PLAGIARISM EXPERIENCE AND MORAL EMOTIONS

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Abstract

Moral emotions have roles in behavioral decision making including decision to plagiarize. Basically moral emotions are described in two emotions: guilt and shame. People with guilt and shame proneness are typically susceptible to ethical decision making. From the public – private distinction views, guilt is associated with the violation of one's conscience while shame is more likely to occur if one's shortcomings are exposed publicly. The act of plagiarizing may lead students to emotionally feel guilty when refer to the misconduct acts or shame if the act is known to public. 159 sophomores were chosen accidently in this study, 135 experienced plagiarism and 24 never plagiarized. The study found significant association between gender and three of four moral emotions, $p < 0.05$ except with shame – negative self-evaluation. The association between students' plagiarism experience and moral emotions was not established because the Asymp. Sig > .05.

Keywords: plagiarism, moral emotions, guilt and shame

1. Introduction

The challenges of plagiarism and academic misconduct do not spread only in universities but also they happen in scientific communities as well as journalistic communities (Ercegovac & Richardson, 2004). The act of copying the work of others and admit it as his / her own seems very easy in the age of internet today. The technique of copy and paste is very easy so that the students more readily set up the mental of plagiarizing.

Consciously, anyone would agree that plagiarizing is unethical and considered crime. However, the social pressures like the observation of ignored and intensive plagiarizing practices will facilitate anyone to practice the same thing. This situation will get worse if intervention is never given.

Anyone would debate the following statement: Imitation is encouraged and ignored. However, such statement is not wrong if we consider that there is belief stating that knowledge of the human should be shared by everyone, not owned personally or in a particular group. Hansen (2003) argued that drawing from other writings was encouraged, the history recorded the work of ancient famous writers such as Aristotle as "a copy paste" of Democritus' work.

Hansen (2003) explained the chronology of the rise of copy right as the following: a) before 1600, writers were facilitated to draw from previous work of others until print technology was invented and authorship became a profession; b) 1700 to 1990, was the period when Copyright laws took serious issues of plagiarism within school, universities and other institutions; c) 1990 – now, the internet technology has been suspected as agent causing plagiarism easier. However several facts disapprove the idea as "conventional" copying still takes place in a great of number.

The display of plagiarism has facilitative effect in one's moral emotion. If plagiarism is considered accepted in public, the act of plagiarism will spread widely and easily. The mechanism of moral emotions i.e. guilt and shame, will never be an issue for those who plagiarize. On the opposite, if sanctions are provided and run effectively, the plagiarism will be diminishing.

The reaction of students after plagiarizing is interesting to study. Few studies report the implications of positioning plagiarism as a moral aspect of decision making to plagiarize and academic misconduct. The study by East (2010) concludes that emotion and reason is moral judgments for plagiarism. Through these emotion and reasons, students are faced with reactions to plagiarism.

Cohen and Wolf (2011) stated that moral emotions motivate ethical behavior by encouraging people to act accordingly on the bases of accepted standard of right or wrong. Scholars agree that moral emotions have function to deter unethical and antisocial behavior

(Eisenberg, 2000; Haidt, 2003; Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek 2007). Moral emotions are commonly divided into guilt and shame. Tangney and Dearing (2002) stated that both of emotions are commonly as the result of responding to personal transgression.

Reviewing the two emotions, two schools of thought show the key discrepancies: the self-behavior distinction and the public-private distinction. Lewis (1971) stated that moral emotions can be differentiated in self- distinction perspective. Guilt is focused one's behavior ("I did wrong thing"), whereas shame focuses in one's self (I am not a good person). Guilt arises from attribution which is internal, unstable, and specific about one's self. This results in negative feeling about specific behavior that one has committed (Tracy & Robins, 2004). On the other hand, shame arises from negative feelings about the global self after one makes internal, stable, and global attribution about one self.

The second view proposes that guilt and shame can be differentiated via public-private distinction. According to this view, any transgression which has not been exposed to public will result in guilty. If the failure or transgression has been publicly known the feeling of shame is likely to occur (Combs, Campbell, Jackson, Smith, 2010). The conclusion of these views is that guilt is associated with a feeling of having done something wrong which violates one's conscience. On the other hand, shame is negative feeling which arises when one's failure, misconduct or transgression is known publicly. Supposedly, this study assumed that participants' moral emotions were associated with their plagiarism experience.

2. Methods

2.1 Participants and procedures

A total of 159 sophomores, 32 male and 127 females, of private university participated in the study. They completed GASP questionnaire measuring guilt and shame containing a description of personal transgression. The responses of GASP ranged from *1* = *very unlikely*, *2* =*unlikely*, *3* = *about 50% likely*, *4* = *likely*, *5*=*very likely*. The subscale of GASP scale: Guilt (Negative Behavior Evaluation) consisted 3 items with coefficient alpha .623; Guilt-repair sub scale consisted of 4 items with Cronbach's Alpha .878, sub scale Shame – negative self-evaluation has 4 items and the Cronbach's Alpha .653; and subscale Shame-Withdraw has got .794 for its Cronbach's Alpha.

Other instruments were designed related to students' perception of conditions and situations of the faculty's academic integrity. The faculty's academic integrity had 11 items, measuring the quality of academic misconduct behaviors in the faculty.

2.2 Result and discussion

Descriptively, the participants' moral emotions were reported in the following table.

Table 1. Frequency of participants' moral emotions

No.	Sub scale	Level	
		Low	High
1	Guilt (Negative Behavior Evaluation)	152	7
2	Guilt-repair	137	22
3	Shame – Negative self-evaluation	146	13
4	Shame-withdraw	93	66

95.6% of the participants had low guilt with negative behavior evaluation. This means that majorly participants are more likely to lie and to engage in antisocial behaviors (Cohen and Wolf, 2011). In terms of personality, people with low guilt –NBE are also more not emphatic, selfish, not altruistic and arrogant. In terms of what to do after they committed transgression, people with low guilt NBE are less likely to repair or change their behavior.

In shame sub scale, majority of the participants in the study show low shame – negative self-evaluation (NSE) (91.8%). People with this emotion trait are more likely to make any unethical behavior.

. The observed chi-square statistic for the association between gender and Guilt-Negative Behavior Evaluation is 6.242, which is associated with a 1.2% of being wrong in rejecting the null hypothesis. This is not a great risk (not exceed the standard of 5% risk). We, therefore find support that gender differences are associated with Guilt-Negative Behavior Evaluation level. An overall summary, females are more likely than males to have Guilt-Negative Behavior Evaluation.

The association between gender and Guilt – Repair was also significant as indicated by

Asymp.sig. .041. An overall summary, females are more likely than males to have Guilt-Repair. There was also association between gender and Shame- Withdraw as shown by Asymp.Sig. .034. Exception has been made, gender and Shame – Negative Self Evaluation did not associate with gender as indicated by Asymp.Sig. .318. The summary of the result is presented below.

Table 2. The association between gender and moral emotions

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Variable
Pearson Chi-Square	.998a	1	.318	Gender and Shame – Negative Self Evaluation
Pearson Chi-Square	6.242	1	.012	Gender and Guilt – Negative Behavior Evaluation
Pearson Chi-Square	4.188	1	.041	Gender and Guilt – Repair
Pearson Chi-Square	4.498	1	.034	Gender and Shame – Withdraw

The participants' moral emotions were correlated with their plagiarism experience. The result was that only guilt – negative behavior evaluation which correlated with students' plagiarism experience, p<0.05. This means that the more students participate in plagiarism, the bigger their guilt-negative behavior evaluation.

The plagiarism experience data was gathered by asking questions whether participants had engaged in plagiarism or not. The result revealed that 135 (84.9%) of total participants admitted that they once plagiarized and 24 participants reported that they never plagiarized. The association between students' plagiarism experience and moral emotions was not established because the Asymp. Sig > .05.

The faculty's academic integrity was measured by 11 items. Item no.4 which says "Many students that I know have downloaded a complete paper from the Internet and submitted the paper as their own assigned work" was majorly responded strongly agree by105 students (66%) . This suggested that the practice of plagiarizing via internet technology was a common phenomenon at the faculty. Other finding revealed that 87 students (54.7%) disagreed with statement no 8 i.e. "Using information on the Internet without acknowledgement (citing) is plagiarism. " This indicated that the students' attitude toward plagiarism using internet technology was positive. Other finding which should be put into attention was item no 11 which said "It is very easy to plagiarize a paper without my instructor knowing" indicated low concern of the instructors / lecturers on students' plagiarism. A total of 103 students strongly agree with the statement. Students' lack of knowledge in citing article was also experienced by majorly participants (40.9%).

3. Limitations

This is a pilot study which has a few limitations to study design. The theme of the study is normative so that it might trigger what we call social desirability. The participants had a chance to respond to what was desirable not to what actually happened to them. It was also assumed that the participants answered the questions honestly and their answers were their own and without influence. Only a few number of students participated in this study so that inference would be improper. The composition of the participants gender was imbalance i.e. females outnumbered males so that comparison study might not valid.

4. Conclusions

The rise of plagiarism and other forms of academic misdeed has variety of reasons (Genereux & McLeod, 1995). The social modeling of plagiarism displayed by students at the faculty may "justify" plagiarism at academic activities if no intervention executed. The spirit of "share" through internet has influenced students' thought of copy paste practices. They thought that information in the internet is public so that it must be free of copyright.

These findings reveal that there is a problem with students' moral emotion. The students will not experience shame or guilt even though their plagiarisms are known to public. Based on the situations, the faculty needs to establish faculty academic integrity statement in order to decrease the practices of any academic misconduct.

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