Revue européenne de psychologie appliquée xxx (2017) xxx–xxx

Disponible en ligne sur
ScienceDirect
www.sciencedirect.com

Elsevier Masson France
EM|consulte
www.em-consulte.com/en

Original article

Linking cheating in school and corruption

Liens entre tricherie à l'école et corruption

G. Orosz[a,b], I. Tóth-Király[a,c], B. Bőthe[a,c], B. Paskuj[d], M. Berkics[a], M. Fülöp[a,b], C. Roland-Lévy[e,*]

[a] *Institute of Psychology, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary*
[b] *Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience and Psychology, Hungarian Research Centre for Natural Sciences, Budapest, Hungary*
[c] *Doctoral School of Psychology, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary*
[d] *Department of Psychology, University College London, London, UK*
[e] *C2S, Department of Psychology, University of Reims Champagne-Ardenne, 51571 Reims, France*

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 24 August 2017
Received in revised form 13 February 2018
Accepted 26 February 2018

Keywords:
Collaborative academic cheating
Corruption
GDP per capita
In-group collectivism
School

ABSTRACT

Introduction. – Previous research suggests a link between academic cheating and corruption. However, no prior empirical studies examined this link with cross-cultural data.
Objective. – The present study aims to fill this gap and it examines their link by considering cultural values such as in-group collectivism and economic background in terms of GDP per capita.
Method. – Self-reported data were collected regarding collaborative academic cheating. The database of Transparency International was used for assessing the level of perceived corruption, and the in-group collectivism data was derived from the GLOBE study. Structural equation modeling was used in order to identify their relationship pattern.
Results. – In the present study, using data from 40 countries, a strong relationship between self-reported academic cheating on exams and the country level of the corruption perception index was found. The present results also support evidence of a strong relationship between collaborative academic cheating and in-group collectivism in a sample comprising 30 countries. This link remains significant if GDP per capita, as an indicator of economic development, is controlled. However, path analysis showed that if both GDP per capita and in-group collectivism are considered, the link between corruption and cheating disappeared.
Conclusion. – These results suggest that GDP per capita as an economy-related background variable and in-group collectivism as a societal value have independent effect on collaborative cheating and perceived corruption and these broader background variables can diminish the strong link between collaborative cheating and perceived corruption.

Mots clés :
Tricherie collective à l'école
Corruption
PIB par habitant
Collectivisme
Ingroup

RÉSUMÉ

Introduction. – Des travaux antérieurs (2009) ont montré l'existence d'une corrélation entre le favoritisme à l'égard de l'ingroup en lien avec le niveau de collectivisme du pays et le niveau de corruption. Néanmoins aucun travaux précédent à notre connaissance n'a fait l'étude comparative de différents pays.
Objectif. – Cette étude vise à combler ce manque en examinant les liens entre des variables culturelles, telles que le niveau de collectivisme et le PIB par habitant.
Méthode. – Des données auto-rapportées sur la tricherie à l'école ont été collectées. La base de données Transparency International a été utilisée pour évaluer le degré de perception de la corruption et les données de l'étude GLOBE ont permis de mesurer le degré de collectivisme (*in-group collectivism*). Le modèle d'équations structurelles a été utilisé pour identifier les types de relations.

* Corresponding author.
E-mail address: Christine.Roland-Levy@univ-reims.fr (C. Roland-Lévy).

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erap.2018.02.001
1162-9088/

Résultats. – Ainsi, à partir des données de 40 pays, nous avons pu mettre en évidence la présence d'une relation forte entre les déclarations de tricheries à l'école et le niveau de l'indice de perception de la corruption du pays d'origine ($r = 0{,}54$). Les résultats ont aussi montré la présence d'un lien important entre la tricherie à l'école et le favoritisme à l'égard de l'ingroup ($r = 0{,}61$). Ce lien reste significatif, y compris lorsque le PIB par habitant, comme indicateur du développement économique, est contrôlé. Néanmoins, une analyse en pistes causales a montré que si l'on prend en compte à la fois le PIB par habitant et le niveau du collectivisme (*in-group collectivism*), le lien entre le niveau de corruption du pays et la tricherie à l'école disparaît.
Conclusion. – Ces résultats suggèrent que le PIB par habitant et le collectivisme ont un effet sur la tricherie collective comme sur la perception de corruption.

1. Introduction

Both collaborative cheating and corruption cause serious problems worldwide. There was a huge scandal in India in 2015 when parents and relatives tried to help their children cheat even by risking their own lives while climbing on the walls of the examination centers and bribing the policemen assigned to oversee these centers. Although not so blatantly, collaborative exam cheating, defined by McCabe, Trevino, and Butterfield (2001) as unpermitted collaboration among students on written assignments, still penetrates school systems worldwide. Corruption is another socially harmful practice with an estimated cost of 5% of global GDP, approximately 2.6 trillion USD (El-Sharkawy, Jarvis, & Petkoski, 2006); corruption can be defined as a "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. Corruption can be classified as grand, petty and political, depending on the amounts of money lost and the sector where it occurs" (Transparency International, 2009a). It can entail the deliverance or acceptance of bribes or inappropriate gifts, double dealing, under-the-table transactions, election manipulation, fund diversions, and money laundering. The present study aimed to measure the link between collaborative cheating and corruption by considering the most important value-related and economic variables, namely in-group collectivism and GDP per capita.

Similarities between collaborative cheating in school and corruption include: (1) cooperation between two or more persons; (2) both are prohibited; (3) in both cases, participants are interested in hiding their behavior from authorities; (4) both violate the interest of the broader community and (5) in both cases, participants risk detection and potential punishment. The possibility of links between academic cheating and workplace dishonesty (Graves, 2008; Harding, Carpenter, Finelli, & Passow, 2004; Lawson, 2004; Nonis & Swift, 2001; Sims, 1993), as well as corruption has been suggested in previous studies (Ballantine, McCourt Larres, & Mulgrew, 2014; Crittenden, Hanna, & Peterson, 2009; Magnus, Polterovich, Danilov, & Savvateev 2002).

As a potential value-related variable within both corruption and collaborative academic dishonesty, in-group collectivism appeared to be a prime candidate. In-group collectivism reflects "the degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations, families, circle of close friends, or other similar small groups to which they belong" (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). Countries characterized by high in-group collectivism have lower economic prosperity and lower scores on World Competitiveness Index (House et al., 2004). It thus appears that collectivism focused on smaller groups (as opposed to larger communities) leads to the malfunctioning of the society as a whole. However, the direction of causality is not clear. It is also possible that the "malfunctioning" of society promotes in-group collectivism. If social institutions, formal rules and state agencies cannot be trusted to function properly, it can be the small group and one's personal networks that the individual can rely upon.

Seleim and Bontis (2009) found a strong correlation ($r = .73$) between in-group collectivism and the pervasiveness of perceived corruption. Both corruption and collaborative cheating are per se collective forms of dishonesty in which using their previously established network, members of a smaller community (i.e. in-group) strive to obtain unfair advantages over individuals from the out-group (e.g., other classmates or the general public). In the present study, we expected to find results similar to Seleim and Bontis (2009) regarding the link between in-group collectivism and corruption. Nevertheless, we aimed to examine whether in-group collectivism is a good candidate as a possible value-related common denominator behind both corruption and collaborative academic cheating.

Several studies found that collectivism is one of the values that are clearly related to corruption. According to Hooper (1995), in Spain, there is a relationship between in-group favoritism and corruption. Furthermore, according to Banfield (1958), in Italy, favoritism for family members and bribe acceptance relate to each other. We suggest that a similar pattern can be expected between collaborative cheating and collectivism, especially in countries in which collectivism is restricted to smaller communities (families, close friends).

According to Hofstede (2001), it is important to take into consideration economic development and to "control" it in order to examine the effect of culture. Seleim and Bontis (2009) found relationships between corruption and in-group collectivism practices when they controlled GDP per capita as a macro-level indicator of economic development. Consequently, in the present study, it is expected that the relationship between in-group collectivism and collaborative academic cheating will be significant after controlling for GDP per capita. Furthermore, based on these results we suppose that besides in-group Collectivism, GDP per capita will be a predictor of corruption.

The present study aimed at assessing the strength of the relationship between the proportion of students who self-reported collaborative cheating during exams and perceived corruption. Based on previous studies (Ballantine et al., 2014; Crittenden et al., 2009; Magnus et al., 2002) we expected that collaborative academic cheating is an antecedent of perceived corruption. Furthermore, we aimed to identify a common denominator at the level of societal values – in terms of in-group collectivism practices – underlying both phenomena.

2. Methods

2.1. Literature search strategy

In order to gather the appropriate cheating-related articles reporting data on collaborative cheating frequencies, four online databases (Google Scholar, PsycINFO, Web of Science and ERIC) were used to conduct a literature search reviewing articles for published and unpublished articles on this topic, up until August 2015.

Please cite this article in press as: Orosz, G., et al. Linking cheating in school and corruption. *Rev. Eur. Psychol. Appl.* (2017), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erap.2018.02.001