

Academic Integrity in the New Normal Education: Perceptions of the Students and Instructors of Polytechnic College of Botolan

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ABSTRACT :This study focused on the analysis of the perceptions of the students and instructors of Polytechnic College of Botolan to determine how the new normal education affects academic integrity. The researcher used the descriptive correlational quantitative design by employing an online self-administered questionnaire via Google Forms among 30 instructors and 150 students who were selected using the purposive sampling technique from SHS, TEP, and ICTP Departments. The data gathered were analyzed on the premise of the Neutralization theory by Sykes and Matza (1957) and were statistically treated using the Likert Scale, Weighted Mean, Frequency and Percentage Distribution, and Pearson (r). Results showed that the most common academic misconduct committed by students in the new normal education is plagiarism, followed by cheating in online exams. In terms of neutralization strategy, students commonly used denial of responsibility to justify their misbehavior. Furthermore, findings revealed that there is a significant moderate positive correlation between the perceived academic misconduct and their justifications indicating that the new normal education negatively affects the academic integrity of the students. The results of this study were used as a basis for crafting an intervention plan to address the issue of misconduct in the academe.

KEYWORDS : *Academic integrity, academic misconduct, neutralization theory, new normal education*

I. INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought a massive change in the different sectors and economies around the globe. The education sector is one of the most affected as schools temporarily suspend the traditional face-to-face classes to limit the students' and teachers' exposure to the deadly virus and to maintain everyone's safety, health, and wellbeing. According to United Nations [1], the pandemic has affected 94% of the world's student population which is nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries around the world. As a result, numerous educational institutions have shifted from face-to-face classrooms to the new normal education, in which digital technology becomes the core of teaching and learning for the first time [2]. Online distance learning has become the new norm as blackboards temporarily replaced online devices, and students relied mostly on the help of the internet for their academic studies. With answers readily available at the tip of their fingers, it is now easy to copy answers or plagiarize work for the sake of submission. However, academic integrity is critical for a healthy learning process and should not be compromised. Fishman [3] explained that academic integrity is "a commitment to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility" plus the courage to act on them in the face of adversity. Unfortunately, research conducted by Lilian & Chukwuere [4] among students in an institution in South Africa revealed that online plagiarism, which is also known as electronic cheating (e-cheating), occurs on the internet because a wealth of information is easily available to students. The same results were stated by Šprajc et al. [5] in their study where they elucidated that information and communication technology (ICT) contribute largely to plagiarism with two causes cited: ease of copying and easy access to materials and new technologies. To add to this dilemma, in the absence of an instructor, students are prone to misbehaving, especially in remote learning [6]. This is in agreement with Peterson [7] of Illinois State University in her study where she stated that the likelihood of cheating tends to increase due to the distance between the instructor and the student, as well as the lack of traditional face-to-face contact. This affects the students' views of cheating, making it a more acceptable practice. Dibrova [6] also explained that the number of academic integrity violations is growing at a disturbing rate. According to the research by MacEwan University, their students were 38% more mischievous during the second semester (starting in March 2020), compared to the previous academic year [8]. In an interview with Sean Waddingham, president of the Students' Association of MacEwan University, with CBC News, he stated: "The sudden move to online made their classes a little harder to complete... and you could see how the sudden move to online could make cheating easier." [8]. Moreover, a study conducted in three universities in Germany revealed that there

were high rates of self-admitted academic dishonesty reported by students for the summer semester of 2020 [9]. In an interview conducted by Costley [10] among a group of students enrolled in cyber university classes in South Korea, he found out that cheating is done when necessary and that students perceived academic dishonesty as a natural part of their learning process. There have been various studies discussing how and why students cheat. Findings in the study conducted by Cheung et al. [11] among Chinese students showed that students' attitudes toward the acceptability of cheating and cheating behavior are linked to engagement and task orientation in the classroom (contextual factors) as well as intrinsic and utilitarian value (personal elements). In a study conducted among the medical students of Saudi Arabia, participants cited a variety of motivations for cheating, including improving grades, passing the course, and a lack of preparation, all while acknowledging that cheating is a "mistake." [12]. Other indicators include "anxiety over not knowing what is expected of them and fear of doing the wrong thing" [13], "stress resulting from poor time management and poor planning skills to complete their work on time" [13], and "pressure to perform due either to a student's own obsession to achieve high grades or familial expectations that signal that anything less than high achievement is unacceptable" [13]. These have been true in this time of pandemic where the shift of learning approach and modality has become stressful, particularly to students. Stressed students are more receptive to the opportunity to engage in online cheating, according to BusinessMirror [14], because their existing learning environment is contributing to their anxiety.

The problem of academic dishonesty is also experienced by Southeast Asian countries. Based on the analysis of an interview among Cambodian students, it was found that individual students' cheating experiences varied in frequency and timing. Findings in a study conducted by Lim & See [15] among the students in Singapore revealed that students thought cheating in exam-related scenarios was serious. Curriculum, parental attitudes, peer behavior, institutional policies, and – most importantly – connections with teachers have all been highlighted as influencing variables for students' cheating behaviors [16]. Plagiarism in online classes is also prevalent in these countries. According to the data gathered from the study of Hussein et al. [17] in a university in Malaysia, students have a good level of awareness of plagiarism. However, because they have easy access to the internet and a habit of completing last-minute work, this does not prevent them from plagiarizing. A study among the undergraduate seniors in two universities in Vietnam showed that 91.7% of the graduation reports at the institution that does not use Turnitin were found to be plagiarized, while 61.7% of the reports at the university that does use the software were found to be plagiarized. The usage of content from the internet without citing the original authors was the main source of this problem [18]. Apart from plagiarism, academic dishonesty in the guise of collaboration is frequent in online learning, according to research conducted by Herdian et al. [19]. Students commit academic fraud in a variety of methods, including downloading a friend's answer file in the online system and entering in with a typical username and password that students do not update. Furthermore, rather than attempting to answer the problem, a student chose to be dishonest by duplicating a friend's work by merely altering the name, then used the Whatsapp group app to collaborate on cheating. However, concerning online classes, Southeast Asian countries experience the problem of academic integrity in a different light. While the rest of the world is adapting to the new normal education through online learning, the digital divide is apparently hindering some Southeast Asian countries from being at par with the rest of the world. Digital divide, according to Hanna [20], is a term used to describe the disparity between people who have access to contemporary information and communications technology (ICT) and those who do not or have limited access. The telephone, television, personal computers, and internet connectivity are all examples of this technology. Bridging this divide is one of the main challenges that the ASEAN countries faced for the past 10 years [21]. In a book written by Prajaknate [21], he explained that some ASEAN member governments, such as Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam, have only recently begun investing in ICT infrastructure and Internet access. Other member states, such as Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore, have, on the other hand, expanded their ICT programs in schools. When it comes to internet penetration in the ASEAN region, just three nations have more than 80% penetration, with Singapore leading the way, followed by Brunei and Malaysia [22]. In Thailand, teachers' technical grasp of ICT abilities is insufficient for integrating ICT into student learning. Despite significant investments in ICT infrastructure, equipment, and professional training, access to ICT in Bruneian, Singaporean, and Malaysian schools is limited. Barriers to such access remain, and teachers claim a lack of time to integrate ICT into their lessons, especially after getting ICT training, due to excessive workloads. According to Varghese [23], access to the internet is still not available to everyone in Indonesia, especially to those who live in rural areas or remote islands. Even in places where internet access is available, still, some people cannot afford it. Only 56 percent of the population of Indonesia, the region's most populous country, has access to the Internet, with only 150 million people out of a total population of 268 million. Thailand, Myanmar, and Vietnam all have internet penetration rates below 60% in 2019, with 57 percent, 39 percent, and 38 percent, respectively [22]. Tria [24] stated that the most burdened individuals in this situation are the "most vulnerable and marginalized students, especially in countries with significant pre-existing gaps in their education systems". This is in agreement with Ping et al. [25] who asserted that "poorer households and remote or excluded communities and regions have limited access to the internet and

the devices needed to access online classes”. They added that a large percentage of the Rohingya population in Rakhine and Chin states in Myanmar do not have internet, mobile, television, and radio access to remote teaching and learning. These situations showing a poor learning environment and lack of facilities contribute to cheating, as identified by some studies according to Korb (2009, as cited in Starovoytova & Namango [26]). The digital divide has uncovered several flaws and injustices in today’s educational institutions, ranging from lack of access to the broadband and computers required for online education, to the supportive surroundings required to focus on learning, to a mismatch of resources and needs [27]. Students with very limited access to the internet and online resources may tend to copy or plagiarize someone’s work for the sake of submission, hence, compromising academic integrity.

In the previous studies presented, the availability of digital resources and an internet connection, as well as their lack constitute academic misconduct among students. Among western countries, information and communication technology (ICT) contributes largely to plagiarism because of ease of copying and easy access to materials and new technologies as elucidated by Šprajc et al. [5]. In the ASEAN region, on the other hand, limited to lack of ICT resources contribute to students’ cheating behaviors [27]. The current situation in the country is not different from the rest of the world, and the topic of academic integrity is also of great importance. While the majority of countries in the different continents are leaning toward online classes and most of the Southeast Asian countries have problems with the internet and technology, Philippines on the other hand, is caught in the middle. Currently, the educational institutions in the country employ blended learning, which is a pseudo-virtual approach that combines two alternative education options (online and printed modules) into a “blend” to serve students who are forced to stay at home because of the pandemic [28]. However, in a survey conducted by the Social Weather Stations (SWS) in March 2021, it was revealed that 89 percent of Filipino families consider blended learning to be “more difficult” than regular face-to-face classes [28]. The utilization of online classes is also a burden to most Filipinos since it requires the use of gadgets such as smartphones and laptops which only well-off and middle-class families can easily purchase [29]. Moreover, access to the internet is also an issue as the country has the lowest internet connectivity in Asia, according to the report of Akamai (2017, as cited in Guadalquiver [29]). This indicates that the majority of parents and students are not yet ready for the new normal education. The study conducted by Guansi et al. [30] revealed that the students are least ready for the new normal learning mainly because of a lack of resources and knowledge. Consequently, unpreparedness which causes stress triggers students to cheat, as revealed in the study conducted by Diego [31]. The employment of blended learning has become stressful to students that the values of academic integrity have been set aside for the sake of compliance with the needed academic requirements. Magsambol [32] wrote in his article for Rappler that students who were desperate to pass their subjects resort to academic dishonesty. A sophomore psychology major told Rappler that a fellow student asked her once to write a paper for a class requirement for P150, and has “decided to make commissioning for students’ classwork a business” [32]. While the studies mentioned in the previous paragraphs determined the students’ engagement in cheating activities and their motivation behind their deviant behaviors which brought a significant contribution to the study of academic integrity, they fall short of determining and elucidating the students’ justifications before they commit their acts of misconduct in the academic setting. Thus, this study helped shed light on how students use their sense of morality to justify acts that may contradict school rules and violate the fundamental values of academic integrity, especially in this new normal, where the shift from traditional face-to-face classes to flexible and blended learning brought an unprecedented challenge to both the students and educators.

With the present problem at hand, the researcher aimed to shed light on the question of how the new normal education affects academic integrity as perceived by the students and instructors of Polytechnic College of Botolan (PCB) of Academic Year 2020-2021. This study investigated and analyzed the profile of the respondents in terms of age and gender, as well as the forms of academic misconduct that the students engage in the new normal education and the neutralization strategies they use to justify their behaviors. Furthermore, this study also pursued to ascertain if there is a significant correlation between the perceived academic misconduct and its justification. These justifications were explained through the lens of Neutralization Theory by Sykes and Matza [33]. This determined if the behaviors were caused by external forces that are beyond their control (denial of responsibility), teachers’ knowledge and pedagogical skills (condemnation of the condemner), or their desire to help others, such as their classmates (appealing to higher loyalties). The results will be beneficial to the education stakeholders, such as students, parents, teachers, and school administrators as it will help them to identify ways on how academic integrity can still be advocated even in the face of the pandemic. Moreover, since education in the new normal is new in the country, there are only a few pieces of research on academic integrity in this kind of learning modality here. Hence, this study will be an additional resource to the body of research that can be used for further studies. Additionally, since this study is limited to the study of the students’ and teachers’ perceptions as a whole, future researchers may consider doing a comparative study to determine the differences in the perceptions of the two respondent groups, as well as to provide a more extensive and comprehensive explanation of the study.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The COVID-19 pandemic poses challenges to every sector of society including education institutions. From the traditional face-to-face classes, schools have shifted to the new normal education which entails the utilization of flexible and blended learning approaches. In these times students experience difficulty with adjustment to the new learning modalities which may drive them to commit acts of misconduct. Hence, the purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions of the students and instructors of Polytechnic College of Botolan regarding academic integrity in the new normal education. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1. Age?
 - 1.2. Gender?
2. How does the new normal education affect academic integrity as perceived by the students and teachers of Polytechnic College of Botolan:
 - 2.1. What forms of academic misconduct do students engage in the new normal education; and
 - 2.2. How do students justify their behavior?
3. Is there a significant correlation between the perceived academic misconduct and its justification?
4. How can academic integrity be upheld in the new normal education?
5. What intervention plan can be proposed to address the issue of academic integrity in the new normal education?

III. HYPOTHESIS

To have a deeper and more extensive analysis of the study, the researcher tested the hypothesis: *There is no significant correlation between the perceived academic misconduct and its justification.*

IV. METHODOLOGY

To come up with a thorough analysis of the data, the researcher used a descriptive correlational quantitative research design. According to Fleetwood [34], in correlational research, a researcher monitors two variables, analyzes the statistical relationship between them, and evaluates it. It looks into the relationship between variables without allowing the researcher to control or manipulate any of them [35]. This type of study is ideal for quick data collection from natural settings. This allows the researcher to apply their findings to real-life problems in an externally valid way. This approach was used to determine the correlation between the perceptions of the respondents regarding academic integrity and the neutralization strategies used by the students to justify academic misconduct. Furthermore, the study is quantitative. This type of research focuses on objective measurements and statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data acquired through polls, questionnaires, and surveys, as well as manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computing tools [36]. Through this method, the data collected from the survey questionnaires were thoroughly evaluated and analyzed. After the questionnaires were retrieved, they underwent statistical analysis to extract the pertinent data needed. Moreover, the descriptive method of research was also utilized. According to Krathwohl [37], “(the) three main purposes of research are to describe, explain, and validate findings”. Following a creative investigation, description emerges to organize the results to fit them with explanations, which are subsequently tested or validated. Since this study aimed to determine the respondents’ perceptions, this method is also an appropriate choice because descriptive research aims to “identify characteristics, frequencies, trends, and categories” [38]. Description was used as a tool to organize data into patterns that emerge during analysis. After the data were collected and tabulated, they underwent in-depth analysis to determine and explain the respondents’ perceptions regarding the academic integrity in the new normal education through the lens of Neutralization Theory by Sykes and Matza. This allowed the researcher to systematically determine and describe the students’ justifications for their academic misconduct which might be violating the values of academic integrity.

The study was conducted at Polytechnic College of Botolan (PCB) formerly Botolan Community College (BCC), located at Batonlapoc, Botolan, Zambales. PCB is a local community college created under the Sangguniang Bayan Resolution 34 series of 2006. Moreover, PCB is an educational institution committed to providing continuous quality education even amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the second semester of the Academic Year 2019-2020, PCB has been employing flexible learning through online and printed self-learning modules (SLMs) to cater to the needs of all its students. The participants of this study were the students of Polytechnic College of Botolan from Senior High School (SHS), Teacher Education Program, and Information (TEP), and Information and Communications Technology Program (ICTP) of the Academic Year 2021-2022. PCB instructors from the three departments were also included as respondents in this study. The participants were selected through the purposive sampling technique. The purposive sampling technique, also known as the ‘selective sampling technique’, is a sampling technique in which the researchers select their respondents based on the characteristics of a population and the objective of the study [39]. More particularly,

the researcher will use heterogeneous or maximum variation sampling which “depends on the researchers’ judgment to select participants with diverse characteristics” [40]. The researcher attempted to collect data from the widest range of perspectives possible about the topic at hand. Thus, there were 30 instructors, 150 students from SHS, TEP, and ICTP Program, with a total of 180 participants. With the suspension of the face-to-face classes to avoid the spread of the deadly COVID-19, students are not allowed to go to school for their safety and wellbeing. Even the instructors are reporting in an alternative working arrangement (AWA). Hence, the researcher used online survey questionnaires via Google Forms to reach out to the respondents and gather necessary data despite the pandemic.

The use of questionnaires is advantageous for the following reasons: to begin with, if it is carefully and well-constructed, it can provide objective and reliable information. Secondly, it is relatively effective and easier to score and administer. The survey questionnaire for this study was adapted from an academic integrity survey developed by Dr. Donald McCabe [41] with few modifications to fit the research problem. The questionnaire is divided into four sections: The first section asks about the respondents’ role in the institution (i.e., instructor or student). They will simply check the box that corresponds to their role. The second section deals with the respondents’ demographic profile which includes their name (optional), sex, and age bracket. The third section asks for the respondents’ perceptions regarding students’ acts of misconduct in the new normal education. It is divided into two parts: the first part consists of specific student behaviors, while the second part consists of the perceived students’ justifications for the given specific behaviors. The participants rated them based on their level of agreement with the statements using a five-point Likert Scale. The last section consists of the suggested ways on how academic integrity can be upheld in the new normal education. The respondents will simply rate them based on their level of agreement using the same given scale. Through this questionnaire, the researcher was able to gather the perceptions of the students and instructors of PCB which shed light on the effects of new normal education on academic integrity. To ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument, the researcher conducted pilot testing among selected respondents who were not part of the actual study. Their answers also had no bearing on the research at hand and were only be used for testing purposes. After the dry run, the result was presented to the statistician for a validity and reliability test. Results showed that the statements on “Specific Behaviors” have a good level of reliability ($\alpha = 0.893$), statements on “Neutralizations Used to Justify Behaviors” have an excellent level of reliability ($\alpha = 0.902$), and the statements on “Strategies to Uphold Academic Integrity” have a good level of reliability ($\alpha = 0.895$). With these results, the researcher was then advised to proceed with the data collection.

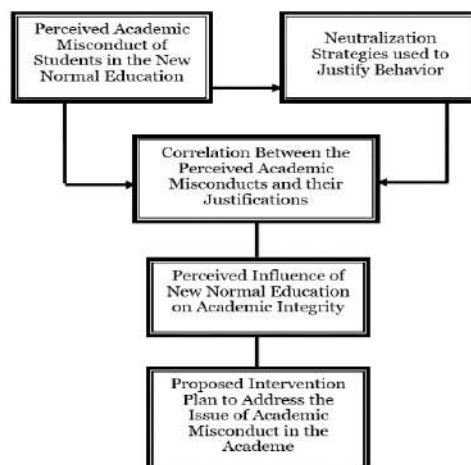
The prepared survey questionnaire was administered to the 30 teacher respondents and 150 student respondents of Polytechnic College of Botolan. This included an informed consent note which contains sufficient information and assurances about taking part to allow them to understand the implications of participation in the study. After the validation of the research instrument, the researcher proceeded to ask permission and approval from the School Administrator and College President of PCB where the respondents are employed and currently enrolled. Once permitted, the researcher administered the instrument to the respondents. The instrument was circulated via Facebook Messenger with the help of the class advisers from each department. The respondents took about five (5) minutes to complete the survey. Once accomplished, the questionnaires were retrieved by the researcher for statistical treatment using the Likert Scale, Weighted Mean, Frequency and Percentage Distribution, Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r).

To help analyze and explain students’ actions of misconduct in the new normal education, the researcher used the Neutralization Theory as a guiding principle. This theory proposed by Sykes and Matza in 1957 explains juvenile delinquency and deviant behavior [42]. Instead of using the term "rationalization" to refer to the justification supplied after the act, Sykes and Matza opted to use the term "neutralization" to refer to the justification offered before the act. Its basic argument is that offenders learn neutralizing strategies to break the rules and norms that they typically believe in and follow [42]. This explains why individuals might violate ethical codes. They use linguistic devices to persuade themselves that it is acceptable to engage in behavior that is traditionally considered immoral because of their current situation, thereby protecting their self-esteem and neutralizing self-blame [42]. The researchers who used the theory to students’ cheating discovered that a student’s chance of cheating is determined not by an absolute sense of right or wrong, but by their ability to explain wrongdoing in a given environment [44]. Furthermore, the Neutralization Theory suggests that there are five strategies individuals use to deflect responsibility for deviant behavior from themselves. These include *denial of responsibility*, where the offender claims that the criminal act was not their fault but the responsibility of outside forces beyond their control; *denial of injury*, where the offender claims that his actions did not hurt anyone; *denial of the victim*, where the offender justifies his wrongdoing as he claims that the victim deserved what he/she got; *condemnation of the condemners*, where the offender believes that the world is corrupt, hence his actions were justifiable; and *appeal to higher loyalties*, where the offender commits the crime because of his loyalty to a person or an idea [43]. Among the five given strategies given by Sykes and Matza, the researcher opted to use only three which are deemed to best explain the cheating-related behaviors of students: denial of responsibility, condemnation of the condemners, and appeal to higher loyalties. Students can use their personal

sense of morality to justify acts that may contradict school rules if they can persuade themselves that a circumstance is unjust, illogical, or unusual. Since the new normal education is a big change to the mode of education, it is a challenge to the students and educators. Hence, the new normal education makes it an easy excuse for students to engage in acts of academic misconduct (denial of responsibility). The new normal education also requires the majority of students to go online, therefore, limiting the interaction between them and their teachers. According to Koch (2000, as cited in Klein Schiphorst [43]), students are more prone to cheat when they believe their teachers have little influence over their learning, cannot explain what they are required to perform, do not feel prepared or encouraged by the teacher, and do not value the work at hand (condemnation of the condemners). Furthermore, as students feel that the new normal is a difficulty faced by everyone, including those who are closely related to them (e.g., relatives, classmates, friends), they may feel the need to cheat to help, typically to maintain friendships [43]. Whatever the reasons or justifications, these deviant acts are a violation of academic integrity.

Fig. 1 below shows an illustration of the relationship of the variables in this study. The two rectangles on top contain the perceived academic misconduct of students in the new normal education as well as the neutralization strategies they use to justify such behaviors. These were gathered through the survey questionnaires that were administered to the students and instructors of Polytechnic College of Botolan. Afterward, the correlation between the perceived academic misconducts and their justifications was extracted, as shown in the box in the middle. Through this, the researcher was able to determine the perceived influence of new normal education on academic integrity. The results of the study were also used as a basis for crafting a proposed intervention plan to address to issue of academic misconduct in the new normal education.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Profile of the Respondents

The profile of the respondents comprises of age and gender, as shown in Table 1 below. Among the 30 teacher respondents, only three (3) or 10% belong to the age bracket of 39-45, while thirteen (13) or 43.33%, which is the majority, belong to the age bracket of 25-31, closely followed by nine (9) or 30% from the age bracket of 18-24. Among the 150 student respondents, on the other hand, it is interesting to note that while the huge majority (122 or 82.33%) were from the age bracket of 25-31, there were also students who are from the age group of 25-31 (fourteen (14) or 9.33%), 32- 38 (eleven (11) or 7.33%), and 39-45 (three (3) or 2%). This shows the diversity of students in PCB in terms of age. In terms of gender, twelve (12) or 40% of the 30 teacher respondents are male, while eighteen (18) or 60% of them are female. On the other hand, among the 150 student respondents, forty-eight (48) or 32% are male, while 102 or 68% of them are female.

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

Age	Teachers (n=30)	%	Students (n = 150)	%
39 – 45	3	10.00	3	2.00
32 – 38	5	16.67	11	7.33
25 – 31	13	43.33	14	9.33
18 – 24	9	30.00	122	81.33
Gender				
Male	12	40.00	48	32.00
Female	18	60.00	102	68.00

Results show that majority of the teacher respondents were from the age group of 25-31, while the vast majority of the student respondents were from the age group of 18-24. Both of which are considered “youth” by the National Youth Commission (NYC). According to NYC, “youth” refers to the period of a person's growth and development from the onset of puberty to the pinnacle of mature, self-reliant, and responsible adulthood, which encompasses a significant portion of the population between the ages of fifteen (15) and thirty (30) [45]. The diversity of students in terms of age proves the school's dedication to achieving its goal which is to “democratize access to quality education through the adoption of scholarship programs, financial assistance schemes and the like, and make them available to all qualified applicants especially the poor yet deserving students of the municipality” [46]. Findings also reveal there is not much difference between the age group of the majority of the two respondent groups. However, while there is not much age gap between the two, it is important to note that the personal experiences of the individual respondents, as well as their role in the institution, may influence their perceptions regarding the given problem statements in this study. According to Sayeed [47], our reactions to various situations and events in our lives are all influenced by our past experiences. Our experiences change or mold our mental process, mindset, attitude, aspirations, expectations, and social behavior. In terms of gender, on the other hand, female respondents are greater in number than the male in both respondent groups. A study of academic cheating among male and female students conducted by Khamesan & Amiri [48] revealed that cheating was much more common in boys than in girls, and girls had a statistically higher belief in cheating as a common occurrence than boys. This is also true in the study conducted by Watson & Sottile [49] which showed that gender may play a role in making ethical decisions. When investigating and evaluating ethical activities, researchers discovered that females articulated more ethical viewpoints than males and that they chose an ethical attitude more than males [49]. This showed that the two genders have different attitudes in terms of cheating. However, the analysis of the respondent's perception when grouped according to age and gender variables is not part of the study and may be delved upon by future researchers. Moreover, since most academic institutions employ online classes, there is a need for the students and parents to spend money on devices and internet connection. Hence, incorporating the family income of the respondents would give an additional information for a greater understanding of the topic.

2. How the New Normal Affects Academic Integrity as Perceived by the Students and Teachers of Polytechnic College of Botolan

2.1. Academic Misconduct in the New Normal Education

Table 2 below shows the different academic misconduct that students commit in the new normal education as perceived by the instructors and students of Polytechnic College of Botolan. Six (6) out of ten (10) obtained a descriptive equivalent of Strongly Agree (SA), while the remaining four (4) obtained a descriptive equivalent of Agree (A). Overall, the academic misconduct that students commit in the new normal education obtained a descriptive equivalent of Agree (A), with an overall weighted mean of 4.12, which indicates that both respondent groups agree that students indeed commit different forms of academic misconduct in the new normal.

Table 2. Academic Misconduct in the New Normal Education

	Academic Misconduct	Teachers #X	Students #X	Overall WX	DR
1.	Working on an activity with others (in person) when the instructor asked for individual work.	4.26	4.18	4.22	Strongly Agree
2.	Working on an activity with others (via online platforms, such as Facebook Messenger) when the instructor asked for individual work.	4.25	4.02	4.14	Agree
3.	Helping someone to accomplish his/her online or modular activity.	4.32	4.27	4.30	Strongly Agree
4.	Copying another student's finished online or modular activities by hand or in person.	4.31	4.13	4.22	Strongly Agree
5.	Copying another student's finished online or modular activities using digital means.	4.23	4.22	4.23	Strongly Agree
6.	Turning in a paper submitted by another student and claiming it as own work.	3.98	3.68	3.83	Agree
7.	Turning in a paper done by someone else (e.g., a friend, a relative, or a family member).	4.08	3.53	3.81	Agree
8.	Copying a few sentences from a site on the internet without citing them.	4.31	4.52	4.42	Strongly Agree
9.	Copying material, almost word for word, from any written or digital source and turning it in as own work.	3.82	3.65	3.74	Agree
10.	Googled answers during an online exam.	4.23	4.42	4.33	Strongly Agree
	Overall	4.18	4.06	4.12	Agree

Among the ten statements, the respondents strongly agree that the most common academic misconduct committed by students in the new normal education is *copying a few sentences from a site on the internet without citing them*. It received the highest level of agreement among the student and teacher respondents, with an overall weighted mean of 4.42. This shows that the most common academic misconduct that students commit in the new normal education is plagiarism. According to Moitra [50], when completing assignments or tests, it is possible to argue that a large amount of plagiarism or other types of misbehavior is caused by students' lack of knowledge or awareness of academic rules. Students tend to plagiarize information from the internet when they are unaware of the school policies regarding this academic misconduct, their lack of knowledge about academic writing, or when they are oblivious of the repercussions of committing such acts.

Another academic misconduct that obtained a high level of agreement among the respondents is *Googling answers during an online exam*. Since new normal education involves remote learning, there is not much physical interaction between the teachers and students. Without the presence of the teacher during an online examination, it is easier for the students to cheat especially in these times when the internet is easily accessed by the students. This is consistent with what has been found in the previous studies. According to Bilen & Matros [51], many institutions reported significant cheating in online exams in Spring 2020, and the problem became so pervasive that it was even covered by the media. Additionally, students thought cheating in exam-related scenarios was serious, according to the findings of the study conducted by Lim & See [15]. Furthermore, according to faculty members and testing professionals, universal online testing has resulted in a confirmed increase in cheating, owing to universities, colleges, and testing businesses being unprepared for the size of the transition or unable or unable to pay for safeguards [52]. Cheating in an online exam is closely followed by *helping someone to accomplish his/her online or modular activity*. This can also be referred to as aiding and abetting dishonesty which is the act of providing material, information, or other assistance to another person with knowledge that such aid could be considered a violation of academic honesty [53]. Contrary to the findings of Herdian et al. [19], which showed that cheating in a form of collaboration is the most common academic misconduct among students, this study revealed that it is only the third most common act, with plagiarism being the first followed by cheating by googling answers from the internet.

Interestingly, however, that while a statement pertaining to plagiarism received the highest level of agreement among the student and teacher respondents (Statement 8), the statement *copying material, almost word for word, from any written or digital source and turning it in as own work*, which is also a form of plagiarism, received the lowest level of agreement among the respondents with only 3.74 overall weighted mean. This denotes that students tend to plagiarize only a few sentences from the internet instead of the whole material which is possibly because the former enables them to submit their outputs with little fear of being detected. Since online plagiarism and cheating are perceived to be the most common academic misconducts in the new normal, it can be deduced that technology indeed aids academic dishonesty among students. Hence, there is a need for the institution and the educators to ensure that the students are well-informed about the proper usage of technology, particularly the internet, as well as the proper way of acknowledging their sources through citations and referencing. This is supported by the findings of Amiri & Razmjoo [54] which revealed the necessity for effective strategies and a unified framework to improve students' awareness early on to reduce the prevalence of plagiarism later on. Course instructors should take developing rich writing and reference abilities seriously, and the prevalent leniency toward students' instances of plagiarism should be replaced with a more serious attitude that stimulates inventive and real research activity.

2.2. Neutralizations Used by Students to Justify Academic Misconduct in the New Normal Education

Table 3 below shows the different neutralization statements that students use to justify academic misconduct in the new normal education based on the neutralization strategies proposed by Sykes & Matza. Statements 1-5 pertain to *condemnation of the condemner*, statements 6-10 pertain to *appeal to higher loyalties*, while statements 11-15 pertain to *denial of responsibility*. Only two (2) obtained a descriptive equivalent of Undecided (U), while thirteen (13) out of fifteen (15) statements obtained a descriptive equivalent of Agree (A). Overall, statements under the denial of responsibility strategy obtained an overall weighted mean of 3.81. This is followed by condemnation of the condemner with an overall weighted mean of 3.78. The appeal to higher loyalties obtained the least overall weighted mean of 3.59. All in all, the three neutralization strategies obtained a weighted mean of 3.72 with a descriptive equivalent of Agree. This indicates that both students and instructors perceive that students indeed use these neutralizations to justify academic dishonesty. It is worthy to point out, however, that there is a big difference between the teachers' and students' level of agreement on the given neutralization statements. It shows when the perception of the two respondent groups regarding the neutralizations used by the students are analyzed separately, they have a different level of agreement per statement.

Table 3. Neutralizations Used by Students to Justify Academic Misconduct in the New Normal Education

	Justifications on academic misconduct	Teachers #X	Students #X	Overall WX	DR
1.	In my opinion, students commit acts of misconduct because the teacher fails to give them explanations or clear expectations regarding their lessons or activities.	3.46	4.31	3.89	Agree
2.	In my perspective, students cheat because the teacher does not monitor his/her students.	3.24	4.22	3.73	Agree
3.	I think students cheat because they do not feel their teacher's concern or support in their learning in this new normal.	3.32	4.25	3.79	Agree
4.	Student's cheating behaviors can be attributed to teacher's high expectations from students to perform well despite the new normal.	3.42	4.31	3.87	Agree
5.	I believe pressure from friends and family makes the students commit acts of misconduct.	3.40	3.75	3.58	Agree
6.	I think students let their classmate copy or plagiarize their work because they do not want to lose their friendship.	3.47	3.88	3.68	Agree
7.	Students help another student with their classwork because they do not want their classmate/s to be left behind.	3.21	3.99	3.60	Agree
8.	I think the students would prefer to let their classmates copy their answers so their classmates will pass than keep the answers for themselves and let their friends fail the course.	3.41	3.97	3.69	Agree
9.	I believe students commit acts of misconduct, so they won't be kicked out of their peer group.	3.09	3.65	3.37	Undecided
10.	I think students cheat because they consider such activity as normal especially in the new normal education.	3.28	3.97	3.63	Agree
11.	I think students deem that learning via online platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, or LMS is difficult, thus cheating is a better option to pass.	3.18	3.57	3.38	Undecided
12.	I believe that lack of resources (such as gadget or internet connection) for the new normal learning makes it difficult for students which compels them to cheat.	3.43	3.73	3.58	Agree
13.	Having an easy access to answers through the internet draws the students to commit acts of misconduct.	3.97	4.01	3.99	Agree
14.	I think students cheat because they believe they were given online/modular activities that are too difficult.	3.82	4.31	4.07	Agree
15.	In my perspective, students cheat because of excessive amount of work given to them despite being in the new normal education.	3.72	4.32	4.02	Agree
	Overall	3.43	4.02	3.72	Agree

According to Sykes & Matza [33], "neutralization" refers to the justification offered before the act. Its basic argument is that offenders learn neutralizing strategies to break the rules and norms that they typically believe in and follow. Most students understand that cheating is unethical, but they nevertheless do it. This misalignment of thought and conduct degrades their positive self-image and causes discomfort. These behaviors must be justified to alleviate this anguish, hence, the use of neutralization strategies [43]. Among the 15 statements, the respondents greatly agree and think that *students cheat because they believe they were given online/modular activities that are too difficult*. They also agree that *students cheat because of the excessive amount of work given to them despite being in the new normal education*. Both statements fall under the denial of responsibility neutralization strategy indicating that it is the most common justification that students use to justify academic misconduct and to neutralize self-blame. Since the level of difficulty of the online and modular activities, as well as the amount of workload given to them, were beyond their control, they believe that committing academic misconduct was not their fault. On the other hand, statements pertaining to appeal to higher loyalties obtained the least level of agreement. This explains that while their loyalty to their relationships, whether with their family or friends, are important to students, they are not frequently used as justification for cheating.

However, it is important to note that among the student respondents, condemnation of the condemner obtained the highest weighted mean average followed by denial of responsibility. This indicates that for the students, it is the condemner's fault (teacher, parent, and friends) why they commit academic misconduct, hence, they should not feel bad about cheating. This finding is broadly in line with the results presented by McCabe [55] which revealed that students use teachers' failings to justify cheating. They are enraged by teachers who administer tests on content that has not been discussed in class or highlighted in homework assignments. As a result, they cheat to show their disdain for teachers and contempt of their authority. Similarly, a study conducted by Murdock et al. [56] revealed that cheating was judged as more justifiable due to bad pedagogy, performance goal structures, and low teacher caring, which resulted in greater teacher blame and less student blame. Apart from this, Greene & Saxe [57] stated that students also blamed their parents and instructors for rampant cheating, claiming that they were under pressure to perform well.

On the other hand, the teachers perceive that the neutralization strategy that the students use the most to justify their academic misconduct is the denial of responsibility, with *easy access to answers through the internet* being the most common justification. This result is similar to the majority of studies previously discussed where easy access to the internet and technology are primarily blamed for students' academic misconduct. The findings in this study show that when analyzed separately, the perceptions of students and teachers when it comes to neutralization strategies differ from each other. Since this study is restricted to analyzing the respondents' perceptions as a whole, this study suggests further exploration regarding the comparison of the students' and teachers' perceptions regarding the issue.

3. Correlation Between the Perceived Academic Misconducts and their Justifications

Table 4 shows the test of correlation between the perceived academic misconduct of students in the new normal education and their justifications for such acts.

Table 4. Correlation Between the Perceived Academic Misconducts and their Justifications

Correlation	r-Value	P-Value	Decision at 5% alpha
Perceived Academic Misconducts and their Justifications	+ 0.677 (Moderate Positive)	0.000 Significant	Reject Ho

Table 4 reveals that there is a significant moderate positive correlation between the perceived academic misconducts and their justifications with an r-value of 0.677. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected at a 5% level. This indicates that students indeed commit various forms of academic misconduct and uses different neutralizations to justify their behavior. Through these neutralizations, students were able to shift blame from themselves to the situation to alleviate feelings of guilt and humiliation [44], hence, validating the use of the theory proposed by Sykes & Matza (1957). Although this theory was originally used to explain juvenile delinquency and deviant behavior [42], it can also be considered applicable in explaining and understanding students cheating behaviors. Students plagiarize and cheat because of the seemingly unreasonable level of difficulty of the given modules, as well as the excessive amount of work given to them despite being in the new normal education. By using neutralization strategies, mainly denial of responsibility, students can deflect self-blame and commit dishonesty such as plagiarism and online cheating. This shows that the new normal education has a significant negative effect on the academic integrity of the students.

4. Ways to Uphold Academic Integrity in the New Normal Education

Table 5 shows the different ways or strategies which may be employed to maintain and uphold academic integrity in the new normal education. Four (4) out of seven (7) obtained a descriptive equivalent of Strongly Agree (SA), while the remaining three (3) obtained a descriptive equivalent of Agree (A). Overall, the suggested ways to uphold academic integrity in the new normal education obtained a descriptive equivalent of Strongly Agree (SA), with an overall weighted mean of 4.36, which indicates that both respondent groups strongly concur with the suggested means to prevent academic misconduct.

Table 5. Ways to Uphold Academic Integrity in the New Normal Education

Upholding Academic Integrity During the New Normal Education	Teachers WX	Students WX	Overall WX	DR
1. The school must have a clear and standard policy regarding academic integrity.	4.72	4.30	4.51	Strongly Agree
2. Policies regarding academic integrity must be clearly explained to the students, as well as their parents.	4.67	4.07	4.37	Strongly Agree
3. Repercussions of the violation of academic policies must be clearly addressed to students and parents.	4.52	4.11	4.32	Strongly Agree
4. There should always be clear communication between the students and the teachers, especially when it comes to the online and modular lessons and activities.	4.61	4.33	4.47	Strongly Agree
5. Consider including a statement on all submissions that says, "By submitting this (paper, exam, assignment), I hereby state that all work is entirely my own, with proper citations for borrowed resources. No violation of the school's academic integrity policy is made.	4.23	4.02	4.13	Agree
6. Plagiarism detector software such as Turnitin.com can be used to ensure that student's papers do not contain any plagiarism.	4.31	3.68	3.83	Agree
7. Consider the use of authentic assessments where students demonstrate an application of learning in their online/modular activities.	4.57	4.16	3.81	Agree
Overall	4.55	4.17	4.36	Strongly Agree

Table 5 revealed that out of seven suggested strategies to uphold academic integrity in the new normal education, statements 1-4 gained the strongly agree descriptive equivalent, with number one being the highest. This indicates that both the students and teachers agree that the school must have a clear and standard policy regarding academic integrity. This also implies that the school does not have such policies which are specifically designed for the new normal education setup. Gamage et al. [58] explained in their study that academic staff members frequently overlook acts of academic misconduct, even when they are discovered, since the system is unclear to them, or it is overly complicated or time-consuming. Academic misconduct goes unreported because teaching personnel has a variety of professional duties, such as teaching, assessing, grading, and conducting new research. Morris & Carol (2016, as cited in Gamage et al. [58]) describe how examples of academic misconduct have been neglected in the US because they were considered "minor" offenses that would eventually be punished. Schools in Canada exhibit similar conduct due to a lack of regular norms and guidelines. According to Anohina-Naumeca et al. [59], academic integrity policies outline the university's ethical principles and ideals, as well as the acceptable types of academic behavior, the punishments for academic misconduct, and the methods for dealing with policy infractions. Students' self-reported cheating is much lower at schools where honor codes are strictly enforced than at universities where no such honor code exists [43]. Hence, academic integrity policies must be conveyed, executed, and applied consistently and effectively. This supports the respondents' strong agreement on statements 2 and 3. Previous studies also suggest the same thing and stressed the vital role of teachers in ensuring academic integrity. Cavico & Mujtaba [60] explained that A school's faculty members are the most important factor in ensuring the success of any academic honesty program. The school's ideals and dedication to ethics and integrity must be reflected, upheld, communicated, and enforced by the teachers. Also, it is critical that faculty members are informed that they have the full support of their colleagues, the administration, and the school's deans in preserving the school's policy of academic honesty, ethics, and integrity.

Among the suggested ways presented above, both respondent groups also strongly agree that there should always be clear communication and feedback between the students and the teachers, especially when it comes to online and modular lessons and activities to avoid academic misconduct among students. This helps the learners to comprehend the lessons and understand the expectations regarding them. A study conducted by McCabe [55] that students use teachers' failings to justify cheating. They are enraged by teachers who administer tests on content that has not been discussed in class or highlighted in homework assignments. As a result, they cheat to show their disdain for teachers and contempt for their authority. Because the online environment lacks body language, communicating with students requires a little more effort and planning than communicating with students in a traditional setting. In a face-to-face session, instructors have the advantage of using body language and facial expressions to connect with their students and convey their message. When communicating with students in an online class, instructors do not have the benefit of using body language to aid communication. Knowing the communication flaws that exist in online contexts will help them decide how to establish timely and suitable communications, as well as how to communicate with their online students effectively [61].

5. Using the Results of the Study as Basis in Crafting and Proposing an Intervention Plan to Address the Issue of Academic Misconduct in the Academe in the New Normal Education

Results of this study showed that there is a need for the institution to set clear and standard policies regarding academic integrity which should be clearly communicated and addressed to the students and their parents. Academic integrity rules, according to Anohina-Naumeca et al. [59], explain the university's ethical ideas and ideals, as well as the sorts of academic activity that are permissible, academic misconduct consequences, and ways for dealing with policy violators. Students who self-report cheating are far less likely to do so at institutions with rigorous honor codes than at universities without one [43]. The main justifications used by the students in committing academic misconduct in the new normal signal for the need of the school to conduct training and workshop for the instructors on how to craft and prepare student learning modules that are thought-provoking and mind-stimulating, yet not too difficult for the students. This will also inform them of the reasonable number of modules to be given to their students based on the latter's understanding and capability. Recalibration of the Student and Faculty Manual/Handbook is also proposed to come up with a clear set of policies adapted for the new normal education setting, which should be clearly explained to the students and their parents.

The proposed intervention plan to address the issue of academic misconduct in the academe includes the following: key areas, objectives, programs and activities, funds, persons involved, and time frame. This is recommended to be used for the 2nd Semester of the Academic Year 2021-2022. The academe may consider adapting the intervention plan to uphold academic integrity among the students in the new normal education.

Table 6. Proposed Intervention Plan

KEY AREAS	OBJECTIVES	PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES	FUND	PERSON(S) INVOLVED	TIME FRAME
Crafting of Standard School Policies	To come up with clear and standard policies regarding academic integrity in the new normal education	Conduct an admin and academic council meeting. Recalibration of the Student and Faculty Manual / Handbook.	None	1. School Administrator, 2. College President, 3. Program Coordinators 4. Faculty Members 5. Guidance Counselor 6. OSAS Coordinator	Month of February
Training and Workshop; Recalibration of Student Learning Modules	To equip the teachers with knowledge on how to craft and prepare Student Learning Modules.	Conduct faculty training and workshops. Recalibrate the Student Learning Modules.	None	1. College President 2. Program Coordinators 3. Faculty Members	Month of February
School Rules and Regulations and Academic Integrity Policies Awareness	To inform and educate the students and their parents regarding the school rules and regulations and academic integrity policies in the new normal education	Conduct a series of limited face-to-face orientations among the students and their parents, with observance to the IATF health and safety protocols.	School Fund	1. Program Coordinators 2. Selected Faculty Members 3. OSAS Coordinator 4. Guidance Counselor 5. Students 6. Parents	1 st Week of March (1 week before the start of the 2 nd semester, AY 2021-2022)
Class/Subject Orientation	To inform the students of the class rules and regulations, and orient them on the course syllabus and subject requirements.	Conduct a class orientation via Online Platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams.	None	1. Subject Teachers 2. Students	First Day of Class (March 14, 2022)
Proper Citation and Referencing	To help and educate the students on how to properly cite sources.	Conduct a webinar.	None	1. Research Instructors 2. Students	Month of April
Improvement of Students' Study Habits	To help the students manage stress and improve their study habits in the new normal education.	Conduct a webinar.	None	1. Guidance Counselor 2. Students	Month of June
Evaluation	To evaluate the 2 nd Semester of AY 2021-2022.	Conduct an academic council meeting.	None	1. College President 2. Program Coordinators 3. Faculty Members	Last Day of the 2 nd Semester

VI. CONCLUSIONS

After an intensive investigation and analysis of the data gathered, the researcher has concluded that there is not much age difference between the two respondent groups, and both belong to the “youth” age bracket. In terms of gender, there are more female respondents than males from both respondent groups. When it comes to the academic misconduct that students commit in the new normal education, copying a few sentences from the internet without citation which is a form of plagiarism is the act that is perceived to be most commonly done by students. This is followed by cheating in an online exam by googling answers from the internet, then followed by aiding and abetting dishonesty by helping someone accomplish his/her online or modular activity. Based on the findings of the study, the main neutralization strategy that students use to justify their academic misconduct is the denial of responsibility which means that students believe that committing academic dishonesty is acceptable because of the outside forces beyond their control. These include being given online/modular activities that they deem to be too difficult, being given an excessive workload despite being in the new normal, and having easy access to answers through the internet. It is followed by condemnation of the condemners wherein the teacher is at fault for the students’ deviant behaviors because they fail to communicate their expectations to their students, their high expectations from the students, as well as how they handle their classes. Appeal to higher authorities is the least strategy that students use when justifying their academic misconduct. The significant moderate positive correlation between the perceived students’ academic misconducts and its justifications also indicates that students indeed use the factors relevant to the new normal education to justify their cheating behaviors to shift blame from themselves to the situation to alleviate feelings of guilt and humiliation. With these findings, it is evident that new normal education has a negative effect on the academic integrity of the students. For the ways to uphold academic integrity in the new normal education, the

strategies such as having a clear and standard policy regarding academic integrity which should be clearly explained to students and parents, as well as having clear communication between the students and the teachers, especially when it comes to the online and modular lessons and activities, are the most suggested ways to be employed to ensure the academic integrity in the institution despite the new education setup.

While the issue of academic integrity has been a topic of many studies and discussions in both foreign and local settings, the majority of the previous research related to the topic at hand only focused on determining students' engagement in cheating activities and their motivation behind their deviant behaviors, an analysis of the implications of the misconduct to students' academic performance and to the moral code, as well as suggestions on how such behaviors can be minimized. Although their findings bring a significant contribution to the study of academic integrity, they fall short of determining and elucidating the students' justifications before they commit their acts of misconduct in the academic setting. Thus, this study helped shed light on how students use their sense of morality to justify acts that may contradict school rules and violate the fundamental values of academic integrity, especially in this new normal, where the shift from traditional face-to-face classes to flexible and blended learning brought an unprecedented challenge to both the students and educators. By analyzing and explaining the neutralization strategies the students use to justify their actions, teachers will be encouraged to use appropriate alternative methods of assessment and monitoring to prevent any further acts of misconduct among the students. They will also be able to build positive relationships and interactions with their students to foster the values of academic integrity. This study will also enlighten the students on the value of academic integrity even in the new normal education, as well as the repercussions of doing acts of academic misconduct during online and modular distance learning. Since parents play a critical role in the studies of their children as home facilitators in this time of the pandemic, this study will help them in guiding and encouraging their children in their academic endeavors while supporting the teachers in maintaining academic integrity among the students. Furthermore, this study will help program coordinators, school administrators, and educational institutions to devise a plan for a conduct of seminars or orientations regarding the importance of academic integrity, as well as the different ways how to uphold and maintain it even in the face of the pandemic. They may use the proposed intervention plan to address the issue of academic misconduct in the new normal education. Since the shift of learning modality to new normal education only happened recently in the light of the COVID-19 crisis, there are very few studies relating to the influence of new normal on academic integrity. Hence, this study will be an additional resource to the body of knowledge that can be used for further studies.

However, there are areas that this study still needs to address. These include the significant difference in the perception of the respondents when grouped according to profile variables, as well as the comparison between the perceptions of the students and the teachers. The findings of this study revealed that when analyzed separately, there are significant differences in the perception of students and teachers when it comes to the neutralization strategies used by the students to justify their cheating behaviors in the new normal education. Moreover, since most academic institutions employ online classes, there is a need for the students and parents to spend money on devices and internet connections. Hence, incorporating the family income of the respondents in the analysis would give additional information for a greater understanding of the topic. Further studies may be conducted to bridge this gap and to provide a more comprehensive explanation and understanding of the study. Nevertheless, despite its limitations, this study provided significant evidence and additional information about the correlation between the perceived academic misconduct of students and the justifications for their behavior. It revealed that indeed, new normal education affects students' academic integrity.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study found a significant moderate positive correlation between the perceived academic misconducts of students and their justifications for such acts. It clearly shows that new normal education has a significant negative effect on the academic integrity of the students. After a careful examination and analysis of the pertinent data gathered in this study, the researcher has come up with the following recommendations.

Teachers and educators may consider appropriate alternative methods of assessment and monitoring to prevent any further acts of misconduct among the students. There must also be good and consistent communication among the teachers, students, and parents for them to build positive relationships and interactions to foster the values of academic integrity. They may also take into consideration giving a reasonable number of online/modular activities that are thought-provoking and mind-stimulating, yet not too difficult for the students; with clear explanations and expectations from the teacher. Since the new normal education is already challenging for students, teachers' and parents' concerns and support are of great importance in their learning. In addition, the educational institutions should also have a clear standard policy regarding academic integrity which must be conveyed, executed, and applied consistently and effectively. Furthermore, the researcher also recommends that the institution should conduct an orientation every start of the semester to inform the students as well as the parents about the rules, regulations, and policies of the school to uphold

academic integrity. They may use the proposed intervention plan crafted by the researcher in conducting these orientations.

The findings of this study signal for additional studies to understand more about the topic at hand. Since findings revealed that there are significant differences in the perception of students and teachers when it comes to the neutralization strategies used by the students when analyzed separately, the researcher suggests that future researchers who wish to investigate a similar study may consider conducting a comparative study to bridge the research gap and to determine and understand the differences in their perceptions in a deeper manner. Future studies could also investigate and analyze the significant difference in the perception of the respondents when grouped according to profile variables to provide a more comprehensive explanation and understanding of the study.

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