

# Hospitality and Tourism Students' Views of Academic Dishonesty Before and During the Height of the Coronavirus Pandemic

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Those involved in higher education have been concerned about students' academic dishonesty for many years and there are concerns that the coronavirus pandemic led to even more academic dishonesty across the disciplines. Therefore, this study focused on hospitality and tourism students' views on academic dishonesty, or cheating behaviors, before and during the height of the pandemic. The results of two online surveys of hospitality management students in the southeastern United States found that students felt that academic dishonesty increased, they experienced more stress, and their views varied by their perceptions of online education. Suggestions for decreasing academic dishonesty to enhance learning include communicating with students about it, making changes in assignments and pedagogy, and getting to know students better.

## INTRODUCTION

In general, colleges and universities fear that students' acts of academic dishonesty diminish the goals of higher education with regard to transferring knowledge and developing skills (Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2002). Furthermore, some believe that cheating has continued to become more common among college and university students (Liebler, 2016; Laurent et al., 2014; McCabe, 2005), and estimates are that high numbers of undergraduate students have cheated in their classes (Laurent et al., 2014; McCabe, 2005). Acts of academic dishonesty, including cheating behaviors, occur in all major areas of study in higher education, including that of hospitality and tourism (Calvert et al., 2008; Kincaid & Zemke, 2006).

Moreover, there are concerns that the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic led to even more academic dishonesty in general (Dey, 2021; Supiano, 2020), and thus, the authors wondered if that increase might include students studying hospitality and tourism. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the hospitality and tourism industry was negatively impacted, as many businesses had to close, or their operations were reduced in response to travel restrictions and regulations (Fowler, 2022). Furthermore, job losses in the hospitality and tourism industry that were related to the pandemic often produced negative attitudes toward the industry (Yu et al., 2021), working in the industry during the height of the pandemic produced high levels of stress among employees (Chen & Chen, 2021), and many employees became motivated to leave the hospitality industry altogether (e.g., Akkermans et al., 2020; Bufquin et al., 2021; Chen & Chen, 2021; Yu et al., 2021). In addition, through the results of a recent study, researchers found that anger played a significant role in employees' intentions to leave the hospitality industry (Popa et al., 2023). Thus, students majoring in hospitality and tourism may have experienced increased anxiety about their future employment in addition to having to adjust to a sudden pivot to online education, which may have resulted in changes in their perceptions about academic dishonesty.

Therefore, it would be helpful for educators within the hospitality and tourism discipline to understand more about these issues. For that reason, this study focused on what hospitality and tourism students' views on academic dishonesty, including cheating behaviors, were before and during the height of the COVID-

19 pandemic to learn more about what students thought and did, so as to help instructors and students diminish acts of academic dishonesty, enhance learning, and understand more about students' intentions and behaviors during difficult situations.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Academic Dishonesty among Students in Higher Education in General

Examples and definitions of academic dishonesty can be found on many university websites (e.g., Berkeley City College, 2022; NIU, 2022; Penn State Berks, 2022; Purdue University, 2022; WPU, 2022; UC Denver, 2022). A concise definition of academic dishonesty is that "academic dishonesty or academic misconduct is any type of cheating that occurs in relation to a formal academic exercise" (Berkeley City College, 2022 [online]. Plagiarism, fabrication, cheating, collusion, deception, and sabotage have all been described as types of academic dishonesty (Berkeley City College, 2022; SPC, 2022).

Tests and examinations have commonly been viewed as subjects of academic dishonesty, with the following all viewed as acts of cheating: a student copying another student's exam without his or her knowledge, using notes when they are not authorized, finding out what was on an exam from another student prior to completing the test, getting a false excuse so as to complete an exam at a later time/date, helping another student cheat on an exam, and using electronic devices such as cell phones to cheat on exams (McCabe, 2005). Students have also been found to cheat on written assignments through acts of plagiarism by not attributing the evidence provided in assignments to their source(s) and copying entire assignments or parts of them from other sources (McCabe, 2005). In addition, the use of a variety of tools such as those offered via artificial intelligence (AI), and contract cheating, whereby students purchase assignments completed by someone else and then submit them as their own, have been shown to be increasing (Curtis et al., 2021; Erguvan, 2021; Newton, 2018; Ouyang et al., 2022).

The academic dishonesty of college and/or university students has been the subject of a large body of research over the last couple of decades and has been of concern to many educators, and ways to resolve the issues surrounding cheating vary (e.g., Asokan et al., 2013; Bashir & Bala, 2018; Blau et al., 2017;

Becker et al., 2006; McCabe et al., 2004; McCabe, 2005; McCabe & Pavela, 2000, 2004; McCabe et al., 2001). Interestingly, cheating on a test has been viewed as a very unethical type of academic dishonesty (Hrabak et al., 2004; Hsiao & Yang, 2011), and younger university students (meaning younger in age) who possess lower grade point averages have been observed as being more likely to participate in those types of behaviors involving academic dishonesty (Klein, et al., 2007).

Suggested ways to prevent or stop cheating behaviors include making sure that students know that academic integrity is something of value, communicating with students about academic integrity as a social norm and about what behaviors comprise academic dishonesty (Hutton, 2006; Jones, 2011; McCabe, 2001). They also include role modeling acts of academic integrity, such as helping students develop skills for how to correctly use and cite sources (Jones, 2011; Chankova, 2017). In addition, pedagogical techniques can impact cheating (Hutton, 2006), and permitting students to select their own topics and applying principles of Universal Design Learning (UDL), including relevance, value, and authenticity in connection with learning, appear to help decrease cheating behaviors in the current era (Daniels et al., 2021), as does assigning students' seats in face-to-face exam settings (Fendler et al., 2018).

### Academic Dishonesty Behaviors during the Height of the COVID-19 Pandemic

As noted, some believe that cheating has continued to become more prevalent (e.g., Liebler, 2016; Laurent et al., 2014), and some perceive that the coronavirus pandemic may have exacerbated cheating behaviors among students (Asimov, 2020; Supiano, 2020). Some of the reasons behind the rapid increase in academic dishonesty appear to have been connected to the quick pivot that many instructors and students had to make from in-person classes to online classes at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 (Carrasco, 2022), and due to students' "higher levels of distress, sadness, and other negative emotions" (Duckworth, 2022[online]) during the pandemic. Furthermore, during the height of the coronavirus pandemic, university and college students indicated that they experienced less effective teacher-student communication, a lack of socialization, a lack of learning, and an increase in issues related to their health (Radu et al., 2020). In addition, a deep distrust between students and instructors was found in at least one study about academic dishonesty during the height of the pandemic (Amzalag et al., 2021).

Moreover, during the height of the pandemic, students frequently completed exams and assignments online, including those who had previously attended classes in person on their campuses. Many students may have completed their assignments and exams while they were within their own houses and apartments with others nearby, such as family members and friends, and thus, they may have had more opportunities to engage in acts of academic dishonesty. Students could also more easily access resources online such as Google, find earlier versions of exams and the answers online, text answers to classmates or share screen shots of exam questions in advance, and use tools such as GroupMe and/or Whats App (Chang et al., 2021) to share answers. In addition, they can currently use tutoring services such as "Chegg" that allow students to receive answers from so-called experts in a short amount of time (Asimov, 2020; Supiano, 2020). Plus, artificial intelligence (AI) products, such as the chat bot called

ChatGPT, have become increasingly available to help students with their assignments (Open AI, 2023).

Interestingly, a study of students' cheating behaviors on online exams, via the Proctor U platform, found that cheating increased dramatically during the pandemic, with students trying to use "unpermitted resources" such as textbooks and cell phones while they completed exams (Williams, 2022). It appears that the temptation to cheat became even stronger than it was prior to the pandemic, and although online proctoring is often suggested as a preventative measure, companies such as ProctorU reported more incidents of cheating than ever before, and proctoring has its challenges, especially in terms of equity (Asimov, 2020).

For instance, proctoring is not necessarily readily available to all students as they may need a computer with a microphone and a camera facing them at all times; they must have a strong, reliable internet connection, and they also need a quiet space to be alone in and to work uninterrupted in during an exam, and that setting is not necessarily available to all students (Asimov, 2020). Thus, rather than recommending proctoring for all online exams, the recommendation is to design classes that promote academic honesty and integrity and that discourage cheating by design (Asimov, 2020). For as it has been noted, "college graduates will rarely have to solve problems in an hour during which they have no access to the internet or other people" (Supiano, 2020, p. 26).

### Academic Dishonesty among Hospitality and Tourism Students

Twenty-five years ago, results of a study by well-known researchers on student behavior, McCabe and Trevino (1995), indicated that undergraduate students majoring in business, where hospitality and tourism programs are often housed, were more likely to participate in a variety of types of academic dishonesty or cheating than students studying other disciplines (e.g., education, engineering, science, law, arts, medicine). Other studies found that business students self-reported cheating and had a more relaxed attitude about what they perceived was cheating than students studying leadership (Klein et al., 2007; Simha et al., 2012), and they felt that trying to get ahead was the major motivation behind cheating behaviors (Simkin & McLeod, 2010).

A number of studies have investigated the academic dishonesty of students studying specifically within the hospitality and tourism discipline (Bae et al., 2015; Calvert et al., 2008; Deale et al., 2020; Hein & Grand, 2011; Kincaid & Zemke, 2006; Self & Brown, 2008). The authors of one study about academic dishonesty among hospitality and tourism students recommended the development of more hands-on, laboratory type courses and increased opportunities to connect with industry professionals to help decrease instances of cheating (Bae et al., 2015). Others found that using an online tool, such as Turnitin.com, resulted in less plagiarism (Self & Brown, 2008). Additionally, a recommendation, made as a result of another study, was that educators should discuss the topic of academic dishonesty, including the comparisons between collaboration and cheating, in more detail and more openly with their students and offer specific examples (Deale et al., 2020).

Research has shown that hospitality and tourism students experienced career anxiety prior to the pandemic (Boo & Kim, 2020; Unguren & Huseyinli, 2020) and may feel more anxiety during challenging times, such as at the height of the pandemic (Ren et al., 2022). In fact, they may even lose their confidence in

the hospitality and tourism industry as a career choice (Unguren & Kacmaz, 2022). However, although hospitality and tourism students are often included in a college of business, and some studies have focused on academic dishonesty in the discipline (Bae et al., 2015; Deale, et al., 2020), the perceptions of academic dishonesty held by students in the team-oriented, practical field of hospitality and tourism are relatively unknown, and truly were not understood, during the height of the coronavirus pandemic.

## STUDY PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to compare and contrast students' views of academic dishonesty prior to and during the height of the coronavirus pandemic in 2021.

The research questions that guided this study were the following:

1. **What were hospitality and tourism students' perceptions of academic dishonesty prior to the pandemic and during the pandemic?**
2. **How did hospitality and tourism students' perceptions of academic dishonesty differ by their perceptions of online education?**
3. **During the coronavirus pandemic, how did hospitality and tourism students think about academic dishonesty?**

## METHODS

### The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

This study was completed as a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) study that involved "the exploration and transformation of the teaching and learning environment for both students and faculty, whether at the level of an individual class or the whole institution across all disciplines" (ISSoTL, 2022). SoTL has evolved over the past few decades, to encompass scholarly activities centered on teaching and learning, discovery, integration, application, inclusivity, and engagement (e.g., Boyer, 1990, 1996; ISSoTL, 2022; Theall & Centra, 2001). SoTL can be described as the organized investigation of teaching and learning, using established criteria for scholarship, derived from a variety of disciplines and perspectives (Chick, 2014). Moreover, the goal of a SoTL project is to advance student learning and heighten the quality of education (Poole & Simmons, 2013). SoTL can be applied to understand how beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, and values about instruction can improve learning and/or generate a more genuine understanding of learning, giving way to products that are peer-reviewed and publicly shared (Potter & Kustra, 2013; Simmons & Marquis, 2017).

Additionally, although definitions of SoTL may vary by the specific viewpoint or context of a project (Simmons & Marquis, 2017), generally SoTL is viewed as bridging the connection between teaching and learning (University of Indiana, 2022). The context of this SoTL study, was that of the authors, as instructors of university courses within the discipline of hospitality and tourism, wanting to find out more about what was happening within their courses at two different times, so as to improve the teaching and learning and reduce academic dishonesty going forward,

by understanding more about what was happening and why it might be occurring.

## The Study Design

This survey study was approved by the institutional review board at the university where the authors work, and it received exempt certification (UMCIRB #20-002803). The survey method was chosen for this study as it permitted the investigators to approach a sample of students in a comparatively easy way, allowed the students to provide anonymous responses, and allowed the authors to compare and contrast the perceptions of the pre-pandemic and peri-pandemic (during-the-pandemic) groups. This study involved two surveys. One survey about academic dishonesty was conducted in the spring of 2019, prior to the coronavirus pandemic. The second survey was conducted during the fall of 2021, during the height of the coronavirus pandemic.

The survey was made up of both closed-ended and open-ended items. The closed-ended items concentrated on various student behaviors including the completion of tests, group projects, assignments, and class activities; and were based on the literature (Asokan et al., 2013; Kidwell et al., 2003; Klein et al., 2007; McCabe et al., 2001). A 5-point Likert scale was applied that contained values from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Open-ended items were also included to gain further insights into students' views about the subject. Finally, the survey concluded with a section containing demographic items.

The same questions were asked on the pre-pandemic and peri-pandemic surveys about academic dishonesty, and additional items about the students' perceptions of and experiences during the pandemic were added to the peri-pandemic survey. Please note that the demographic items included in the survey can be found in Table 1 in the results section. The survey items about academic dishonesty in general that were applied in both the pre-pandemic and peri-pandemic surveys included the following:

- It is very important to make sure that students do not plagiarize others when they write papers and reports.
- Instructors need to trust their students and develop creative ways to assess their learning.
- I think that students cheat primarily because they feel stressed and disconnected.
- When it is possible, instructors should use forms of assessment that do not require proctoring.
- It's the student's loss if they cheat.
- Better teaching reduces cheating.
- I think that students cheat because they did not study for an exam.
- Instructors need to take the pressure off of students and make testing more low stakes and instead create high stakes assignments that are projects and papers.
- It is very important to make sure that students do not cheat on exams.
- College graduates will rarely have to solve problems in an hour during which they have no access to the internet or other people.
- I think students collaborating, using Google, finding exam answers, or using online tutoring services (such as Chegg and get an answer from an "expert" in minutes) is reprehensible if students are told to complete an assignment or exam alone.
- I think that we focus too much on cheating in colleges and universities.

- Instructors need to create assignments that are hard to cheat on in online classes.
- If instructors communicate effectively about academic integrity, then cheating behaviors will decrease.
- Instructors should require students to use online exam proctoring services.

As noted, the peri-pandemic survey asked the respondents to share their views regarding the pandemic and included the following additional closed-end items:

- I think that many students are experiencing stress and feeling disconnected during the pandemic.
- I am feeling stressed and disconnected during the pandemic.
- I think that students are cheating more during the pandemic, especially now that many are taking online courses.

Both of the surveys (pre-pandemic and peri-pandemic) were piloted with groups of students prior to their use and the questions were revised according to the feedback received. The final form of each of the surveys was placed in the Qualtrics survey software system and shared through an email link. Students enrolled in hospitality and tourism classes in a college of business at a public university in the southeastern United States (U.S.) were asked to take part in an online survey in the spring of 2019 and the fall of 2021. Note that it is possible that some students may have completed both surveys, as the surveys were conducted at the same university within the same program of study, but at two different times.

As noted, the students' responses to the surveys were collected anonymously so that the students would be open to sharing their perspectives. To examine the survey responses, the quantitative items were analyzed via descriptive statistics, factor analysis, and analysis of variance. The open-ended responses were analyzed through content analysis, as recommended by scholars in qualitative research methods (Berg, 2004; Malterud, 2012). For this project, thematic analysis was selected, and the authors and two graduate students coded the written responses independently (Braun & Clarke, 2006). First, the responses were read in total and then they were read again and coded by placing notes on interesting and frequently mentioned items. Next, the codes were viewed again for themes, and the themes were described and named (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The coders compared and evaluated the themes that they generated from the data as a sort of cross-validation of the final elucidation of the meanings of the qualitative answers, as recommended by researchers in the area of content analysis (Berg, 2004; Malterud, 2012; Neuendorf, 2017).

## RESULTS

### The Description of the Sample and Types of Assessments Used

The data analysis for this study was based on 79 surveys that were acquired prior to the coronavirus pandemic in the spring of 2019 and 84 surveys that were obtained from students during the height of the coronavirus pandemic in the fall of 2021. The program that students were enrolled in had a total of about 300 students at the time the surveys were administered, indicating that the sample sizes were representative of the population (26%<sup>pre-pandemic</sup> and 28%<sup>peri-pandemic</sup>). Most respondents were female students (74%<sup>pre-pandemic</sup> and 81%<sup>peri-pandemic</sup>), younger than 30 years old (94%<sup>pre-pandemic</sup> and 78%<sup>peri-pandemic</sup>), and white (80%<sup>pre-pandemic</sup> and 77%<sup>peri-pandemic</sup>). With regard to the students' years in school, in the pre-pandemic sample, there were more freshmen (first year)

(43%) and sophomore (second year) students (33%), whereas in the peri-pandemic sample, there were more senior (fourth year) (46%) and graduate students (25%) (see Table 1). As indicated, while the samples were obtained from students in the same program, the respondents' years in school varied between those who completed the pre-pandemic and peri-pandemic samples. Overall, the samples were representative of the institution's and the department's student profile, and the responses to the surveys did not appear to differ significantly by year in school or level of study (undergraduate versus graduate).

**Table 1. Sample Profiles**

	Pre-Pandemic (n=79)		Peri-Pandemic (n=84)	
	#	%	#	%
<i>Gender</i>				
Male	20	26%	15	19%
Female	58	74%	64	81%
<i>Age</i>				
20 or less	36	46%	17	22%
21-30	38	48%	44	56%
31-40	3	4%	9	11%
41-50	1	1%	4	5%
51-60	0	0%	5	6%
<i>Race/ethnicity</i>				
African American	8	10%	12	15%
Asian	3	4%	2	3%
Hispanic	2	3%	2	3%
White	63	80%	60	77%
Other	3	4%	2	3%
<i>Student rank</i>				
1 <sup>st</sup> year/Freshman	20	43%	5	6%
2 <sup>nd</sup> year/Sophomore	15	33%	8	10%
3 <sup>rd</sup> Year/Junior	7	15%	10	13%
4 <sup>th</sup> Year/Senior	4	9%	36	46%
Graduate student	0	0%	20	25%

## DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Regardless of their views about themselves, as shown in Table 2, the students who responded to the peri-pandemic survey thought that many students were experiencing stress and feeling disconnected during the height of the pandemic ( $m=4.62$ ), and students indicated that they cheated during the pandemic primarily because they felt stressed and disconnected ( $m=4.11$ ). At the same time, the peri-pandemic respondents recognized that it is very important to make sure that students do not plagiarize others when they write papers and reports ( $m=4.43$ ) and observed that it is the student's loss if they cheat ( $m=4.06$ ). They also believed that instructors need to trust their students and develop creative ways to assess their learning ( $m=4.13$ ), and instructors should use forms of assessment that do not require proctoring when that is possible ( $m=4.10$ ). Overall, they perceived that better teaching reduces cheating ( $m=3.88$ ).

The students (including those who completed the pre-pandemic survey and those who completed the peri-pandemic survey) noted that they were assessed by their instructors via the

**Table 2. Students' perceptions about academic dishonesty (peri-pandemic)**

	Mean	SD
I think that many students are experiencing stress and feeling disconnected during the pandemic.	4.62	0.67
It is very important to make sure that students do not plagiarize others when they write papers and reports.	4.43	0.87
Instructors need to trust their students and develop creative ways to assess their learning.	4.13	0.76
I think that students cheat primarily because they feel stressed and disconnected.	4.11	0.93
When it is possible, instructors should use forms of assessment that do not require proctoring.	4.10	0.78
It's the student's loss if they cheat.	4.06	1.02
Better teaching reduces cheating.	3.88	1.08
I think that students cheat because they did not study for an exam.	3.87	0.79
I am feeling stressed and disconnected during the pandemic.	3.82	1.12
I think that students are cheating more during the pandemic, especially now that many are taking online courses.	3.68	1.08
Instructors need to take the pressure off of students and make testing more low stakes and instead create high stakes assignments that are projects and papers.	3.68	1.15
It is very important to make sure that students do not cheat on exams.	3.67	1.14
College graduates will rarely have to solve problems in an hour during which they have no access to the internet or other people.	3.66	1.10
I think students collaborating, using Google, finding exam answers, or using online tutoring services (such as Chegg and get an answer from an "expert" in minutes) is reprehensible if students are told to complete an assignment or exam alone.	3.44	1.17
I think that we focus too much on cheating in colleges and universities.	3.24	1.12
Instructors need to create assignments that are hard to cheat on in online classes.	3.24	0.99
If instructors communicate effectively about academic integrity, then cheating behaviors will decrease.	3.20	1.13
Instructors should require students to use online exam proctoring services.	2.68	1.17

Note: A 5-point Likert scale was used.

following: multiple-choice/short answer quiz (44%), group project (42%), multiple-choice/short answer test/exam (41%), research project (37%), presentation (31%), essay test/exam (28%), term paper (26%), and lab or practical work (10%). Students tended to be assessed differently by their class year. For example, first year students were mainly assessed by quizzes. Second year students were assessed by quizzes, essay tests/exams, and multiple-choice/short answer tests/exams. Third year students were typically assessed by quizzes and tests/exams. Fourth year students were primarily assessed by quizzes, tests/exams, and group projects. Lastly, graduate students were usually assessed by group projects and presentations. In addition, according to the students, several plagiarism tools were used by their instructors, including Turnitin.com (31%), SafeAssign (27%), and other tools such as Respondus and proctors during exams (5%). It should be noted that the students were allowed to select more than one answer.

## FACTOR ANALYSIS ON STUDENT MOTIVATIONS FOR ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

From the literature review, 23 items were adopted to measure student motivations for academic dishonesty, and it appeared that the list was long and redundant. To reduce the number of items to a manageable size, 23 items were analyzed using a principal

component analysis that uncovered the underlying structure of a relatively large set of variables. After examining the rotated factor matrix for the patterns of significant factor loadings, 11 items were eliminated, and the remaining 12 items were kept. The loadings ranged from .653 to .889. The factor analysis grouped the 12 items into three factors displaying eigenvalues greater than one. The total variance explained was 77.96% (52.4% for factor 1; 15.9% for factor 2; 9.7% for factor 3), as shown in Table 3 (which includes both the pre-pandemic and the peri-pandemic survey responses).

**Table 3. Factor loadings on students' motivation for academic dishonesty (includes both pre-pandemic and peri-pandemic survey responses)**

	F1	F2	F3
	52.4%	15.9%	9.7%
Grade-related reasons for academic dishonesty ( $\alpha = 0.920$ )			
To get a better grade	0.880		
To pass the course	0.868		
To get a high grade	0.834		
Had time but did not prepare adequately	0.799		
Fear of failure	0.783		
Instructor-related reasons for academic dishonesty ( $\alpha = 0.830$ )			
The instructor doesn't care if I learn the material or not.		0.849	
The instructor acts like this is the only course I'm taking. He/she assigns too much work.		0.769	
Instructor is poor or indifferent		0.726	
Circumstance-related reasons for academic dishonesty ( $\alpha = 0.833$ )			
The instructor encourages cheating by leaving the room during tests.			0.886
My friends ask me to help them cheat and I can't say no.			0.809
People sitting around me during a test make no attempt to cover their answers.			0.765

The factors are listed in order of variance and explained as follows:

1. Factor 1 (Grade-related reasons for academic dishonesty): This factor accounts for grade-related motivation for academic dishonesty. For example, students engaged in academic dishonesty to get a better grade, pass the course, and/or get a high grade.
2. Factor 2 (Instructor-related reasons for academic dishonesty): This factor demonstrates instructor-related motivation for academic dishonesty. For instance, students decided to engage in academic dishonesty because the instructor did not care if they learned the material, the instructor acted like his/her/their class was the only course they were taking, or/and the instructor assigned too much work.
3. Factor 3 (Circumstance-related reasons for academic dishonesty): This factor is related to how certain circumstances lead students to engage in academic dishonesty. For example, students were motivated to cheat when the instructor left the room during tests, their friends asked them to help cheat and they could not say no, and/or people sitting around them during a test made no attempt to cover their answers.

## Mean Comparisons

To learn about how hospitality and tourism students perceived academic dishonesty differently between the time prior to the coronavirus pandemic and during the height of the pandemic, their motivations for cheating were compared between the responses on the pre-pandemic survey and peri-pandemic survey. Interestingly, the students showed significantly higher motivations for academic dishonesty during the height of the pandemic, especially for performance related reasons ( $F=28.867$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and instructor related reasons ( $F=3.122$ ,  $p < .10$ ), compared to the results obtained before the pandemic (see Table 4).

**Table 4. Analysis of Variance between Pre-Pandemic and Peri-Pandemic Survey Responses**

	Pre-Pandemic (n=79)		Peri-Pandemic (n=84)		F	P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Grade-related	3.44	1.34	4.33	0.68	28.867	0.000***
Instructor-related	2.98	1.36	3.31	1.01	3.122	0.079*
Circumstance related	2.29	1.20	2.36	0.99	0.196	0.659

Note: \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \* $p < .10$

In terms of the types of academic dishonesty, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, some students would try to know the questions asked on the exam before the examination ( $m=2.47$ ), and in an individual assignment, some students would accept help from others to complete it ( $m=2.12$ ). When submitting an assignment, only a few students noted that they would copy and change a few sentences/lines/words and phrases from other sources ( $m=1.72$ ), a few used online resources in a personal educational assignment/project without citing the author ( $m=1.65$ ), and a few used prohibited things such as hidden notes, calculators, and other electronic devices during an examination ( $m=1.63$ ). A few students also noted that they used unfair means to obtain information about the content of a test before it was given ( $m=1.58$ ) and gave false explanations when they missed a deadline for an educational project ( $m=1.55$ ).

Due to the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, during the 2020-2021 academic year, 42% of the students said that all of their classes moved online, 24% said that some of their classes were already online, but the rest of them moved online, and 34% of them said all of their classes were already online. To learn more about how their quick transition to online education affected their dishonesty behavior, the peri-pandemic sample was divided into two groups: those who found online education more difficult versus those who found online education less difficult. Students (in the peri-pandemic survey) who found online education to be more difficult showed significantly higher motivations for academic dishonesty for performance related reasons ( $F=3.313$ ,  $p < .10$ ) and instructor related reasons ( $F=3.195$ ,  $p < .10$ ), compared to students who found online education less difficult (see Table 5).

## QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

The peri-pandemic survey asked students two open-ended questions, and they provided a variety of answers. The first question asked them how academic dishonesty can be reduced. Sixty students provided answers and they varied a great deal, and included the following ideas: have instructors provide clear explanations about what cheating entails ( $n=10$ ); use lockdown features,

**Table 5. Analysis of Variance by Perceptions of Online Education Difficulty (includes the peri-pandemic survey responses)**

	Group finding online education more difficult (n=39)		Group finding online education less difficult (n=42)		F	P
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Grade-related	4.47	0.62	4.19	0.73	3.313	0.073*
Instructor-related	3.47	0.97	3.08	0.99	3.195	0.078*
Circumstance-related	2.35	1.06	2.41	0.94	0.069	0.794

Note: \* $p < .10$

proctoring, and other online tools ( $n=9$ ); engage in better teaching ( $n=6$ ); no idea ( $n=5$ , one noted that they had “no clue”); engage in creative teaching ( $n=4$ ); have more papers and projects as assignments ( $n=4$ ); provide clear information about consequences ( $n=4$ ); hold in-person exams ( $n=3$ ); assess students individually via a Zoom type tool ( $n=2$ ); offer low stakes tests ( $n=2$ ); help students prepare for tests ( $n=2$ ); provide fair assignments ( $n=2$ ); and other ( $n=5$ ). One of the rather interesting answers in the “other” category was the following: “I pay for the course, why does it matter how I come up with the answers?”

The second open-ended question on the peri-pandemic survey asked students how they thought that the coronavirus pandemic affected students' academic dishonesty; 59 responses were received. The most frequently mentioned impact related to courses moving online, such that since courses were moved online, students did not do as well, was that they may have been less motivated to learn, and they were more inclined to cheat ( $n=19$ ). The second most common answer was that the pandemic led to mental health issues such as stress and depression, leading students to be more likely to engage in academic dishonesty ( $n=15$ ). A few students were not sure of the impacts of the pandemic on academic dishonesty ( $n=7$ ), and some students offered other ideas, such as that the pandemic led students to have no boundaries and therefore, academic dishonesty has been normalized ( $n=2$ ). These themes were in line with the findings from the quantitative survey.

Students were also asked to make any additional comments about what they thought was the most interesting item on the survey and why, and 30 students provided additional insights at the end of the peri-pandemic survey. Examples of some comments that could be of particular interest to educators included the following:

I think that the most interesting question on the survey was when it talked about whether it was considered cheating if you took a piece of work, you turned in for one class and turned it in for another. I've always had mixed feelings about that being considered cheating or not, on one hand I'm sure the teacher would want you to put in the work for that certain class and not turn in something that you've already done for something else. However, it isn't plagiarism if it's your own work, and just because you already had the work done doesn't mean you didn't work hard on it. Say, for example, two scholarships you applied for asked the same question, would you use the same essay for both?

I personally think to reduce academic dishonesty there should be a change to how much one test can impact your grade. I have had classes where I only had three assignments which were all tests worth 33 percent of your grade. It really

adds a pressure to you when one test can be the reason you have to retake a course even if you have studied hours upon hours for that one assignment.

If anything, the additional understanding and flexibility often given by instructors should be not only greatly appreciated, but respected in a way that causes students to be even more accountable and transparent in their actions and course work. I do feel that continued flexibility should be provided to those suffering from health or mental health challenges during this time, but it is that student's responsibility to communicate these needs to their professor when the class begins, not as an excuse after.

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of this study indicated that students were more motivated to engage in academic dishonesty during the height of the coronavirus pandemic than prior to its occurrence. Moreover, those students (in the peri-pandemic survey) who perceived that online education was more difficult were more motivated to cheat. The findings indicated that many participants in the study perceived that students experienced stress and felt disconnected during the height of the pandemic, and students cheated primarily because they felt stressed, depressed, and disconnected, a finding similar to that of other researchers (Amzalag, 2021; Radu et al., 2020). These findings have implications for teaching and learning, and these implications are discussed below by the themes the emerged from the students' responses.

### Define and Discuss Academic Dishonesty

One suggestion that could perhaps make a positive difference in courses, whether they are taught in-person, online, or in a hybrid format, would be for instructors and students to discuss academic integrity and what behaviors are considered to be acts of academic dishonesty or cheating, including plagiarism and other acts lacking in academic integrity, as suggested in earlier research within the discipline (Deale et al., 2020). While students may know that they should not use notes during an exam or copy another student's answers, other behaviors may not be clearly understood as being considered cheating and therefore, deserve attention in the classroom setting. Providing specific examples of what to do and what not to do could potentially enhance students' understanding of academic integrity and dishonesty.

The discussion about academic integrity in general could also include the subject of ethics and ethical dilemmas and could potentially engage students in discussions and use case studies that focus on ethical dilemmas within their chosen field of hospitality and tourism (Hudson & Miller, 2006). Integrating the study of ethics into the curriculum via case studies has been recommended in hospitality and tourism education (Lynn, 2010), and using cases might be a way to connect integrity in the classroom to integrity in the industry that is the focus of the students' current studies and future career plans.

A couple of helpful and rather simple suggestions, regardless of the class format, include offering a recorded presentation about what the instructor considers to be cheating and why those particular behaviors are considered acts of cheating, and offering a live, virtual and/or face-to-face, discussion and question and answer session about academic dishonesty at the beginning of the class. Universities and colleges typically have academic integrity

standards and although those may be available to students, it is unlikely that they have read over those guidelines and therefore, being certain that students understand the institution's principles, policies, and procedures regarding academic dishonesty would be helpful. These suggestions align with those of a previous study that recommended keeping the conversation going about what academic dishonesty entails and having open discussions about the topic to promote mutual understanding and alleviate issues connected to cheating (Deale et al., 2020).

Sharing the university's or college's honor code is also strongly recommended and some have asked students to read and sign a statement of honor that indicates that they will not participate in acts of academic dishonesty during a class (e.g., Erguvan, 2021). Moreover, rather than recording sessions or holding discussions that focus solely on negative, punitive kinds of activities, perhaps educators would do well to first demonstrate to students how they can study, conduct research, complete assignments, and take exams in ethical, positive ways that demonstrate academic integrity instead of academic dishonesty.

### Use Creative Teaching Methods and Assignments

Another recommendation, which has been suggested by students involved in this study, and is supported by previous research (Durko, 2022), is for educators to take a deep look at one's classes and make changes so as to design and apply more engaging, creative course assignments and assessments that, even by their nature, discourage acts of academic dishonesty from taking place. For example, in connection with this theme, one respondent wrote the following: "When you offer other ways of assessments like projects and papers it is harder and less desirable for students to cheat."

As suggested in previous studies, perhaps instructors could apply the principles of UDL, encompassing its guidelines for engagement, representation, action, and expression (CAST, 2022; Daniels et al., 2021). For instance, one student in this study observed that an instructor only had students read a textbook and complete quizzes and tests over the text content and wrote that, "had my professors been engaging and maybe thrown in some discussion boards or lectures, then I do not think I would have turned to cheating." Examples of more engaging assignments include having more individual and group projects and papers and more individualized kinds of exam questions instead of multiple-choice ones.

Other recommendations include offering more low-stakes tests, more open-note exams, a wider variety of assignments, and requiring proctoring only as necessary. This finding connects to those of a previous study about hospitality and tourism education that noted that having more laboratory-oriented courses and connecting with industry professionals would further engage students and could help alleviate cheating behaviors (Bae et al., 2015). The finding also relates to studies of higher education in general that were conducted during the pandemic that recommended creating more authentic assessments based on realistic scenarios and/or case studies (Chang et al., 2021; Daniels et al., 2021). Thus, perhaps it would be wise for instructors to consider if there are better ways to assess student learning than via exams that may require proctoring and that may increase students' stress levels (Williams, 2022). In addition, proctoring can be costly and

therefore, access can be limited due to students' financial capabilities.

Furthermore, in addition to creating more engaging, thoughtful assignments and exams, it would be wise for instructors to help their students plan ahead. For example, one student noted that, "as an online student, it can be hard to study for classes and complete assignments virtually. This is why it is important to plan well and prepare in advance to make sure work gets completed." Rather than simply putting a syllabus up on a platform, it would be helpful for educators to spend some time each week or at the beginning of each module, regardless of the course's format (online, in-person, or hybrid), explaining the schedule, time, effort, and activities involved in the assignments and helping students to plan and prepare for the work that they need to complete in the course. For as previous research studies have found, a lack of self-control, self-motivation, and time management can negatively impact a student's educational experience and performance (e.g., Davis et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2016; Ye & Law, 2022).

### Address Stress and Mental Health Issues

As Duckworth (2022) noted, educators cannot underestimate the impact of stress on behaviors, including those connected with honesty and thus, should be particularly open about discussing academic dishonesty issues with their students. Sharing information about the counseling services and other wellness resources available to students would be an easy practice for all educators to engage in, and seems particularly important for instructors involved in the people-oriented, service-focused hospitality and tourism industry. Yet another recommendation for instructors, that students suggested, that could potentially make a real difference in terms of reducing academic dishonesty and improving motivation and attitudes, would be to consider the whole student in terms of his/her/their mental health. Living in the time of the coronavirus pandemic has been difficult and challenging and students noted that improved relationships between faculty members and students, and between students themselves, could enhance the learning process and potentially reduce cheating. For instance, one student wrote the following, "I would enjoy my classes more if I had connections to other students in the class and wish I could have a more personal relationship with all my professors," while another student indicated that, "I don't think students want to cheat, sometimes it happens because they truly want to do well and have so much on their plate. With more encouraging teachers that show they truly care; I feel like students would want to engage more and would be less likely to cheat." Social presence and creating a sense of community could be key components to implement in classes to create positive, caring, learning environments (Deale & White, 2012; Munoz et al., 2021), and potentially help decrease acts of academic dishonesty.

Perhaps the encouragement and connections may be taken for granted and therefore, it could also be helpful for instructors to intentionally get to know their students (obviously if class sizes are manageable, as getting to know 100+ students can be daunting if not improbable or impossible), and provide ways for students to get to know each other. One suggestion might be to have students interview a classmate or classmates so that they know more about others in the class, again, regardless of the class delivery mode. Another idea would be to have students conduct small-group discussions about academic integrity to get insights from other students and share these ideas in a discussion board

or other format, so as to communicate ideas and build understanding among other students and with the instructor. Although student mental health issues may not always relate directly to academic dishonesty, the results of this study indicate that performance-related and instructor-related factors have influence and thus, paying more attention to who is in the class and how the class interacts, could possibly help mitigate issues connected with academic dishonesty.

### Offer More Discipline Specific Activities

The recommendations made above are quite general and would connect to students across the disciplines. However, given the service-focused, people-oriented, practical aspects of the hospitality and tourism discipline, some suggestions might be focused more specifically on students within the discipline. For example, it might be helpful to have guest speakers who are professionals in the hospitality and tourism industry speak to a class about how they dealt effectively with the issues connected to the pandemic and employee misconduct/dishonesty. They could address how they dealt with the recent pandemic and how they plan to meet challenges that could occur in the future. The industry professionals could also engage in a question-and-answer session that allows students to ask questions about how they managed employee misconduct/dishonesty in their business and how they will manage situations going forward. Plus, they can ask other questions of interest to them. Their presentations and question-and-answer sessions could be conducted in an in-person format and recorded; in an online, synchronous format and recorded; or previously recorded and uploaded to the course's online learning platform. Thus, they could be available to all students regardless of the way a course is conducted. Industry professionals could include those in leadership positions and might also include students who recently graduated with a hospitality/tourism degree, to provide further relevance and help reduce anxiety and future academic dishonesty.

General recommendations made in the past may include the use of a variety of tools, such as proctoring tools and lockdown browsers. However, as noted, students may have issues with internet access and have limited financial capabilities and therefore, these kinds of items may not be helpful for hospitality and tourism students, or other students for that matter. For example, lockdown features that might be used to eliminate cheating can be seen as invasive of one's privacy in a learning environment (The Retriever, 2021), proctoring services for exams may have significant costs to students, and to institutions (Measure Learning, 2023), and the assumption that an online hospitality and tourism student who may work full-time in the hospitality and tourism industry and have family and/or personal obligations can readily complete an exam with a lockdown feature or afford a proctor may be unrealistic. Therefore, providing different kinds of assessments, rather than exams using these anti-cheating tools, might reduce student stress and enhance their learning.

Another action, connected to the suggestion above, that might be particularly helpful for hospitality and tourism students would be increasing the flexibility in terms of assignment due dates and types of assignments. Hospitality and tourism students are often working in the industry while they attend college or university and are also typically required to have documented work hours and an additional internship in the industry prior to graduation. Plus, the hospitality and tourism industry often requires students to work long hours, and late at night or early in



the morning, to meet the demands of the industry and therefore, it can be difficult for students to make hard deadlines that do not allow for any flexibility. Therefore, flexibility could be extremely helpful so that students might not feel as stressed by hard deadlines and assignments that can only be completed in one format.

## CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Findings obtained through the completion of this study offer information that is meaningful to both faculty members and students regarding academic dishonesty or cheating in hospitality and tourism education, in general and with regard to the coronavirus pandemic. If one types academic dishonesty, students, and coronavirus into the Hospitality and Tourism database, no items show up and therefore, this study provides new information to the discipline in the form of a SoTL study. This information may provide insights into ways to enhance teaching and learning in hospitality and tourism education.

However, the study is not without limitations. For example, the sample sizes of the pre-pandemic and peri-pandemic surveys were small, and the two samples were not identical. Conducting a similar study with a larger more diverse group of participants, but also more analogous in the pre- and peri- samples might lead to different conclusions, as would broadening the scope of the focus of the study to investigate academic dishonesty in the discipline more thoroughly.

For instance, further investigations into a variety of topics and issues related to academic dishonesty could be meaningful. Along those lines, it could be valuable to learn more about academic dishonesty in connection with students' years in school or various teaching and learning modalities, such as in-person classes, synchronous online classes, asynchronous online courses, courses that include both synchronous and asynchronous learning experiences, and classes offered in Hy-flex formats. Additionally, investigating topics such as contract cheating, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools, such as Chat GPT, and a more fine-tuned focus on proctoring and the use of tools such as SafeAssign and Turnitin.com could add depth to these findings.

Furthermore, as one student pointed out, perhaps cheating is a lesson that students need to address during their college/university life, which prepares them to respond to dishonest and unethical situations in real life. Although instructors can make changes to their course requirements to try to eliminate cheating, as some researchers have observed, if students spend their time in college in an environment where all of the assignments and exams are "cheat proof," then they may not know how to respond to opportunities to engage in acts of dishonesty that present themselves in the workplace (Kolb et al., 2015). Thus, trying to eliminate all opportunities to cheat may unintentionally hinder students' development of ethical behaviors. This issue could perhaps be the focus of an interesting future study that applies to hospitality and tourism students and the industry.

Finally, the world is now in yet another era of the coronavirus pandemic, whereby, universities, colleges, schools, and businesses, such as those in the hospitality and tourism industry, are back in full operation, although the coronavirus still lingers on, and thus, it could be helpful to explore academic dishonesty during this new era. Hospitality and tourism students, like other students,

can now often take courses in a variety of formats such as fully in-person, fully online, hybrid, or Hy-flex modalities. Plus, they may be working in the industry, both for jobs for personal reasons and/or for internship and work hour requirements for their degree programs, and therefore, there may be additional issues arising regarding academic dishonesty in this new phase. Still, even with the limitations described, the results of the study provide educators with some potentially useful information about academic dishonesty and ideas about and strategies for how to decrease it and improve educational experiences to enhance learning in the field of hospitality and tourism.

## CONTACT

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