

Moral reasoning and academic dishonesty: a qualitative Study of undergraduate students in Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Academic dishonesty represents a pervasive issue within educational settings, and understanding the moral reasoning behind such behaviors is crucial for effective intervention. The primary objective of this research is to explore and assess the moral reasoning frameworks of undergraduate students attending the University of Malaysia Sabah, a public institution. Employing a qualitative methodology, we conducted indepth interviews with 13 students to gain nuanced insights into their moral perspectives. Data analysis was carried out using an Interpretive Phenomenological Approach (IPA), enabling us to deeply understand the lived experiences and thought processes surrounding moral reasoning among these students. Our findings reveal that students predominantly subscribe to one of three distinct moral viewpoints. The first approach, termed as the 'subjective/contextual' perspective, posits that moral decisions are largely influenced by personal feelings and specific situational factors. The second approach is rooted in consequentialism, where the morality of an action is determined by its outcomes. The third approach regards morality as an objective entity, often grounded in religious or legal tenets. Based on our results, we advocate for a multifaceted educational strategy that addresses academic dishonesty. Universities should actively educate students on both the individual and societal repercussions of engaging in academically dishonest behaviors. Additionally, encouraging students to further develop their religious affiliations could serve as a complementary approach to mitigating academic dishonesty.