian higher education students found that 82.1% and 74.6% have engaged in at least one act of academic dishonesty in either an academic or clinical environment. Collaboratively, the current study's findings are in line with [Kiekkas et al. \(2020\)](#) study findings. For instance, 0.9% and 51.2% of higher education students engaged in some form of academic dishonesty, with "seeking verbal information from other students" being the most common, and a large proportion of students (34.8% and 75.9%) had witnessed their peers engaging in academic dishonesty. Comparatively, the proportions are different, but the effects of such dishonest academic behaviours may be similar in tarnishing the reputable images of the various higher educational institutions. Irrespective of the difference in proportions, any form of dishonest academic behaviour from students has negative implications for the students and their institutions. The revelation of the current study supports the statistical inference of [Mensah and Azila-Gbettor \(2018\)](#) and [Mensah et al. \(2016\)](#) that about 4.7% to 62.4% of students in Ghana's higher educational institutions (HEI) have ever engaged in some form of dishonest academic behaviours. [Table 5](#) presents the results.

#### 4.5. Research Hypothesis One: Personality Traits and Self-Efficacy as Predictors of Academic Dishonesty

The aim of testing the hypothesis was to establish how personality traits and levels of self-efficacy could predict academically dishonest behaviours among higher education students in Ghana. The hypothesis was tested using standard linear regression, where personality traits and self-efficacy (IVs) were used as the predictors while academic dishonesty (DV) was used as the criterion. Before performing the standard linear regression analysis, statistical assumptions such as normality, linearity, multicollinearity, singularity, homoscedasticity, autocorrelation, and independence of residuals were all satisfied. From the findings, only two dimensions of personality traits were significant positive predictors of academic dishonesty among students. Thus, openness and conscientiousness were shown to contribute about 1.7% and 1.2%, respectively. The current study's findings contradicted studies revealing that conscientiousness, honesty-humility and openness were significantly negatively related to academic dishonesty behaviours of students ([Barbee, 2020](#); [Cazan & Iacob, 2017](#); [Peled et al., 2019](#)). In addition to these personality traits, self-efficacy was the

**Table 5.** Prevalence of academic dishonesty behaviour.

Statements	NS	SS	FS	VS	MS
I sometimes copy from someone else during a test.	63.8%	21.0%	9.9%	2.2%	3.1%
I sometimes take an examination for another person.	83.4%	4.6%	7.1%	1.5%	3.3%
I sometimes submit an assignment that was written by someone else.	76.8%	10.8%	7.7%	1.5%	3.1%
I sometimes use technology illegally to answer examination questions during examination time.	78.1%	8.4%	7.1%	3.1%	3.3%
I sometimes use unauthorized learning material in class.	77.7%	8.4%	6.6%	3.3%	4.0%
I sometimes make photocopies of examination questions to sell to my colleagues.	85.9%	4.0%	5.7%	1.8%	2.6%
I sometimes copy learning material from the internet and submit it as my work.	59.6%	18.1%	13.2%	5.3%	3.8%
I sometimes falsify information for the details of someone on an examination paper.	80.4%	7.7%	7.3%	1.8%	2.9%
I sometimes allow other people in my class to copy from me during an examination.	57.8%	18.3%	15.2%	4.2%	4.4%
I sometimes copy learning material from a published source without acknowledging them.	58.3%	16.6%	14.8%	4.6%	5.7%
I sometimes write assignments for a friend who submits them as his/her work.	66.7%	15.9%	10.8%	2.4%	4.2%
I sometimes collaborate on an assignment when asked for individual work in class.	48.3%	18.5%	17.9%	6.2%	9.1%
I sometimes reproduce examination questions and share them with friends in class.	67.3%	10.8%	11.9%	5.3%	4.6%
I sometimes obtain questions from a previous examination in school.	40.6%	15.5%	18.5%	11.3%	14.1%
I sometimes wrongly use family crises to get an extension on a school examination.	75.1%	8.6%	10.6%	3.1%	2.6%
I sometimes do not contribute to group work or assignments.	70.4%	8.6%	8.6%	4.6%	7.7%

\*\*NS = Not Serious, SS = Slightly Serious, FS = Fairly Serious, VS = Very Serious, MS = Most Serious.

best predictor of academic dishonesty with 11.2%. This implies that self-efficacy causes about 11.2% of the variation in academically dishonest behaviours of students. Regarding the effect of personality traits on dishonest academic behaviours of students, the findings of the current study contradicted several study results. In the studies of Darmiany and Nurmawanti (2020), He et al. (2021), and Ika, Sumarti, and Widodo (2017), it was found that low self-efficacy brings about dishonest academic behaviours, and this is a sharp contrast to the ensuing study findings. Table 6 shows the model fit for the standard linear regression. Table 7

**Table 6.** Model summary.

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error	Change Statistics				
					R <sup>2</sup> Δ	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	0.334 <sup>a</sup>	0.112	0.110	11.64589	0.112	56.769	1	451	0.000
2	0.358 <sup>b</sup>	0.128	0.125	11.54875	0.017	8.619	1	450	0.003
3	0.375 <sup>c</sup>	0.141	0.135	11.47896	0.012	6.488	1	449	0.011

a. Predictors: (Constant), Self-Efficacy; b. Predictors: (Constant), Self-Efficacy, Conscientiousness; c. Predictors: (Constant), Self-Efficacy, Conscientiousness, Openness.

**Table 7.** Coefficients.

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	52.658	3.524		14.94	0.000
	Self-Efficacy	-0.763	0.101	-0.334	-7.54	0.000
2	(Constant)	45.642	4.233		10.78	0.000
	Self-Efficacy	-0.770	0.101	-0.337	-7.66	0.000
	Conscientiousness	1.081	0.368	0.129	2.94	0.003
3	(Constant)	42.895	4.344		9.88	0.000
	Self-Efficacy	-0.785	0.100	-0.344	-7.85	0.000
	Conscientiousness	0.963	0.369	0.115	2.61	0.009
	Openness	0.797	0.313	0.113	2.54	0.011

a. Dependent variable: Academic dishonesty.

shows that all the IVs correlated positively but moderate with the DV, where correlation values of 0.334 to 0.375 were recorded at  $p \leq 0.05$  with the contribution of IVs to the DV.

## 5. Conclusion

The current study results were in line with the literature despite their variations in some findings. The study found that the most dominant personality trait among higher education students was conscientiousness. This implies that students are self-discipline, follow instructions in their academic lives, then, act spontaneously. Following the dominance of conscientiousness in students, they are likely to exert moral sense that could govern all their actions both in school and out of school because they may make painstaking efforts to follow their moral conscience in decisions.

In addition, the study found that higher education students exhibited dishonest academic behaviours, but the prevalence was low. This shows that irrespec-

tive of being influenced by moral conscience, some students still engage in frowned-upon behaviours in higher educational institutions. Furthermore, the study found that self-efficacy was high among higher education students. This implies that students are likely to engage in healthy academic behaviours and as well, show confidence in academic tasks that they are assigned. Students are likely to put much effort into their academic endeavours for sustained academic achievements at the expense of experiencing negative stress and emotions.

The study found that conscientiousness, openness, personality traits, and self-efficacy positively influenced academically dishonest behaviours of higher education students. This implies that as students exert much effort and are open to opportunities in their learning situations, the zeal to perform will be high. On the other hand, if their academic journey becomes blurry, they may engage in academic dishonesty at all costs just to make sure their efforts and chances are not in vain, and to maintain their positive recognition in school.

## 6. Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn, it is recommended that students are presented with opportunities to maintain their high level of self-efficacy using periodic assessments to ensure that it does not drop or reduce (Pekmezi, Jennings, & Marcus, 2009). Keeping in mind that students might not know how to execute such an activity, educational and counselling psychologists should be recruited and assigned to various levels of students to help in maintaining students' self-efficacy. Indirectly, helping maintain a high level of self-efficacy among students could reduce incidents of academic dishonesty because they might be convinced that they possess the ability to succeed. In addition, it is recommended that to increase students' self-efficacy in an academic context to reduce dishonest academic behaviour, test developers should use moderately complex tasks in examinations to help decrease academic dishonesty among students. On the other hand, teachers and lecturers should encourage peer models, teach specific learning strategies, give frequent, focused feedback, and practice skills needed for their fulfilment (Baran & Jonason, 2020). Teachers and lecturers are encouraged to engage in good assessment practices and abide by its principles to reduce academic dishonesty. Higher education institutions must help develop appropriate personality traits among students to see themselves as confident regardless of adversities in their academic journey. In doing this, students can be taught to take control of their minds and eliminate negative thoughts that may have prevented them from succeeding in their academic journey. Again, students need to be oriented that mental fitness is very similar to physical fitness in that results in their academic endeavours might not be seen overnight (Smith, 2021). However, they must develop strength and resilience through practice and training for success.

As a theoretical implication, there is a need to strictly apply moral sanctions on higher education students so that they can behave morally as they pursue

their academic programs. However, before this, intensive education and orientation opportunities should be offered to students so that they can be guided and abide by ethical and moral protocols to prevent unethical academic behaviours.

The faculty should serve as a model by putting ethics into practice rather than merely discussing it. Students should be instilled with a sense of ethics and rational thought that broadens their perspective of organisational values, making them capable of resolving all the conflicts of different, complex perspectives they will encounter in their future lives. Education devoid of humility is emblematic of arrogance and danger. Citizens are plunged into darkness by unethical behaviour, which can only exist when ethical leaders remain silent in the face of anomalies. Suppose those stakeholders in the field of higher education wish to measure and evaluate efforts, there is a need to examine how institutions foster human freedom in the service of humanity. Today, the measure of a person's success is the power of their wealth (Motlagh, Jamali, & Ghoorchian, 2016).

### Conflicts of Interest

The researchers have no competing interest to declare.

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### Ethical Clearance

The researchers followed due process in as much as the use of human subjects were concern. On that note, ethical clearance was sought from the University of Cape Coast and was approved with the number CES-ERB/UCC.EDU/V4/22-09.

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