

## On the cause of university students' cheating phenomenon from the perspective of Albert Bandura's reciprocal determinism

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**Abstract:** In recent years, "cheating" becomes a prevalent social phenomenon among the university students, which result in a bad influence to the quality of higher education, to the healthy growth of the university students, and to the social morale. To solve this problem, the key is to scoop out the root reason and get rid of it thoroughly. The emergence of cheating comes from various reasons, this paper is supposed to make an objective, systematic and dialectic analysis basing on Albert Bandura's reciprocal determinism.

**Key words:** reciprocal determinism; university students; cheating

The university, the students and the employers all pay much attention to the examination result. The reasons are: on one hand, the examination is an important and indispensable link of teaching process in higher education, which plays a crucial role in foster qualified professional talent, and is one of the most effective means to check the results of teaching and learning, which reflects the students' study ability and effect; on the other hand, when the university students graduate and seek job, all kinds of knowledge-level examination and certificates become a yardstick to measure the university students' knowledge-level ability and comprehensive character. Thus, the examination is necessary and it is the reason that examination had been taken as a very important way to check teaching quality and select talent. However, the problem is that, in recent years, the cheating behavior develops an up-trend in the university students' community, which makes examination result and the reliability of certificate greatly give discount, and furthermore, inflected the seriousness and fairness of the examination system greatly.

The cheating phenomenon, on one hand, brings great harm to the discipline of the university, and corrupts the university students' mind in the meantime, and reduces their credit, influences the generation whose mind and body health growth. On the other hand, it pushes society out of harmony. In order to cure the persistent ailment, and the influence and harm, we should start from searching its source.

People have varied parlance about the reason why the cheating phenomenon arises, one is the environment determinism. People who hold this view claims that the cheating is a forced action, and lay the blame on the reason of cheating for exterior environment. Another is self-determinism. People who hold this view claims that the contemporary university students are all like that: whose character is inferior, whose personality is imperfect, whose trustworthiness is short, they completely negate the character of the generation, and lay the blame on the reason of cheating for the university students' character only. Also there are theories like need determinism, behavior determinism etc. Then what about reason for this phenomenon is the objective, systematic and dialectic?

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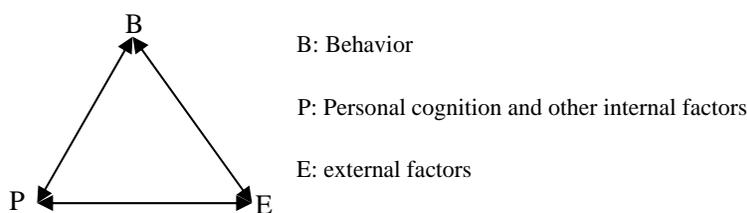
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Bandura points it out in his reciprocal determinism: the factor of behavior, the factor of person and the environment factor, their actually action as mutual-link and mutual-interaction decisive factor. This passage is to analyses the reason for cheating phenomenon.

The originator of social studies, American psychologist Albert Bandura points out, the human behavior is the outcome of three factors and mutual interaction constant, namely: cognition, behavior, and environment factor during this process, the environment influences people behavior, but the behavior of the individual also partly impacts the environment in an interactive way. The doer produced its contingency by its reaction. The behavior is regulated by the afterward contingency, which is partly produced by behaviorist. So the behaviorist and the environment rely on each other and control each other, but no one decides another. According to Bandura, human is a kind of independent animals, they do not only make reaction to incitement, but also explain incitement. In addition to the environment factors, the human behavior also is subjected to the behaviorist's internal cognition system. This point is called reciprocal determinism. To be brief, reciprocal determinism is that the person, the environment and the behavior interact and produce succession behavior.

In Bandura's opinion, three main factors can't be independent from the other two factors. The relation of these three factors is like this: behavior, individual (the main cognition and other personal factors) and environment interact mutually and enjoy the same importance, none is inferior or superior to the other two factors. Though in some special cases, a certain factors probably rise up to a domination position. The way of three main factors interaction is shown as diagram below:



The reciprocal determinism is a complicated and synthetic theory dealing with the behavior of human. It pays attention to the human's function and notice the correlation of various internal and external affairs.

In human, many complicated behavior is procured by observation and learn. Bandura's social study theory not only discusses the two social behavior to acquisition process, namely direct empirical behavior acquisition and indirect empirical behavior acquisition, but also discuss various factors determine human behavior in detail. Bandura generalize these factors which determine human behavior as two major types: the factor in advance of decision behavior and the result factor of decision behavior.

How does the university students' cheating phenomenon come about? The following will analyze it by Bandura's reciprocal determinism.

### **1. Environment is a latent factor which decides the cheating motive**

Bandura thought that only environment and personal factor have be combined and activated by appropriate behavior, can they function properly. According to Bandura's social study theory, observation is the principal way people study, and it emphasizes an environmental demonstration function.

#### **1.1 Environment plays demonstration function to the formation of replace behavior motive**

Let's see the environment that the university students have been in first. In market economy, someone whose

pursing the maximum interest become a motive, so they adopt the immoral behaviors, cheating and deceiving turns to the effective means to attain private interest. Recently in China, most employers just care about if the university student has the certificate first, than notice about their technical ability, language expression and work ability, rather than their morality. There is a need, and there is a supply, so hence the “unqualified” certificate. It is investigated that about 1/3 university students have employed “rifleman” or have been employed “rifleman”.

### **1.2. The cheating effect is the factor, which stimulate the replace behavior motive to form**

Parts of the university students had observed that people get the so-called success through cheating, which makes the observers have an expectation of the similar behavior, induct the motive of cheating. When the students see that they get the so-called agreeable result through cheating, this enhanced this kind of behavior result further. The method which enhances demonstration behavior can also become personal value or can change their original value and become the social inducement after behavior of cheating, and produce a function in the succeed motivation of cheating. Thus, it is not difficult for us to see that an environment factor is a latent factor to activate the cheating motive.

## **2. Inappropriate self-cognition and self-adjustment is the basis on which cheating motive had formed**

Bandura put forward the motive which takes the cognition as base, it made people build up target as the standard which enhances on their own, and make it comes out a margin between the target and self-evaluation, to encourage oneself to look for a method to make up the margin. In the read society, most people think that the certificate is to prove their ability, to represent a kind of social approval. The students acquired this social evaluation standard through a great deal of social observation study, and require themselves according to this standard in different degree. When university students establish the target to pass examination and obtain a certificate themselves, they produce a kind of expectation in the meantime, they make a subjective evaluation on their own ability and carrying on which to achieve the target situation, when their own ability can't reach the target, the “cheating” behavior seems to be in a clear pattern as a matter of course.

Bandura put forward that: enhancing by one's own is a kind of personal factor which will be acquired; it is a kind of personal behavior standard and press the standard evaluation as a regulating factor.

First, in the self-cognition and self-regulation function, the university students would analyze and evaluate their own behavior according to other people's reaction. Compared with bribery corruption and crimes, “cheating” seems to be insignificant and people's evaluation on this behavior can't regulate their behavior. According to the observation the university students make the act be heavier, namely: the behavior they saw in the wake of object is enhanced and then equally the behaviors of themselves is enhanced. University students would convert the social evaluation into their own evaluation, and downplay the criticism against the cheating phenomenon.

Secondly, the inducement regulation is through motive function influence behavior. The satisfaction and huge benefits acquired from examination, the loss and disaffection that if they can't make it passed after the examination, or they can't obtain in certificate to prove their ability, all tested to provide an inducement for the cheating.

Various personal factors above—mentioned are decision factors which attribute to motive formation. Certainly, this kind of self-cognition and self-regulation can't function without an environmental factor.

### **3. The factor of university students themselves and environment mutually function to form "cheating" behavior**

Bandura thinks: the person and the environment is mutually interacted with each other, the environment contributes to an establishment to regulate one's behavior that is because the environment can provide information and make people get themselves evaluation standard, thus help university students to establish and develop self-reflection ability.

The fortifier of exterior environment namely social approbation serves an inducement for cheating in test, it has potential motive function, and when this potential motive combines with university students need namely personal factor, the cheating behavior become reality.

### **4. Cheating behavior is the decision factor of interactive function**

Bandura put forward: in no way can we conceive that behavior is the outcome of interaction which by person who had not any action and environment, the behavior is the decision factor of an interaction.

The behavior has cause effect, consciousness and activeness characteristics. University students cheating behavior equally have an auto, self-moving characteristics, and the environment is an external reason, but the motive and demand are internal reason. The external reason can only function through internal reason. When university students cheating behavior get the feedback information that the high mark target and expectation certificate had realized, they put forward a new target further, and make the cheating behavior to develop toward higher level. It is clear that the result of cheating for test enhanced the demand and motive of cheating, further more, decayed these university students' minds and influence their personalities. So, we must not underrate the cheating behavior's adverse effect for the behaviors subjective world.

The behavior has durable, continuous and stable character. Cheating behavior as a social behavior, could develop to a habit of the university students through mutually influence, study, repeat, and practice, and become a kind of demonstration and influence other personal behavior, moreover aggravate it to change environment.

According to Bandura's: the conclusion, that cheating behavior is the decided by the interaction of the three factors, which are personal character of university students, social milieu, and higher education management, is established obviously.

Now that cheating phenomenon is the result of the interaction of the three factors: social milieu, the oneself character of university students and behavior, if we are going to clear up the cheating behavior phenomenon, we should start from three aspects: norm university students behavior, excellent social milieu and higher education environment and strengthening the development of students' comprehensive character and education, and to promotion these three aspects to interact with each other completely and build a good atmosphere of a school and test breeze, to cultivate excellent university students to meet the social needs.

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