Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences xxx (2017) 1–8

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences

journal homepage: http://www.elsevier.com/locate/kjss

Counterfeit self: A confirmatory factor analysis among Indonesians

Juneman Abraham [a, b, *], Bagus Takwin [c], Julia Suleeman [c]

[a] Doctoral Program in Psychology, Universitas Indonesia, Jawa Barat, 16424, Indonesia
[b] Psychology Department, Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta, 11480, Indonesia
[c] Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Indonesia, Jawa Barat, 16424, Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 14 January 2017
Received in revised form 17 June 2017
Accepted 19 July 2017
Available online xxxx

Keywords:
alienation,
counterfeit,
self,
unethical

ABSTRACT

It is questionable whether counterfeiting in many areas of life contributes to unethical behavior to a wider extent. If the notion is supported by data, then the moral damage in a society could be prevented by reducing the counterfeit self and behavior to a bare minimum. This study aimed at empirically testing the measurement model of counterfeit self of Wood et al. (2008) among Indonesians as well as theoretically reviewing counterfeit self roles in unethical behavior. The participants of this study were 1,655 high school students (764 males, 891 females; M_{age} = 15.76 years old; SD_{age} = 1.08 years) recruited through a purposive sampling technique in North Sumatera and West Kalimantan, Indonesia. The data analysis technique used was Confirmatory Factor Analysis. The results showed that the counterfeit self model—comprised of counterfeit self dimensions, namely Self-alienation (ALIEN), Inauthentic Living (LIVE), and Accepting External Influence (EXT)—was supported by the empirical data. However, the dimension of EXT could not be represented by its indicators. The study contributed to the psychological body of knowledge that the EXT dimension might need to be excluded from the measurement of counterfeit self on teenagers, especially in Indonesia and other Eastern countries.

Introduction

Unethical behavior is infectious and causes financial as well as human losses. Unethical behavior is defined as conduct that "violates widely accepted (societal) moral norms" (Kish-Gephart, Harrison, & Treviño, 2010, p. 2). The psychology of counterfeiting is an under-investigated topic in the area of unethical behavior in spite of the fact that its implications are extensive and often unpredictable against morality (Gino, Norton, & Ariely, 2010). Gino et al. (2010) showed that there is an element of the true cost that is often overlooked by the users of counterfeit products, namely "moral cost". The study by Gino et al. (2010) presented a new psychological construct, which is the counterfeit self. The construct works as an intervening variable in the unethical behavior variables network. This is clearly seen from the statement given by Gino et al. (2010, p. 712), "We contend that counterfeit products do cause people to be something they are not, but in ways they do not expect: Counterfeit products cause people to be not admirable but unethical, generating in them a feeling of a counterfeit self that leads them to behave unethically."

The construct of counterfeit self could stimulate further research. Chiou, Wan, and Wan (2012, p. 112) had similar findings with Gino et al. (2010) in their empirical research

* Corresponding author.
E-mail address: juneman@office.ui.ac.id (J. Abraham).
Peer review under responsibility of Kasetsart University.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.kjss.2017.07.011

Please cite this article in press as: Abraham, J., et al., Counterfeit self: A confirmatory factor analysis among Indonesians, Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences (2017), http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.kjss.2017.07.011

on pirating software, “Using two experimental studies, we demonstrated that the impact of soft lifting on dishonest behavior is mediated by its priming effect on the sense of self.”

The main objective of this present study was to answer the following question, “What is the psychological structure of counterfeit self among Indonesians?” The urgency of examining counterfeiting in Indonesia is based on the following social phenomena: (1) the use of fake diplomas by public officials was reported to reach 14 cases in February 2017, (2) there are 800,000 hoax news web sites in Indonesia, and the actors obtain an illegal financial benefit of IDR 600 to 700 million (around USD 45,000 −52,000) per year, (3) there were 12 brands of fake vaccines circulating in Indonesia, and by 2016 those vaccines had spread across 28 health care facilities in nine regions of Indonesia, while fake vaccine makers lived a very luxurious life, and (4) throughout 2016, there were 12 athletes in the national week of sports competition who used doping to improve their performance (Handayani & Hidayat, 2016; Laksmana, 2017; Pratama, 2016; Ratna, 2017; Sari, 2016; Sugiharto, 2016). Many immoral/unethical examples of behavior could be prevented by knowing the person's counterfeit self, and intervention could be done accordingly.

Literature Review

In the literature, the synonym found for counterfeit self is inauthentic (or fake) self. Inauthenticity occurs when a person is influenced by others and sets an image that excludes his/her own values to fulfill others' values, in a way that s/he acts disjointedly with the true self (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, as cited in Crockett, 2012). Crockett (2012) found that counterfeit young adults compromise their belief and values based on others' perceptions. In contrast, if the individual is authentic, s/he tends to think, feel, and behave in a way that fulfills his/her belief and values. To be clearly stated, Leary (2003) concluded that inauthenticity means that a person acts in counterfeit ways to escape from relational devaluation (disrespected by others).

The person with counterfeit self wants to be perceived in the eyes of other people as having positive characters (such as, smarter, more competent, more gallant, more fashionable, more up-to-date), or to get the recognition and appreciation from his/her social environment, whereas at the same time s/he is aware of her/his incompetence or lack of these characteristics. Another example of counterfeiting behavior, besides the consumption of counterfeit products, is the illegal drug consumption or doping behavior found in athletes. Graham, Ryan, Baker, and Kicman (2009) argued that doping behavior aims for image enhancement to achieve a perfect physique; even though the drug consumption poses physical health risks. This could generate counterfeit self.

Covey and Merrill (2008) explained counterfeit behaviors in the area of leadership, “It's pretending, ‘seeming’ rather than ‘being’, making things appear different than they really are” (p. 214). In an interview, Covey (as cited in Green, 2011) stated, “Counterfeit behavior is like counterfeit money—it looks like the real thing, but upon closer inspection, you realize it's not.” Covey and Merrill (2008) showed that there are counterfeit behaviors seemingly appearing as trust behavior, whereas they are not. For example, false listening seems like a genuine listening behavior towards other people. It gives the impression that the doer shows trust behavior, whereas s/he does not. Concise examples of such types of behavior are presented in Table 1.

According to Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, and Joseph (2008), there are three personological dimensions of counterfeit self—self-alienation, authentic living, and accepting external influence. **Self-alienation**, theoretically the first constituent of counterfeit self, is the personal dimension of self, in which there is a gap/inconsistency between one's real experience and conscious awareness, acting as the dissonance experience as the consequence of internalizing social hope or other external sources (Akin & Akin, 2014; Wood et al., 2008). Self-alienation can only be eliminated by developing self-knowledge continuously because with it, one's perception of reality is established (Haines, 2011). Haines also showed that techniques of improving self-knowledge will contribute to increase one's capacity for self-development and the correct appreciation toward heterogeneity and plurality. The psychoanalytic approach shows that the self-alienation development as a dynamic process of neurotic-dysfunctional that destroys

Table 1
Counterfeit behavior from various perspectives

Trust behavior	Opposite behavior	Counterfeit behavior
Talk straight	To lie or deceive	Withholding information
Demonstrate respect	To lack respect	Faking respect
Create transparency	To cover up	Having hidden agendas, hidden meanings
Right wrongs	To deny or justify wrongs	Disguising or hiding
Show loyalty	To take all of the credit	Being two-faced
Deliver results	To perform poorly	Doing busy work or “fake work”
Get better	To deteriorate	Continually learning without productivity
Confront reality	To ignore reality	Evading reality
Clarify expectations	To leave expectations undefined	Guessing
Practice accountability	To not take responsibility	Blaming others
Listen first	To speak first	False listening
Keep commitments	To violate promises	Overpromising and underdelivering
Extend trust	To withhold trust	Extending “false trust”

Source: FranklinCovey (2011, pp. 3–4)

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