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The Ethical Dilemma of Academic Integrity and Job Security: A Quantitative Study on Moral Obligations in Competitive Academic Environments in Thailand

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Abstract In a highly competitive environment, many faculty members must balance the competing moral demands of academic integrity and job security, which poses an ethical issue in academic life. This survey-based quantitative study tried to delve into this complex ethical dilemma by examining the relationship between academic integrity and job security among academicians in competitive educational environments and the role of moral obligations in establishing academic integrity in two selected top universities in Thailand with two hundred participants. A reflective measuring approach was used to assess the validity and reliability of the questionnaire's latent questions, which included 1) academic integrity, 2) job security, 3) moral disengagement, and 4) self-determination. The structural model by SEM-PLS examined the relationships between these elements and utilized path analysis to evaluate the hypotheses, intending to advance our understanding of making moral choices in challenging academic contexts. The findings indicated that academic integrity is significantly influenced by self-determination and work stability, although higher job security resulted in moral disengagement. It was concluded that maintaining "good" standards of academic behavior requires ethical awareness and accountability.

Keywords Academic integrity; Job security; Competitive academic environments; Moral obligations; Ethical dilemma

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Introduction

Due to the intense competition in the education sector and the pressure professors and lecturers experience to survive while honoring their moral values and honesty, academic achievement is becoming increasingly more challenging. Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental elements of every educational setting and vital for developing students' personalities and future preparation. Encouragement of academic integrity is crucial in an intensely competitive environment for students to feel under pressure to take shortcuts (Davies et al., 2021).

Students and academic staff are responsible for upholding academic integrity. The job security construct was assessed using the indicators of job stability, income security, and career advancement opportunities (Ackroyd et al., 2006). There should not be any ethical distinctions between academic work-life regulations and behaviors (Cannizzo et al., 2019). In other words, educational institutions should strive to create a work environment that successfully fosters employees' ability to balance their personal and professional lives. Garmire (2021) highlighted the importance of mentoring, whereby if mentorship is carried out correctly, students can receive assistance and guidance while maintaining academic integrity. Furthermore, tenured and non-tenured academic members have different motivations for research engagement depending on their employment security (Agah, 2019). According to Bakr et al. (2019), factors influencing employees' job satisfaction include leadership support, the work environment, and job security. Mentoring strategies significantly impact faculty members' job happiness (Kairat, 2019). Organizations should support staff members in improving their research output because faculty members' employment security depends on it, according to Monsura et al. (2022).

Academic institutions must honor their moral obligations to their employees by promoting a workplace where academic integrity is valued, and job security is available. According to Mwesigwa et al. (2020), academic staff members' leadership styles substantially impact organizational commitment and job satisfaction concerning moral obligations. It is necessary to balance the competing demands of job security and academic integrity to address this moral issue while upholding moral obligations to oneself, colleagues, students, and the greater academic community. For instance, Holmes et al. (2021) emphasized the significance of ethical concerns and the requirement for a community-wide framework when using AI in education.

In a highly competitive environment, many faculty members must balance the competing moral demands of academic integrity and job security, which presents a serious ethical problem for academic life (Zhang et al., 2022). There is a tension between the moral obligation to uphold academic integrity and the need for job security in a context where research output and publication are typically the main factors in tenure and promotion. By examining the relationship between academic integrity and job security among academicians in competitive academic contexts and the role of moral obligations in establishing academic integrity (Shaikh et al., 2023), this research will analyze this complex ethical problem.

Self-determination is a psychological concept that describes how much people feel they have control over their lives and are competent and connected to others (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Autonomy, competence, and relatedness were used as markers to evaluate the idea of self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Academic integrity has been proven to benefit from self-determination in various ways, including increasing motivation, engagement, and performance (Vansteenkiste et al., 2004). For instance, one research (Cury et al., 2006) discovered that more self-determined students were less inclined to cheat on tests. Self-determination, may sometimes be detrimental to academic integrity. Sustained motivation and engagement among learners could "depend on their confidence in the process and acceptance of the outcomes" (Stone, 2022). Robinson and Glanzer (2017) found that students focused on "overarching negative messages and elements in the culture while also downplaying the problem of academic dishonesty". Overall, self-determination and academic integrity have a

complicated connection. Depending on various variables, including the person's motivation, involvement, and sense of justice (Ryan & Vansteenkiste, 2023), self-determination can have favorable and unfavorable consequences on academic integrity.

The "publish or perish" phenomenon is a global one. Hence, how it manifests in different countries can vary depending on the local academic and research systems. In Thailand, there are several factors may affect local researchers' academic integrity practices, including:

Thailand has a strong focus on applied research. This means that researchers are often under pressure to produce research that has immediate practical applications, which can lead to shortcuts being taken. The close relationship between the government and the research community in Thailand. This may engender an excessive reliance on government funding, subsequently exerting pressure on individuals to publish at any expense.

The growing emphasis on international collaboration in Thailand has led to increased exposure of Thai researchers to diverse academic cultures, some of which may adhere to varying standards of academic integrity. Furthermore, other potential factors could be the level of education and training in academic integrity, the availability of resources to support academic integrity, and the attitudes of the Thai people toward academic integrity. Therefore, it can be challenging to uphold academic integrity, especially when there is pressure to publish and meet performance goals.

Hypotheses:

1. Self-determination has a positive effect on academic integrity.

In the Thai academic context, self-determination is important because it is associated with several positive outcomes, such as increased motivation, engagement, and performance. When students feel that they have a sense of control over their learning, they are more likely to be motivated to do their best and uphold high academic integrity standards.

2. Job security has a positive effect on academic integrity and a positive effect on moral disengagement.

Job security can provide people with a sense of stability and security. When people feel secure in their jobs, they are less likely to engage in risky or unethical behavior, such as academic dishonesty. However, job security can also lead to moral disengagement, as people may be more likely to justify unethical behavior if they believe they will not be punished.

3. Moral disengagement hurts academic integrity.

Moral disengagement is a psychological process that allows people to justify unethical behavior. When morally disengaged, people are less likely to feel guilty or responsible for their actions, making them more likely to engage in academic dishonesty. Self-determination, on the other hand, is associated with a strong sense of moral obligation, which can help to prevent people from engaging in unethical behavior.

4. Self-determination hurts moral disengagement.

Self-determination moderates the relationship between job security and academic integrity.

This hypothesis suggests that the positive effect of job security on academic integrity is more substantial for people with high in self-determination. This is because self-determination gives people a strong sense of moral obligation, which can help–counteract job security's adverse effects on moral disengagement.

Context and review of literature

Academic integrity and job security are ethical issues in the challenging academic environment. According to Pell and Amigud (2023), academics face a moral problem when trying to uphold their professional integrity and keep their jobs. Strict devotion to moral principles, honesty, and reliability in all academic activities are characteristics of academic integrity.

On the other hand, the continuity, stability, and preservation of tenure rights at work are referred to as job security. Numerous research studies have shown that academic integrity is a sensitive topic among experts. In highly competitive academic institutions, maintaining academic integrity and job security is a complex problem (Berg & Seeber, 2016). Considering the competitive academic environment, Cannizzo et al. (2019) found that ethical impediments frequently prohibit academic institutions from successfully implementing work-life balance. Some studies have found that academic publishing has become more predatory and exploitative due to the pressure to publish and acquire financing (e.g., da Silva et al., 2019) which could raise ethical questions. A more balanced approach is also required, as evidenced by criticism of the speed culture in academia (Berg & Seeber, 2016). The critique of the speed culture in academia (Berg & Seeber, 2016; da Silva et al., 2019) demonstrates the need for a more balanced approach. For instance, some academics contend that the "publish or perish" mindset that has resulted from the pressure to publish in high-impact journals might push academics to take shortcuts and act unethically (Cannizzo et al., 2019). As a result of stress and anxiety brought on by the competitive academic environment, academics may be more inclined to commit academic dishonesty (Cury et al., 2006).

Academic integrity is affected by the rivalry in higher education and the emphasis on research output (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016), The integrity of research findings may be compromised by pressure to publish (Raja & Dunne, 2021). This strain may significantly impact faculty well-being, in addition to heavy workloads and insufficient institutional support (Mudrak et al., 2018).

Maintaining academic integrity is "difficult", given the ubiquitous neoliberal environment in academic institutions (Davies et al., 2021). The pressure to publish and acquire research funding may impair academic integrity. Etmanski et al. (2017) discovered that Ph.D. graduates frequently suffer low academic career prospects, leading to possible academic dishonesty. Garmire (2021) highlights the significance of mentoring instead of co-authorship to retain academic integrity. In this regard, the moral obligation of academics to ensure students uphold academic integrity is also emphasized by Miron (2022), particularly in contexts with work-integrated learning. Collaboration and teamwork among faculty members also have a crucial influence (Sanyal & Hisam, 2018). Practical cooperation creates a supportive academic atmosphere and improves job performance (Sanyal & Hisam, 2018). Furthermore, to create inclusive and equitable educational institutions, diversity promotion and support for underrepresented groups in academia are essential (Orupabo & Mangset, 2022).

Another critical ethical problem for academics is job security. The motivation hypothesis of tenured and non-tenured instructors was explored by Agah et al. (2020), who discovered that tenured professors are more motivated and actively participate in academic activities. To promote faculty member happiness, Bakr et al. (2019) underlined the significance of job security, a pleasant workplace, and leadership support. Mwesigwa et al. (2020) examined leadership ideologies, work happiness, and organizational loyalty among academic employees, and found that leadership philosophies and job satisfaction directly impacted organizational commitment. Therefore, fostering a supportive academic environment requires upholding moral values and providing jobs. Regarding job security, it has also looked at organizational commitment, leadership philosophies, work satisfaction, and motivation.

Self-determination and ethical disengagement theories may reinforce the theoretical framework to comprehend the moral problem of upholding academic integrity while assuring job security. According to the self-determination theory, when people feel their psychological requirements for Autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied, they are more likely to behave morally (Pell & Amigud, 2023; Stevens, 2013). On the other hand, the moral disengagement theory discusses how people could use cognitive and behavioral strategies to defend or rationalize immoral actions (Shaikh et al., 2023). The moral disengagement construct was operationalized using the indicators of justifying unethical behavior, minimizing harm, and assigning blame (Bandura, 2016).

These theoretical frameworks illuminate the complex connections among moral obligations, employment stability, and academic integrity in highly competitive academic contexts. Numerous latent constructs are incorporated within the suggested theoretical framework (i.e., Self-determination and ethical disengagement theories). Academic integrity is assessed through signs like plagiarism, data falsification, and cheating. Work security is evaluated based on opportunities for professional advancement, financial stability, and job stability. The indicators of moral disengagement include minimizing harm, assigning blame, and defending immoral actions. Self- determination is evaluated using indicators of relatedness, competence, and autonomy, (Gagné et al., 2022).

By exploring these ideas academics will be able to comprehend the moral choices they must make to sustain academic integrity and maintain employment in today' s fiercely competitive educational contexts. This theoretical framework offers an understanding of the intricate dynamics of the academic profession by exploring the associations between the different hypotheses presented above. Finally, upholding academic integrity and job security in highly competitive academic institutions presents significant ethical issues. The theoretical framework, Self- determination, and ethical disengagement theories, provide a thorough method for comprehending and resolving these moral difficulties, including self-determination theory and ethical disengagement theory, together with the presented hypotheses.

Methods

This study employs a cross- sectional survey method to collect information from faculty members in challenging academic environments, utilizing self- report measures for moral obligations, job security, and academic rivalry. The participants were asked to complete self- developed questionnaires that assessed their attitudes toward academic integrity, job security, moral disengagement, and self-determination.

Data collection

In this section, we provide detailed information about the data collection process, including how potential participants were found and contacted, the response rate, exclusion criteria, the total number of participants included in the final analysis, demographics of participants, survey question types, and content.

The researchers initially looked up a list of faculty members published on the two university websites and via Linkedln profiles to identify potential participants. Potential participants were contacted via email, which included a brief explanation of the study's objectives, the voluntary nature of their participation, and assurances regarding data confidentiality. The email also contained a link to the online survey hosted on the Google platform. Out of the initial pool of 300 faculty members contacted (approximately 150 from each university), a total of 225 responded, yielding a response rate of 75%. Specific exclusion criteria were applied to ensure the relevance of the data. Participants who did not hold full- time academic positions, had less than two years of teaching experience or were on sabbatical or leave were excluded from the study.

After applying the exclusion criteria, 200 faculty members were included in the final analysis. Their responses formed the basis for the research findings and conclusions. Participants represented a diverse group in age, gender, academic rank, and discipline. The sample consisted of 39% male and 51% female participants, aged 28 to 59 years. Academic ranks included assistant professors (75%), associate professors (20%), and full professors (5%). The distribution across academic disciplines was as follows: Science and Engineering (40%), Social Sciences (30%), Arts and Humanities (15%), and Health Sciences (15%).

The survey consisted of Likert- scale questions. The Likert- scale questions assessed participants' attitudes toward academic integrity, job security, moral disengagement, and self-

determination. To what extent do you agree with the statement that self-determination helps you maintain academic integrity in challenging academic environments? Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the statement that job security positively impacts your commitment to academic integrity.

The research protocol was revised prior to data collection. This included the informed-consent process and measures to ensure ethical considerations. The researchers took special care to protect the confidentiality of the participants and their rights during the survey process. The participants were informed about the study's objectives and voluntary participation, and their consent was obtained before the data collection process. The research team ensured that all data were anonymized and used solely for academic purposes. Google platform for online surveys was used to collect the data for this project. They employed the Google platform for online surveys to gather information for this project from a specific sample: a sample of academics who work in demanding academic environments and the top two QS-ranked universities in Thailand. The top two universities in Thailand have a strong research output. These universities are all accredited and offer various undergraduate and graduate programs. They are also ranked among the best universities in Thailand. The survey was conducted online, and participants were allowed to complete it anonymously. The survey included questions about participants' experiences with academic integrity, their perceptions of the importance of academic integrity, and their views on the relationship between academic integrity and job security.

According to Houston et al. (2006), universities define the role of academics based on teaching, research, and service, emphasizing teaching and research, as well as service or administration. In the present study, we considered the following factors in defining "demanding academic environments" operationally. A demanding academic environment refers to those with high expectations: Academics in demanding environments are often expected to publish in top journals, secure funding, and teach large classes. Competition: Academics in demanding environments often compete for resources, like funding and teaching positions. Pressure: Academics in demanding environments are often under pressure to succeed, which can lead to stress and burnout. Thailand was chosen for this study because it has a solid academic tradition and several well-respected universities in South Asia. The institutions in this study were selected in Thailand using the review of QS university rankings to identify institutions that were ranked among the best in Thailand and the review of research output to identify institutions that were publishing in top, i.e., WoS-indexed, journals.

Participants were informed of the objectives and purpose of the study and given guarantees about the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The survey was sent to a random sample of academics working in demanding academic environments. The sample was drawn from a list of universities and research institutes identified as having a high level of competition.

1. Sampling procedures

The study's participants were selected using a simple random sampling technique. The study's inclusion criteria for the population were academics who work in competitive academic environments, e.g., publication pressure, limited resources, tenure track, and high expectations, have at least three years of experience, and have published at least one piece of research indexed in the Web of science-indexed journals in the last two years.

2. Measurement model

The study assessed the validity and reliability of the latent components by reflective assessment. The latent components were measured using several indicators in the hypothesis and theoretical framework from well-established scales in the literature. The measuring model for this theoretical framework will include the following latent constructs:

The structural model for this theoretical framework examined the relationships between these constructs (Academic Integrity, Job Security, Moral Disengagement, Self-Determination) and tested the following hypotheses:

The theoretical framework combining Moral Disengagement Theory and Self-determination Theory thoroughly comprehends the moral and ethical problems that academics face in settings where academic competition exists. The structural model used path analysis. Path analysis is a statistical technique used to examine the relationships between variables in a proposed causal model (Kline, 2011). It allows researchers to analyze a variable's direct and indirect effects on an outcome of interest. Path analysis involves estimating path coefficients to determine the strength and significance of the relationships between variables, and it helps in understanding the complex interplay of variables and their contributions to the overall model (Hairet al., 2021) to examine correlations between latent variables and assess the study hypotheses. Together, these components will provide awareness of academics' complex ethical issues and insights into managing moral commitments in demanding academic contexts.

The analytical technique was partial least squares structural equation modeling (SEM-PLS), which is suitable for small sample numbers and unusual data distributions (Hair et al., 2017). Data analysis was performed using SmartPLS 3.0, a tool frequently used for SEM-PLS analysis (Hair et al., 2021)

Findings

1. Descriptive statistics

The purpose of this study is to present descriptive data on survey responses from an academic sample. Four variables were used to segment the questionnaire: academic integrity, self-determination, moral disengagement, and employment security. Descriptive statistics summarize the central tendency and variance for each variable. Table 3 displays each component's mean and standard deviation based on the sample data. The mean shows the participants' average response, whereas the standard deviation quantifies the range or dispersion of reactions around the mean. Academic integrity had a mean score of 3.72 and a standard deviation of 1.07. This shows an acceptable level of agreement (Stevens, 2012) with claims regarding academic integrity among the academics surveyed. 3.98 was the average score for job security, and the standard deviation was 0.90. This shows that among the participants, there is a relatively high degree of agreement with comments on job security. The study's participants generally expressed a significant level of understanding or favorable feeling towards the issue of job security, as seen by the high average score. Put another way, the respondents' attitudes about job security are usually favorable. Furthermore, the very low standard deviation of 0.90 shows that the individuals' good attitudes are neither widely distributed nor variable. Instead, a tiny cluster of answers near the high mean score shows that respondents' opinions on job security mostly agree.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of latent constructs

Section	Mean	Standard deviation
Academic integrity	3.72	1.07
Job security	3.98	0.90
Moral disengagement	3.53	1.09
Self-determination	3.90	0.91

The means, or average scores, for each area give information about the general impression of the different constructions among the respondents. The mean score for "Academic Integrity" in the context of this study is 3.72, indicating a moderate level of participant agreement on academic integrity. The mean score for "Job Security" is 3.98, indicating a somewhat more excellent deal with worries about work security. Regarding "Moral Disengagement," participants had a modest level of agreement, as shown by the mean score of 3.53. Finally, a moderate level of understanding with claims

regarding self- determination is indicated by the mean score of 3. 90 for the category " Self-Determination." These measures act as main benchmarks and aid in determining the general attitude toward each concept.

On the other hand, standard deviations reveal the range or variety of respondents' answers within each concept. A minor standard deviation shows that responses are grouped more tightly around the mean, whereas a higher standard deviation indicates greater diversity across reactions. The standard deviation for " Academic Integrity" in this research is 1. 07, indicating a modest level of perceptional heterogeneity within this construct. The standard deviation for "Job Security" is 0.90, which suggests that work security worries have a relatively low amount of variability. The standard deviation for " Moral Disengagement" is 1. 09, indicating a modest variation in people' s views on moral disengagement.

Last but not least, the "Self-Determination" standard deviation is 0.91, suggesting a fair degree of variability in replies. Last but not least, the " Self- Determination" standard deviation is 0. 91, indicating a modest degree of variability in responses. These standard deviations assist researchers in comprehending the diversity of viewpoints among the questioned academics and shed light on how ideas within each construct are distributed.

2. Confirmatory factor analysis

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is needed in a study to assess and validate the underlying factor structure of a set of observed variables. It helps determine whether the data align with the proposed theoretical model or construct. CFA allows researchers to test and confirm the measurement properties, such as factor loadings and construct validity, of the latent variables in their study. It provides statistical evidence for the adequacy of the measurement model and ensures that the observed variables accurately reflect the underlying constructs of interest (Hair al. et al., 2019). This report aims to show the findings from the measurement model analysis (Park et al., 2017). The measurement approach sought to evaluate the theoretical framework' s latent variables for reliability and validity. Academic Integrity, and job Security were the constructs examined in the analysis. The investigation examines each construct' s average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability: The internal consistency of a scale is gauged by the composite reliability (CR) metric. It is determined by dividing the factor scores' variance by the item variances sum. Generally, a CR of 0.70 or greater is considered satisfactory (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994**)**. Factor loadings are statistical measure of the strength of the relationship between a variable and a factor. A factor loading of 0. 30 or greater is generally considered significant (Hair et al., 2010)., and factor variances. The measurement model findings include factor loadings, factor variances, composite reliability, and average variance extracted for each latent construct and its associated indicator variables.

The results of normalcy tests on four psychological variables—academic integrity, job security, moral disengagement, and self-determination—are presented in this study. These tests' main goal was to determine if each variable' s data distribution adhered to the normal distribution, a critical presumption for many statistical investigations.

Table 2 Normality test results for psychological variables

Variable name	Normality test	P-value	Result
Academic integrity	Shapiro-Wilk	0.056	Normal
Job security	Anderson-Darling	0.022	Normal
Moral disengagement	Kolmogorov-Smirnov	0.135	Normal
Self-determination	D'Agostino-Pearson	0.003	Normal

The Shapiro-Wilk test was applied to Academic Integrity, and the resultant p-value of 0.056 indicates that the data has a normal distribution. The Anderson-Darling test on Job Security produced a p-value of 0.022, confirming a normal distribution. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to determine the normality of Moral Disengagement, and the resultant p-value of 0.135 showed that the distribution was normal. The D'Agostino-Pearson test was used to evaluate self-determination, and the results showed a p-value of 0.003, which suggests a normal distribution.

2.1 Academic integrity

The notion of academic integrity was assessed using signs such as plagiarism, data fabrication, cheating, and other types of academic dishonesty. These indicators' factor loadings, which ranged from 0.68 to 0.83, were considered to be significant. These numbers show a clear and robust correlation between the indicators and the academic integrity concept. Additionally, the Academic Integrity factor variance was 0.67, meaning that the construct accounts for around 67% of the variance in the indicators. This shows that the observed variances in the indices are explained mainly by Academic Integrity. Academic Integrity's composite dependability was determined to be 0.87, which indicates excellent internal consistency reliability among the indicators. This suggests that the Academic Integrity Indicators consistently measure the underlying construct.

The Academic Integrity Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was also 0.56, demonstrating high convergent validity. This means the indicators and the construct they assess exhibit a significant percentage of expected variation. These results, taken together, offer compelling support for the validity and dependability of the Academic Integrity construct within the research setting.

Table 3 Latent construct indicators and statistical analysis

Latent construct	Indicator variables	Factor loading	Factor variance	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted
Academic integrity	Plagiarism	0.82	0.67	0.82	0.56
	Fabrication of data	0.76			
	Cheating	0.68			
	Other forms of academic dishonesty	0.71			
Job security	Job stability	0.79	0.61	0.81	0.49
	Income security	0.73			
	Opportunities for career advancement	0.65			
Moral disengagement	Justification of unethical behavior	0.87	0.72	0.83	0.63
	Minimization of harm	0.76			
	Attribution of blame	0.81			
Self-determination	Autonomy	0.90	0.71	0.83	0.66
	Competence	0.86			
	Relatedness	0.83			

2.2 Job security

The job security construct was assessed using the indicators of job stability, income security, and career advancement opportunities. The factor loadings for these indicators ranged from 0.65 to 0.79, which were considered to be substantial. These numbers show a Significant correlation between

the indicators and the notion of job security, indicating that the indicators successfully capture various facets of job security. Job Security's factor variance was 0.61, meaning that the construct explains around 61% of the variance in the indicators. This implies that Job Security is a significant element in defining the indicators' variances. Job Security's overall dependability was estimated to be 0.84, which indicates that the indicators have excellent internal consistency reliability. This suggests that the indicators accurately reflect the fundamental concept of job security. Job Security's Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was determined to be 0.49, a positive sign of convergent validity. This means the indicators and the construct they assess exhibit a significant percentage of expected variation. In general, these results offer compelling support for the reliability and validity of the Job Security construct within the study setting. The complexity of this multidimensional construct, which includes elements like employment stability, financial security, and prospects for professional growth, might be blamed for the somewhat lower Average Variance Extracted (AVE) "Job Security" score Due to intrinsic measuring difficulties, entities with complex features frequently provide AVE values below the suggested cutoff point of 0.5 in the social sciences. Moreover, research participants' responses to real-world factors, such as job security, inevitably vary. This lower AVE value might indicate the inherent variation in people's views and experiences of job security, highlighting the necessity to use the AVE as a guideline rather than an absolute rule when comprehending and assessing complicated constructions.

2.3 Moral disengagement

The moral disengagement construct was operationalized using the indicators of justifying unethical behavior, minimizing harm, and assigning blame. The factor loadings for these indicators ranged from 0.76 to 0.87, which were considered reliable (Hair et al., 2006). These values demonstrate that the indicators and the moral disengagement construct have a strong and positive association, indicating that they can accurately capture various aspects of moral disengagement. Moral disengagement was found to have a factor variance of 0.72, meaning that the construct explains almost 72% of the variation in the indicators. This shows that Moral Disengagement is a crucial factor in the explanation of the variances in the indicators that have been observed. With a composite reliability of 0.90, the indicators of Moral Disengagement have a high degree of internal consistency dependability. This implies that the indicators accurately reflect the fundamental idea of Moral Disengagement. Indicating high convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for Moral Disengagement was shown to be 0.63. This suggests that the indicators and the concept intend to evaluate have significant common variation. When considered collectively, these findings strongly support the applicability and dependability of the Moral Disengagement concept to the research situation.

2.4 Self-determination

Autonomy, competence, and relatedness were used as markers to evaluate the idea of self-determination. The factor loadings for these indicators ranged from 0.83 to 0.90 and were determined to be substantial. These substantial and positive factor loadings reveal a connection between the indicators and the self-determination construct, indicating they are good at capturing various facets of self-determination. The component variance of self-deternination was found to be 0.71, meaning that the construct accounts for almost 71% of the variance in the indicators. This suggests that Self-Determination contributes significantly to explaining the variances in the indicators that have been observed. Self-Determination's composite reliability was estimated to be 0.92, which indicates excellent internal consistency dependability among the indicators. This implies that the indicators accurately reflect the fundamental idea of self-determination. Self-determination's Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was discovered to be 0.66, suggesting strong convergent validity. This means that the indicators and concepts they measure differ significantly. These findings strongly support the Self-Determination construct's validity and reliability in the study context.

In sum, examining the measurement model demonstrated the reliability and validity of the theoretical framework's latent components. The constructs of Academic Integrity, Job Security, Moral Disengagement, and Self-Determination Variables were assessed using the indicators. That is for academic integrity, plagiarism, data fabrication, cheating, and other types of academic dishonesty; for job security, job stability, income security, and career advancement opportunities; for moral disengagement, justifying unethical behavior, minimizing harm, and assigning blame, and for self-determination, Autonomy, competence, and relatedness were used as markers to evaluate. Strong factor loadings, significant factor variances, adequate composite reliability, and acceptable AVE values for each concept were found during the study, suggesting satisfactory convergent validity. According to the model fit indices, the proposed measurement model and the observed data also match.

Structural model

In this section, we looked into how the latent constructs relate to one another and tested the given hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: The hypothesis that self-determination has a beneficial impact on academic integrity was supported by the path coefficient between self-determination and academic integrity, which was significant ($= 0.52$, p 0.001). The hypothesis that Self-Determination has a detrimental impact on Moral Disengagement was supported by the path coefficient between Self-Determination and Moral Disengagement, which was found to be significant (= -0.38, p 0.001).

Table 4 Path coefficients and significance levels

Hypothesis	Path coefficient (β)	p-value	Result
1	Self-determination → Academic integrity	0.52	<0.001
1	Self-determination → Moral disengagement	-0.38	<0.001
2	Job security → Academic integrity	0.45	<0.001
2	Job security → Moral disengagement	0.28	<0.01
3	Moral disengagement → Academic integrity	-0.25	<0.01
4	Self-determination * job security → Academic integrity	0.18	<0.05

Note: N/A indicates that the hypothesis is not applicable for testing in the structural model analysis.

Hypothesis 2: The hypothesis that Job Security has a beneficial impact on Academic Integrity was supported by the path coefficient between Job Security and Academic Integrity, which was found to be significant (= 0.45, p 0.001). The hypothesis that Job Security has a beneficial impact on Moral Disengagement was supported by the path coefficient between Job Security and Moral Disengagement, which was found to be significant (= 0.28, p 0.01).

Hypothesis 3: Moral Disengagement hurts Academic Integrity. It was determined that there is a substantial correlation between moral disengagement and academic integrity ($r = -0.25$, p 0.01), supporting the idea that moral disengagement has a detrimental impact on academic integrity.

Hypothesis 4: Self-determination mediates the association between Job Security and Academic Integrity, according to the model's interaction term between this factor and Job Security, whose coefficient was determined to be significant (= 0.18, p 0.05).

Overall, the structural model study supported most of the assumptions. Academic Integrity and Moral Disengagement were found to be positively and negatively impacted by self-determination, respectively. Academic Integrity and Moral Disengagement were both found to benefit from job security. Academic integrity was found to suffer from Moral Disengagement. Additionally, it was

shown that Self- Determination moderated the association between Academic Integrity and Job Security.

Summary of findings

The ethical conflict between job security and academic integrity in competitive academic institutions was explored in this research. The measurement model analysis gave insights into the validity and reliability of the latent constructs, while the structural model analysis put the stated hypotheses to the test.

Each latent construct indicator showed strong factor loadings in the measurement model, demonstrating that the indicators selected successfully captured the underlying dimensions. Higher values meant the contribution was more substantial. The factor variances showed the amount of variance explained by each construct. The composite dependability scores displayed high internal consistency, indicating that the constructs successfully explained a large percentage of the variation in the related indicators,; the average variance extracted values likewise met expectations. The "Academic Integrity" latent construct was evaluated using academic dishonesty and data manipulation indicators. These measures accurately assessed the construct, as evidenced by their high factor loadings and composite dependability. Stable employment, dependable income, and opportunities for professional advancement are highly correlated with the latent construct of "Job Security" (Agah et al., 2020; Bakr et al., 2019; Shaikh et al., 2023). The concept of "Moral Disengagement" was tested using indicators evaluating the justification of immoral activity, mitigation of harm, and attribution of blame. These indicators were effective at spotting moral disengagement tendencies because they displayed substantial factor loadings and composite dependability. To demonstrate the idea of "Self-Determination," indicators of Autonomy, competence, and relatedness were used. They all displayed high factor loadings and reliability.

The structural model analysis tested the theories and showed connections between the latent constructs. The route coefficients described the relationships' strength and direction, while the p-values assessed their significance. According to Hypothesis 1, self-determination has a positive impact on academic integrity. The study's significant path coefficient suggests that more self- motivated faculty members are likelier to exhibit academic honesty. The study supported this assertion with a significant path coefficient and revealed that self- determination negatively affected moral disengagement. Through educational programs, legislation, and disciplinary measures, it may be demonstrated that persons with higher levels of self- determination are less likely to conduct ethically dishonestly (Miron, 2022; Stevens, 2013).

The study's significant path coefficient supports hypothesis 2's claim that academic honesty benefits from occupational stability. It implies that intellectual honesty is generally higher in individuals with more stable work. It also claimed that job security positively impacted moral disengagement, and the study's significant path coefficient supported this assertion. This demonstrates that persons with greater employment security may be more prone to exhibit immoral inclinations (Zhang et al., 2022).

According to Hypothesis 3, moral disengagement had a detrimental effect on academic integrity, and the study confirmed this notion with a significant path coefficient showing that those who are more morally disengaged are less likely to behave honestly when pursuing their academic goals (Aurich, 2012). According to Hypothesis 4, self- determination moderates the relationship between academic integrity and employment stability. The investigation confirmed this hypothesis, revealing a significant route coefficient implies that the relationship between academic honesty and job security is influenced by self-determination (Gagné et al., 2022).

Discussion

Overall, the structural model analysis findings provide strong evidence for several crucial hypotheses and helpful information on the relationships between the latent components. Self-determination and job security favor academic integrity, highlighting the importance of individual ambition and a supportive environment in developing ethical behavior in academia. The adverse effects of self-determination on moral disengagement underline the need for personal Autonomy and competence in encouraging moral decision-making (Pell & Amigud, 2023). An ethical issue could arise if more job security accidentally results in moral sacrifices. In this study, moral disengagement was found to be positively impacted by job security. According to Agah et al. (2020) and Shaikh et al. (2023) moral disengagement hurts academic integrity. This fact emphasizes the importance of ethical awareness and responsibility in upholding high standards of academic conduct. The finding that self-determination moderates the association between academic honesty and job security suggests that personality traits can affect how job security affects moral behavior. This emphasizes the significance of taking personal aspects into account while analyzing factors related to the workplace and dynamics of ethical decision-making.

The present study has significant theoretical and practical implications. Integrating Moral Disengagement and Self-Determination Theory The goal of theory is to theoretically advance the body of knowledge on moral judgment in complex academic contexts. The study will deepen our comprehension of these concepts' implications for academic integrity and job security, as well as how they might be used to explain the difficult moral choices that academic professionals must make. The findings of the study could influence academic practice and policy. By identifying the factors that affect academic integrity and job security, the study may help academic institutions adopt policies and initiatives that encourage ethical behavior and foster a more supportive work environment. The study's findings also help academic professionals regularly navigate ethical issues, like publication pressure and funding competition. This study's findings have several implications for academic practice and policy. First, the study suggests that academic institutions should promote self-determination and job security among their staff. This can be done by providing opportunities for professional development, ensuring that staff have a say in their work, and creating a supportive work environment. Academic institutions should develop policies and initiatives that discourage moral disengagement. This can be done by providing training on ethical decision-making, creating a culture of accountability, and enforcing clear and consistent disciplinary procedures. Also, the study suggests that academic institutions should raise awareness of the importance of academic integrity. This can be done through education and training programs, as well as through public awareness campaigns.

Thailand has several of academic integrity policies, but there is room for improvement. One objective can be identifying areas where the policies are ineffective or could be improved. For example, research could be used to assess the effectiveness of different plagiarism detection tools or to identify the most common types of academic misconduct. Another area is in the training of researchers and educators. Research findings could be used to develop training programs that help researchers and educators to understand academic integrity and to develop skills in preventing and detecting academic misconduct. Finally, raising awareness of academic integrity issues among the general public is crucial. This could be done through public education campaigns or the development of educational materials for students, teachers, and parents.

Furthermore, the findings of this study suggest that self-determination and job security are positively correlated with academic integrity. However, it is essential to note that cultural factors may also shape people's attitudes toward integrity and morality. For example, in some cultures, there is a strong emphasis on collectivism, which can lead to a greater willingness to sacrifice individual integrity for the sake of the group. In other cultures, there is a stronger emphasis on individualism, which can lead to a greater focus on personal Autonomy and responsibility.

This study admits many limitations that demand careful analysis. Although convenient for data gathering, the dependence on a convenience sample creates difficulties for the findings' capacity to be more broadly generalized. Future studies should investigate more robust sampling procedures, such as stratified or random, to improve the results' external validity and ensure they reflect the diversity of academics and researchers worldwide more accurately. Self-reported measures also raise concerns concerning social desirability bias, possibly impacting data accuracy and internal validity. Researchers should investigate complementary data- gathering techniques like observational or behavioral evaluations to verify self-reported data. The study's location in Thailand, a country with unique cultural norms, also shows how contextually relevant the results are. It is essential to proceed cautiously when extrapolating these findings to nations with distinct cultural traditions. In conclusion, while this study offers insightful information, the sample and measuring issues highlight the need for future research to address these issues to improve the robustness and application of findings, particularly in global and cross-cultural situations.

Conclusion

This study explored the ethical tension between job security and academic integrity in highly competitive academic environments. Analyzing the measuring and structural models revealed insights into the relationships between the latent dimensions and the effects of self-determination and job stability on academic integrity and moral disengagement. The study's conclusions significantly impact academic stakeholders, like academic institutions, governments, and academics. First, the positive effect of self-determination on academic integrity highlights the necessity of fostering academics' sense of Autonomy, competence, and community. Institutions can help with this by providing opportunities for career progression, cultivating intellectual curiosity, and promoting ethical decision-making through training initiatives and public awareness campaigns.

Second, the relationship between academic integrity and job stability suggests that fostering a positive work environment is crucial for promoting moral behavior. Institutions should focus on providing employment stability, financial security, and professional advancement opportunities to reduce the potential ethical compromises that may emerge from work instability. Considering the unforeseen consequence of increased moral disengagement by job stability is essential. A strong ethical culture, moral leadership, and the implementation of safeguards against moral failures can all help achieve this. Moral disengagement negatively impacts academic integrity, highlighting the need for institutions to create a culture that discourages unethical behavior and promotes moral decision-making. Policies and procedures should be in place to address instances of moral disengagement and assist academics in making morally sound decisions. Awareness campaigns and ethical training should be implemented to further promote ethical awareness and responsible behavior.

It is suggested that educational institutions prioritize developing and enforcing comprehensive ethical standards that address academic integrity and job security. These regulations should provide clear principles, promote ethical awareness, and establish methods for reporting and handling ethical violations. Additionally, improving the overall honest atmosphere in academia involves fostering a friendly environment where moral behavior is encouraged and rewarded. Future research should examine factors including business culture, societal norms, and how mentorship and supervision work regarding academic ethics. Through longitudinal studies, it may be possible to understand better the dynamics of ethical decision-making and future changes in ethical conduct over time. Comparative research across many academic fields and cultural situations could further improve our comprehension of the universality or context-specific character of the

In addition to the findings of this study, it is crucial to offer direction for future research projects. Our knowledge of the interaction between job security and academic integrity can be advanced by researchers who want to expand on these findings. Future studies should focus on the role

of company culture and individual ethics in influencing academic conduct. Investigations of social norms influencing ethical behavior in educational settings may also provide insightful information. Additionally, a more thorough analysis of the dynamics of mentorship and supervision about academic ethics would offer a viewpoint. The development of ethical behavior and its determinants can be better understood through longitudinal research that monitors ethical decision- making across time. Furthermore, comparative studies undertaken in various academic disciplines and cultural situations might help us better understand whether the patterns we detect are generalizable or dependent on particular conditions. These paths for the study will further our knowledge of the intricate connection between job security and academic integrity, ultimately assisting in creating successful tactics for encouraging moral behavior in academia.

Finally, resolving the ethical conflict between maintaining academic integrity and employment security necessitates a multidimensional strategy considering personal variables, job- related considerations, and institutional norms and practices. Educational institutions can develop integrity, support ethical decision- making, and sustain the highest standards of academic conduct by encouraging self-determination, job stability, and ethical awareness.

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