Abstract

The study seeks to investigate the extent to which students at a public university in Bucharest engage in unethical behaviour within the academic environment such as fraudulence, plagiarism, falsification, delinquency, unauthorized help etc., depending on their personality. This study was conducted using a survey method of 252 students at graduate and post-graduate level. The findings indicate that personality traits such as conscientiousness are significantly and negatively correlated with unethical behavior in the case of university students (r=-.281, p<.01 with plagiarism; r=-.250, p<.01 with fraudulation; r=-.233, p<.01 with misconduct; r=-.217, p<.01 with unauthorized help). Similarly, neuroticism is significantly associated with plagiarism (r=.214, p<.01), fraudulation (r=.163, p<.01) and misconduct (r=.156, p<.05). Significant differences regarding falsification are also observed between graduate and postgraduate students (t(250)=-2.075, p<.05). This research provides some valuable insights on allowing educational institutions and those directly involved in the educational process, to develop relevant policies and guidelines on matters pertaining to academic conduct.

Keywords: academic ethics; personality; NEO-PI-R; cheating; unethical behavior.

1. Introduction

There are significant studies indicating that different types of violations of academic integrity such as plagiarism, cheating on exams, and copying assignments from other students (Jensen, Arnett, Feldman, & Cauffman, 2002) are quite prevalent in colleges and universities worldwide. Some reports claim that 74% of high school students and 95% of college students are admitting to at least one incidence of cheating (Marsden, Carroll, & Neill, 2005; McCabe 2001; McCabe & Trevino, 1997).

Apart from the prevalence of the phenomena, academic cheating can also be analyzed in terms of consistency. From this point of view, after testing over 6000 students from 31 universities across the United States, McCabe (1992) found that one-fifth of the students could be classified as active cheaters, since they admitted to cheating 5 plus times within the last 6 months. Equally, Robinson, Amburgey, Swank, and Faulkner, (2004) found that students report lifetime cheating rates as high as 80%.

Of course that, in determining the frequency and the correlates of such cheating, firstly the conceptualization of the term is required. In this respect, Cizek (2004) has provided an
expanded definition of academic cheating, that covers the complexity of the behaviour: “... any intentional action or behavior that violates the established rules governing the administration of a test or the completion of an assignment, gives one student an unfair advantage over other students on a test or an assignment, or decreases the accuracy of the intended inferences arising from a student’s performance on a test or an assignment” (p. 308).

Moving further, Kibler defined academic dishonesty as “forms of cheating and plagiarism that involve students giving or receiving unauthorized assistance in an academic exercise or receiving credit for work that is not their own” (1993, p. 254). According to Burke (Ercegovac & Richardson, 2004, p. 303), cheating is “intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise”. Along with Kibler (1993), Burke also takes into account the notion of facilitating academic dishonesty, which refers to “intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic dishonesty” (Ercegovac & Richardson, 2004, p. 304).

On the other hand, unethical manifestations in academic settings were also seen as a multidimensional construct. For instance, some authors (Arent, 1991; Caruana, Ramaseshan & Ewing, 2000; Coston & Jenks, 1998; Packer, 1990; Stern & Havlicek, 1986; Roig & DeTommaso, 1995) distinguished a series of different forms of academic dishonesty, such as: lying, cheating on exams, copying or using other people’s work without permission, altering or forging documents, buying papers, plagiarism, altering research results, providing false excuses for missed tests and assignments or making up sources.

Further, these specific manifestations were comprised by Pavela (1978) in four general areas: cheating by using unauthorized materials on any academic activity, such as assignments, tests etc.; fabrication of information, references, or results; plagiarism; and helping other students engaged in academic dishonesty (i.e. facilitating), such as allowing other student to copy their work, memorizing questions on a quiz etc.

Pavela defines fabrication as “intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise” and plagiarism is defined as “intentionally or knowingly representing the word of another as one’s own in any academic exercise” (1978, p. 58).

In order to gain important insights regarding academic dishonesty, which was long acknowledged as problematic, but continues to increase both in frequency and severity (Jensen, Arnett, Feldman & Cauffman, 2002), contextual and individual factors were analyzed in terms of correlates or antecedents (Bolin, 2004).

Among the contextual factors under discussion, increased competition in higher education starting with the 1970s determined a series of changes in academic dishonesty. More precisely, the competitive-atmosphere in universities led students to develop and employ overtly independent acts of cheating (Gallant, 2008), such as: stealing library books, removing pertinent pages from books or changing variables during practical exams to gain an advantage over other students.

Similarly, the commercialization of education and the expectation that high school and college are the minimum societal standard for education, determined a switch in terms of focus among students, who became first of all interested in achieving higher grades, rather than in achieving an education as such (Davis, Grover, Becker, & McGregor, 1992).

Concurrently, there are researchers who claim that technological developments, mainly the generalized use of the internet, have fundamentally changed education (Davis et al., 1992; Gallant, 2008; Lathrop & Foss, 2000; Southerland-Smith, 2008; Underwood & Szabo, 2003).
The main rationale is that, the internet has enabled the expenditure of the research process for many academics by providing greater access to resources and global information (Gaitanaru, 2008).

But, the use of IT-based teaching and learning process, lead to new ways of interaction within the traditional education system (Gaitanaru, 2006). Since information can be accessed, transferred, created, and dispersed quickly and discreetly (Gallant, 2008; Lathrop & Foss, 2000), students gain an easy and anonymous access to a vast array of methods of cheating and (Tichenor, 2001).

As academic dishonesty is a complex and multidimensional behaviour, which cannot be easily explained by a single framework or perspective (Gallant & Drinan, 2006), its specific manifestations were also related to a variety of individual factors.

Previous findings (Anderman, Griesinger, & Westerfield, 1998; Haines, Diekhoff, & Labeff, 1986; Murdock, Hale, & Weber, 2001; Nathanson, Paulhus & Williams, 2006) reported that individual variables such as the level of self-efficacy, attitudes, general personality characteristics or the dark triad personality characteristics represent important factors in a student’s decision to engage in academically dishonest behaviours.

Within personality psychology, five dimensions have been identified as overarching personality features, being named the five factor model (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Pervin, 1999). The five factors are neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

Although the literature on the relationship between general personality characteristics, as defined by the big five model and specific manifestations of academic dishonesty is sparse, remaining still in the exploratory stages, there are previous studies that show that general personality traits influence the extent to which students choose to engage in academic dishonesty (e.g., DeBruin & Rudnick, 2006).

In analyzing the effect of general personality features on the propensity to engage in academic cheating a series of related variables were taken into account.

The personality factor of conscientiousness consists of traits, such as competence, dutifulness, achievement striving, deliberation, order, and self-discipline (O’Cleirigh, Ironson, Weiss, & Costa, 2007). For instance, conscientiousness has been found to be positively related to academic success, integrity, and achievement in the workplace (Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2003; DeBruin & Rudnick, 2007; Paunonen & Ashton, 2001; Salgado, 2003; Wanek, Sacckett, & Ones, 2003). On the contrary, in work settings, conscientiousness was inversely related to negative work habits such as dishonesty and missed days of work (Salgado, 2003; Wanek et al., 2003).

Academic procrastination, which is seen by DeBruin and Rudnick (2006) as a stable trait that can be included under the personality factor of conscientiousness, was also related to academic cheating (Roig & DeTomasso, 1995). Likewise, studies have found that students self-report time pressure as the reason for engaging in academic dishonesty (most frequently Anderman & Murdock, 2007; Devlin & Gray, 2007).

From the five personality traits as assessed by the big five model, extraversion was as well associated with academic dishonesty, mainly through one its facets – the excitement-seeking facet (De Bruin & Rudnick, 2006). Possible explanations for this relationship can reside in the fact that excitement-seeking is related to risk-taking behaviours and academic cheating falls into this category of manifestations – since students intentionally engage in dishon-
est behaviours, that is they are often very aware of the potential risks involved and the possible consequences that may follow if they are caught (Anderman & Murdock, 2007).

2. Objectives

The main objective of the current study is to analyze the relations between different types of academic dishonesty behaviour and general personality traits, according to the big five model.

Starting from previous studies conducted by DeBruin and Rudnick (2006), we hypothesize that participants with high scores on the conscientiousness domain scale of the NEO-PI-R will have engaged in less acts of academic dishonesty. It is also predicted that participants with high scores on the neuroticism domain scale of the NEO-PI-R will have engaged in more acts of academic dishonesty.

3. Methods

3.1. Participants

This study was conducted using a survey method of 252 students at a public university in Bucharest (age M=21.23, SD=3.45; 17 males and 235 females) from graduate and post-graduate level. The prevalence of female participants is an artifact which can be explained by the nature of the faculty specialization itself, being well known that communication and public relations, psychology and human resources are usually gender biased occupations. A non-random, convenience sampling design involving a wide array of students was used.

Students were asked to participate in the study by voluntarily completing the survey. The questionnaires were distributed by one of the authors of this paper who briefly discussed the nature of the research. Due to the nature of investigation the anonymity was fully assured by avoiding the registration of any personal data which might be linked to the persons. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the students (N=252).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender / College Level</th>
<th>First year</th>
<th>Second year</th>
<th>Third year</th>
<th>Postgraduate</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2. Measures

The NEO PI-R is a self-administered personality inventory that measures five domains of personality: neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The NEO PI-R includes 240 items which are scored on those 5 domains, each having six sub-facets. For example, the Conscientiousness domain scale of the NEO PI-R measures six sub-facets of conscientiousness: competence, order, dutifulness, achievement striving, self-discipline, and deliberation (Costa & McCrae, 1992). All items for the NEO PI-R are rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The do-
main scales show internal reliabilities which range from .87 to .92. Facet scales show internal reliabilities ranging from .58 to .82, and test retest reliabilities are all above .75.

The Academic Dishonesty Questionnaire consists of 39 items which were adapted starting from Pavela’s (1978) and Cizek’s (2003) descriptors. Out of those, 23 measure dishonest behaviour clustered in five scales: cheating / fraudulence, fabrication / falsification, facilitating dishonest behaviour / unauthorized help, plagiarism and misconduct; 10 items are dealing with possible motivations, one is related to past behaviour, one with the role of religion and four are factual items (gender, college level etc.).

4. Results

Based upon the frequency of self-reported cheating behaviours listed in Table 2, some conclusions can be drawn. First, only a minority of students admit or report to engaging in fabrication (M=1.38, S.D.=.449; I have falsified or fabricated a few research data). On the other hand, the highest score was reported for unauthorized help (M=1.87, S.D.=.412; I have wrote or provided a paper for another student), followed by plagiarism (M=1.77, S.D.=.532; I have paraphrased issues that I had been reading here and there, without mentioning in my paper that they belong to other authors) and cheating / fraudulation (M=1.73, S.D.=.451; I have used unpermitted crib notes or cheat sheets to help me complete my test or exam).

Sixty-three percent of students admitted that they have facilitated in one way or another academic dishonesty, 58% plagiarism and 53% involvement in cheating behaviours.

Table 2. Mean scores distribution by type of behaviour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>cheating/fraudulation</th>
<th>fabrication</th>
<th>unauthorized help</th>
<th>plagiarism</th>
<th>misconduct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.D.</td>
<td>.451</td>
<td>.449</td>
<td>.412</td>
<td>.532</td>
<td>.344</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the main objective of the study we have determined the Pearson correlations between all five personality factors and the self-reported cheating behaviours assessed (Table 3). The results confirm the association between conscientiousness and unethical behaviours. Therefore, participants with high scores on the conscientiousness domain scale of the NEO-PI-R will engage in less acts of academic dishonesty, the variables being negatively correlated ($r=-.281, p<.01$ with plagiarism; $r=-.250, p<.01$ with cheating / fraudulation; $r=-.233, p<.01$ with misconduct; $r=-.217, p<.01$ with unauthorized help).

Table 3. Pearson correlations between cheating behaviours and personality factors.
Similarly, the hypothesis regarding the relationship between the neuroticism factor and academic dishonesty was also confirmed in the case of three of the specific behaviours assessed (plagiarism, $r=.214$, $p<.01$; cheating / fraudulation, $r=.163$, $p<.01$ and misconduct, $r=.156$, $p<.05$), namely participants scoring high on neuroticism scale are engaging more frequently in unethical behaviours such as plagiarism, cheating or misconduct.

In order to gain further insights, we have also determined the associations between the specific cheating behaviours in academic settings measured and the six facets of each of the five factors of personality, assessed through the NEO-PI-R. This analysis is even more indicated, since, as pointed out by O’Connor and Paunonen (2007), the literature indicates that the narrow personality traits or facets which underlie the broad big five personality factors are generally stronger predictors of academic performance than are the big five personality factors as such.

For the neuroticism factor of personality, results (Table 4) show that the impulsiveness facet is positively related with four out five manifestations of academic cheating ($r=.220$, $p<.01$ with plagiarism; $r=.185$, $p<.01$ with fraudulation; $r=.182$, $p<.01$ with unauthorized help, respectively $r=.135$, $p<.05$ with misconduct). Therefore, students who are less tolerant to frustrations and find it difficult to postpone gratifications are more likely to engage in academic dishonest behaviours. Some possible explanations for these findings could be the general focus on obtaining high grades, as well as the raise in competitiveness in academic settings, which further leads to a greater amount of pressure (both in terms of time and performance), irrespective of cognitive ability (Davis et al., 1992, Stephens & Nicholson, 2008).

Table 4. Pearson correlations between cheating behaviours and neuroticism facets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>anxiety</th>
<th>angry hostility</th>
<th>depression</th>
<th>self-consciousness</th>
<th>impulsiveness</th>
<th>vulnerability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fabrication</td>
<td>-.019</td>
<td>.031</td>
<td>.040</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plagiarism</td>
<td>.046</td>
<td>.143*</td>
<td>.174**</td>
<td>.139**</td>
<td>.220**</td>
<td>.175**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fraudulation</td>
<td>.041</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.132*</td>
<td>.145*</td>
<td>.185**</td>
<td>.169**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unauthorized help</td>
<td>-.055</td>
<td>-.038</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>-.001</td>
<td>.182**</td>
<td>.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>misconduct</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.099</td>
<td>.188**</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>.135*</td>
<td>.109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another facet of neuroticism which seems to support the association between the broad factor of neuroticism and academic dishonesty is depression ($r=.174$, $p<.01$ with plagiarism; $r=.132$, $p<.05$ with fraudulation and $r=.188$, $p<.01$ with misconduct). In other words, students who score high on the depression facet of neuroticism and thus are prone to feelings sadness, hopelessness and easily discouraged are more likely to engage in manifestations that are contrary to academic ethics and integrity.

The only facet of neuroticism that was not related with any cheating behaviour in academic settings is anxiety (Table 4). Individuals who score high on this subscale are usually shy, fearful, nervous or tense, that is they show characteristics that are opposite to risk-taking behaviours, such as manifestations of academic dishonesty.

Moving further, excitement-seeking is the only narrow personality trait that underlies the broader dimension of extraversion (Table 5) that was proven to be positively related with
fraudulation \( (r = .136, p < .05) \), unauthorized help \( (r = .128, p < .05) \) and misconduct \( (r = .188, p < .01) \). The results are consistent with previous findings (DeBruin and Rudnick, 2006).

Table 5. Pearson correlations between cheating behaviours and extraversion facets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>warmth</th>
<th>gregariousness</th>
<th>assertiveness</th>
<th>activity</th>
<th>excitement-seeking</th>
<th>positive emotions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fabrication</td>
<td>-.064</td>
<td>-.036</td>
<td>-.038</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plagiarism</td>
<td>-.065</td>
<td>.032</td>
<td>.005</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.094</td>
<td>-.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fraudulation</td>
<td>-.040</td>
<td>.030</td>
<td>-.013</td>
<td>-.007</td>
<td>.136**</td>
<td>-.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unauthorized help</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.077</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.128*</td>
<td>.090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>misconduct</td>
<td>-.042</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>-.060</td>
<td>-.021</td>
<td>.188*</td>
<td>-.039</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Engaging in cheating behaviours may also be a result of the lack of intellectual curiosity and open-mindedness, as assessed through the openness to ideas facet of the openness factor of personality (Table 6). Therefore, the more conservative and disinterested, the more prone to engage in plagiarism \( (r = -.213, p < .01) \) and fraudulation \( (r = -.172, p < .01) \) will the student be. It should be noticed, though, that low scores on the ideas subscale are not necessarily related to comparable scores in terms of cognitive ability, but rather to a lack of curiosity and narrow focus of the resources on limited topics (Costa & McCrae, 1992). This relationship could further be investigated taking into account additional variables, such as the level of interest and motivation of the student.

However, no significant association was identified with the openness to values subscale, which refers to the readiness to reexamine social, political, and religious values (Costa & McCrae, 1992). A possible explanation for this result may reside in the fact that, although cheating in academic settings represents per se an ethical issue, previous studies (Stephens & Nicholson, 2006) have identified an incongruity between beliefs and behaviour, that is students who acknowledge cheating despite believing that is wrong to do so.

Table 6. Pearson correlations between cheating behaviours and openness facets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>fantasy</th>
<th>aesthetics</th>
<th>feelings</th>
<th>actions</th>
<th>ideas</th>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fabrication</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>-.056</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>-.088</td>
<td>-.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plagiarism</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>-.068</td>
<td>-.023</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.213**</td>
<td>-.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fraudulation</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>-.155**</td>
<td>-.033</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>-.172**</td>
<td>-.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unauthorized help</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td>-.067</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.098</td>
<td>-.030</td>
<td>.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>misconduct</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>-.065</td>
<td>-.032</td>
<td>.075</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.055</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because specific forms of cheating in academic settings often imply a giver and a receiver, facets of agreeableness can further offer valuable insights regarding the more interpersonal aspects which can influence unethical behaviours at university (Table 7). In this respect, individuals who tend to be more constant, frank and sincere in their relationship with others...
are less likely to engage in plagiarism \((r=-.215, p<.01)\), fraudulation \((r=-.205, p<.01)\) or misconduct \((r=-.245, p<.01)\). Similarly, the extent to which students tend to believe that others are honest and well-intentioned is negatively related with fraudulation \((r=-.127, p<.05)\) and misconduct \((r=-.166, p<.01)\).

Being more self-centered and less empathic and friendly is related to fabricating data for assignments \((r=-.124, p<.05\), respectively \(r=-.154, p<.05\)), while scoring high on the compliance subscale is negatively associated with plagiarism \((r=-.124, p<.05)\). Therefore, being rather competitive than collaborative in an academic culture that promotes competition and the achieving of high grades is a personality feature that can lead to engaging in cheating behaviours.

Table 7. Pearson correlations between cheating behaviours and agreeableness facets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>trust</th>
<th>straight forwardness</th>
<th>altruism</th>
<th>compliance</th>
<th>modesty</th>
<th>tender-mindedness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fabrication</td>
<td>-1.14</td>
<td>-0.94</td>
<td>-1.24</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>-1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plagiarism</td>
<td>-0.87</td>
<td>-2.15*</td>
<td>-0.55</td>
<td>-1.24</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fraudulation</td>
<td>-1.12</td>
<td>-2.05*</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.66</td>
<td>0.097</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unauthorized help</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>-0.072</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.047</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>misconduct</td>
<td>-1.66</td>
<td>-2.45*</td>
<td>-1.10</td>
<td>-0.077</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td>-0.091</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since conscientiousness was the personality factor which was the most related with the specific forms of academic cheating assessed in the current research (four out of five), these associations are further supported by significant correlations in the case of all six facets of this dimension (Table 8).

Table 8. Pearson correlations between cheating behaviours and conscientiousness facets.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>competence</th>
<th>order</th>
<th>dutifulness</th>
<th>achievement striving</th>
<th>self-discipline</th>
<th>deliberation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fabrication</td>
<td>-0.65</td>
<td>-0.67</td>
<td>-1.10</td>
<td>-0.042</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>-0.082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plagiarism</td>
<td>-1.53**</td>
<td>-1.51**</td>
<td>-2.81**</td>
<td>-1.71**</td>
<td>-2.64**</td>
<td>-2.11**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fraudulation</td>
<td>-1.66**</td>
<td>-0.66</td>
<td>-2.84**</td>
<td>-1.67**</td>
<td>-2.79**</td>
<td>-1.48*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unauthorized help</td>
<td>-0.075</td>
<td>-1.63**</td>
<td>-2.09**</td>
<td>-0.90</td>
<td>-1.53**</td>
<td>-2.42**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>misconduct</td>
<td>-0.089</td>
<td>-1.170*</td>
<td>-2.35**</td>
<td>-1.178</td>
<td>-2.58**</td>
<td>-0.078</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Plagiarism is the only unethical behaviour that is negatively related to all six subscales, the most significant relationships being with dutifulness \((r=-.281, p<.01)\) and self-discipline \((r=-.264, p<.01)\). Therefore, the less likely students are to adhere strictly to their ethical principles and scrupulously fulfill their moral obligations and to complete tasks, the more inclined they will be to “intentionally or knowingly representing the word of another as one’s own in any academic exercise” (Burke apud Ercegovac & Richardson, 2004).
As a general tendency, dutifulness and self-discipline, followed by deliberation seem to be the facets of conscientiousness that show more powerful relationships with unethical behaviours in academic settings (Table 8). A possible explanation for this finding could be the fact that these particular facets refer mainly to moral aspects (dutifulness) and effectiveness, both in terms of completing a task and considering “the whole picture” (self-discipline and deliberation).

5. Discussion

This study found that 63% of participants admitted being involved in different forms of academic dishonesty behaviour at least once within the past year. We consider this percentage to be a high one given the fact that cheating behaviours are often under-reported by students, especially when their gravity is high (Paulhus, 2002).

The findings presented in the current research are mirrored by previous studies (Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2003; DeBruin & Rudnick, 2007), that reported conscientiousness to be linked with academic dishonesty. Also, conscientiousness has been found to be positively related to academic success, integrity, and achievement in the workplace (Salgado, 2003; Wanek, Sacckett, & Ones, 2003).

In contrast, conscientiousness has been demonstrated to be inversely related to negative work habits such as dishonesty and missed days of work (Salgado, 2003; Wanek et al., 2003).

This study found as well that those who reported higher levels of academic dishonesty also had higher levels of neuroticism, in accordance with Karim, Zamzuri, and Nor’s (2009) results which indicate that those with higher neuroticism scores were more likely to engage in plagiarism. The present findings also relate to those of Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham (2003) who found neuroticism to be a negative correlate and predictor to academic achievement, which can be broadly seen as the positive antipode of academic cheating.

Based on previous findings which proved that the more narrow personality characteristics are better predictors for academic achievement than the five dimensions advanced by the big five model, the current research investigated, as well, the correlations at subscale level. The results offer valuable insights for better understanding the initial associations, stated above.

Of course that there is much more research needed to fully understand what types of cheating students engage in, how frequently they cheat, and especially why they cheat. In this respect, future studies should focus on interpersonal aspects of the process and include, for instance, measures for social pressures to cheat or not to cheat (Nathanson et al., 2006). Similarly, other areas, such the motivation behind cheating behaviour – unable, under-interested or under pressure (Stephens & Nicholson, 2008) should be taken into account in order to explain the incongruity belief-behaviour in the case of students who report engaging in cheating behaviours.
cu manifestările non-etice în cazul studenților incluși în studiu (r=-.281, p<.01 cu plagiatul; r=-.250, p<.01 cu fraudă; r=-.233, p<.01 cu abaterile; r=-.217, p<.01 cu ajutorul neautorizat). În aceeași măsură, nevrotismul corelează semnificativ cu plagiatul (r=.214, p<.01), fraudă (r=.163, p<.01) și abaterile (r=.156, p<.05). Diferențe semnificative în ceea ce privește falsificarea pot fi observate între studenții de la nivelul universitar și cei de la nivel post-universitar. Cercetarea oferă perspective valoroase care vin în întâmpinarea nevoilor instituțiilor educaționale și a celor direct implicați în procesul educațional cu privire la dezvoltarea de politici și regulamente relevante din punctul de vedere al conduitei în mediul academic. 

Cuvinte-cheie: etica în mediul academic; personalitate; NEO-PI-R; copiat; comportament non-etic.

References
Personality and Academic Dishonesty. Evidence from an Exploratory Pilot Study