

## **Formation Mechanism of Academic Corruption in the Perspective of Identity and Governance Path<sup>①</sup>**

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**Abstract:** *Academic identity is the cognitive status of academic research subjects on the formation of professional attributes, academic morals, and academic values. Alienation and corruption of academic identity are the psychological foundations for the emergence and spread of academic corruption. To struggle against academic corruption, it is necessary to restructure the power allocation between administration and academia, actively explore the realization of academic power, prevent alienation of academic power, strengthen the supervisory responsibility of academic management departments at all levels, change the ineffectiveness of academic power supervision and restraint mechanisms to form a control mechanism preventing academic corruption. Furthermore, it is need to strengthen academic moral construction, enhance self-discipline ability, consciously accept heteronomy, purify academic atmosphere, and form a mechanism for preventing academic corruption and establish a unified identity of teaching and scientific research and an advance position to prevent academic corruption.*

**Keywords:** *Academic corruption, Academic morals, Identity alienation, Academic identity, Discipline construction*

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### **I. Introduction of Academic Identity**

"Identity" is a multi-level and multi-dimensional concept of psychology. It involves the development of self-cognition and personality. In other word, it is an significant concept to answer the question of "who am I". In the field of modern social research, identity includes various types: self, religions, groups, regions, occupations, classes, nations, and countries. It is a key question that must be answered by anyone and communities involved in different levels. Meanwhile, it is an important academic field to be explored in social disciplines. However, when conducting social identity research, the academic community has neglected the research on their own identity issues, such as whether they are a scholar, what a scholar is, what is the purpose of academic research, how to do a good academic research, etc. Li (2008) pointed out that "there is also a obvious question on 'identity' in academic activities".<sup>[1]</sup> Yu (2013) enumerated the main problems of modern academic identity in her article "*Social, Cultural and Psychological Study of Academic Dependence*".<sup>[2]</sup> From the current understanding of academic identity, scholars mostly use this concept from the perspective of academic recognition, such as recognition of a scholar's academic status, academic achievement or research level. This understanding actually excludes the academic values and academic morals that widely exist in academic circles and universally recognized by scholars all over the world from the concept of academic identity, which limits academic identity to the evaluation of academic results, leading to the narrowness and deviation of this concept understanding. That means the academic identity needs to be further studied. Therefore, we can make understanding of academic identity as follows from the concept of "identity". One kind of social identity is from cognitive status of academic research subjects on professional attributes, academic morals, and academic values. There are two level meaning for academic identity. First, it is the academic research subject's recognition of his or her professional or disciplinary attributes, the answer to the identity question of "who am I", and the academic research subject's distinction between self and the other, the sense of identity strengthening,

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and the identity basis forming of the group's academic cultural traits. Second, it is the academic research subject's recognition of the value, goals, norms, and morals of academic research, the cultural bond that maintains the group's sense of identity, the spiritual core that determines the cultural characteristics of academic research and the 'glue' that maintains a close society.<sup>[3]</sup>

Academic identity, especially the subject's recognition of academic research value, goals, norms, and ethics is the spiritual core that determines the cultural characteristics of academic research, which defines and guides the academic direction, academic atmosphere, and its social value. For example, during the Spring and Autumn Period, scholars formed the identity of rejuvenating the country and enlightening folk in response to the Great Transformation, Great Turbulence, Great Division, and Great Integration. The academic prosperity period of 'contention of a hundred schools of thought' has formed in Chinese history. This shows that different academic identities will have a significant impact on the trend of academic research, and the formation of today's academic corruption is also closely related to that.

## **II. Formation Mechanism of Academic Corruption in the Perspective of Identity**

### **2.1. Alienation of academic identity is the cognitive source of academic corruption**

Since ancient Greece, academic tradition has been formed in which the original purpose of scholarship is academy itself. Since the establishment of the country, the purpose of academic research has carried more of the social functions of promoting national progress, national development and cultural prosperity. The pursuit of the social value and significance of academic research has also become the mainstream recognition of scholars. Ancient Chinese scholars have also put forward academic ideas such as 'humanistic pragmatism', 'moral expressed in words', 'salvation compassion' and so on. While they are also the innovative core driving force of Chinese culture inheritance for thousands of years. Meanwhile, academic chaos, such as academic counterfeiting, plagiarism, fabrication, and data falsification, have never faded out of our academic horizons. The famous Qing Dynasty novel 'The Scholars', a famous novel in Qing Dynasty, used different types of 'Confucian scholars' as its main creation objects to vividly depict academic misconducts and corruptions in the Ming and Qing academic circles, such as fake editors, surrogate exam-taker, signature stealing, cheating in the test, buying fame, lying about age, and counterfeit publishing.<sup>[4]</sup> Nowadays, similar phenomena are still common. Regarding the cause of academic misconduct, the 'Academic Misconduct' questionnaire survey jointly launched by China Education Channel and Qingyan Consulting shows that the first ranking is 'social misconduct' (63.5%) and 'unreasonable evaluation system' (63.5%), followed by 'regulating for the benefit ignoring specifications' (58.2%) and 'no match between self-ability and academic requirements' (52.4%). About 42% people believe that there is too much work or academic stress. About 42% people think that they do not know enough about academic ethics.<sup>[5]</sup> From the results of this survey, it demonstrates that the alienation of academic identity has basically been caused by the causes mentioned above, which has led many academic research subjects to obliterate the original intention of academic research, and to treat academic research as a way to decorate the facade, obtain achievements and social reputation, complete the assessment of scientific research tasks and professional titles, acquire benefits and promote their own values.

In this context, domestic universities and research institutions generally regard the number of academic achievements as the main pursuit targets and indicators of teacher assessment. This is also an important reason why the discipline construction of most universities in China is full of achievements, but academic achievements transformation projects are rare. Most scholars also regard academic misconduct and corruption as shortcuts to finish scientific research and acquire benefits. Some journals and publishers consider the publication of papers and works as huge business opportunities. In addition to publicly collecting page fees and using academic power to arrange privately, many journals and publishers sell pages and book numbers in large numbers, clearly priced. They have become profitable academic dealers, and even journals have annual profits of tens of millions.<sup>[6]</sup> In April 2017, due to alleged peer review, Springer Publishing, one of the world's largest academic publishing institutions, announced the withdrawal of 107 academic papers published by its medical journal 'Tumor Biology' from 2012 to 2015. Although the relevant responsible person of Springer repeatedly emphasized that such counterfeiting is global and the screening work is not targeted at any country, the 107 papers are all from China. What's more worth pondering is that the large-scale withdrawal of Chinese scholars' papers by international academic institutions has not happened for the first time. In 2015, 41 of the 43 biomedical papers withdrawn by 'BioMed Central' were written by Chinese authors. This shows how shocking the problem of academic corruption in China is.

### **2.2 Corruption Identity is a Direct Factor of the Academic Corruption Generalization.**

The reform and opening-up that has lasted for nearly 40 years in China has profoundly changed people's production method, life style, values and social psychology. The focus shifting from academics and society to interests and individuals has profoundly transformed the academic community's views on academic corruption. The academic power alienation caused by management system provides institutional environment

for the corruption identity formation. In China, the alienation of academic power is mainly manifested in two aspects: First, administrative power excessively intervene academic power. The academic power is alienated as a dependency of administrative power due to the leading position of government in funding, personnel, discipline and degree construction, scientific research platform approval, professional title evaluation, professional evaluation, project declaration, etc. That has led universities, research institutes, and scholars to ignore academic ethics and curry favour with administrative power for their own benefits. The academic corruption has been aggravated with close connection between academic identity and administrative adjudication, scholar identity and power granting, knowledge and transaction. Second, academic power supervision and restraint mechanisms lose ability. For more than ten years, various types of academic corruption have been reported in the newspapers. Facing the intensified academic corruption in universities, little effective disciplinary measures is adopted by universities, academic institutions, education management departments, and academic committees that have supervisory responsibility for academic corruption. Professor Ge Jianxiong said that education departments at all levels often announce that there is 'zero tolerance' for corrupt practices that have been exposed, but "zero-action" is generally adopted in implement. The disability of the supervision and restraint mechanism of academic power accelerate the spread of academic corruption. Some scholars believe in 'social relations', turning the so-called "academic circle" into a platform for the benefits exchange, treating academic research as a tool for reclame, and using academic power as a resource for transaction of power and money. Therefore, academic corruption identity was formed, and academic corruption became a reasonable and normal social phenomenon, when academic corruption is embedded in consciousness and manifested in behaviors, so that academic research subjects no longer regard the projects obtained by the transaction of power and money, articles published by ghostwriters, and plagiarized results as shame. Academic corruption, unlike other corruption, is mainly limited to the field of academic research, involving a small scope, which can be called 'small-group corruption' or 'niche corruption', but the harm that this corruption causes to society is any other 'small-group corruption' cannot be reached. The main members of any country's management and service agencies are all from universities. When some colleges and teachers in university have become the subject of corruption, it is logical for students to cultivate corruption identity. In recent years, the increasingly high education of various corruption subjects in society has a close relation with academic corruption in universities.

### **III. Governance Path of Academic Corruption in the Perspective of Identity**

#### **3.1 Reforming the academic management system, Establishing a control mechanism for academic power, and Preventing academic identity alienation**

The academic identity alienation is the cognitive source of academic corruption. Therefore, governance of academic corruption need also start with preventing academic identity alienation. Firstly, it is necessary to correctly handle the relationship between government and universities, politics and academics, freedom and norms, reconstruct power allocation between administrative management and academic research, change excessive interference of administrative power in academic research, return academic power to scholars, and actively explore the realization of academic powers such as 'professor management' and 'academic autonomy', so that the administrative department can truly become a server of academic research instead of a referee, and scholars truly identify the academic research as itself instead of the slavery of power to enables academic research truly reflecting social needs and academic significance rather than satisfying personal self-interest, thereby preventing alienation of academic research purposes. Secondly, supervision and governance mechanism of academic power need to be further improved. At present, although China does not have a system of special laws and regulations for punishing academic corruption, relevant administrative regulations and a large number of administrative regulations issued by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science and Technology have stipulated to encourage academic research and punish academic corruption. [7] Therefore, in addition to strengthening system construction, exploring more specialized and specific laws and regulations for punishing academic corruption, it is even more critical to strengthen the supervisory responsibility of academic management departments at all levels to deal severely with various types of academic corruption incidents, carry out accountability to relevant departments for dereliction of duty, and form a control mechanism to prevent academic corruption, so that academic research subjects can form an identity and awe of the legal system and consciously abide by academic norms.

#### **3.2 Strengthening academic moral construction, forming a spiritual defense line to prevent academic corruption, and enhancing academic moral identity**

Noble moral sentiment is the spiritual guarantee for people to guide their thoughts and behaviors. Good moral culture is the basic content for scholars to cultivate themselves and help the world. The academic corruption becoming a more prominent issue now is the inevitable result of the lost ethics and morality of academic research subjects. To prevent academic corruption, we need to build a prevention mechanism, and strengthen scholars' sense of academic moral identity. First, we need to put great effort on rebuilding the

academic research beliefs and academic ethical identity, strengthening scholars' sense of historical mission, social responsibility and self-awareness, adhering to academic rationality, academic morals and academic conscience, being cautious, independent, constantly self-aware and self-disciplined, forming a moral force to resist academic corruption, and strengthening the self-control ability of academic behavior, and consciousness of preventing academic corruption. Second, we need to increase publicity and education on academic corruption events, strengthen academic supervision, carry out academic criticism, as an important link and component of academic activities, to completely change the bad practice of academic circles in China, such as face-saving, light criticism and self commendation to keep academic behavior under the strict supervision of academic morals, academic conscience, and academic norms, strengthen scholars accepting heteronomy for cultivating self-discipline and form a spiritual line of defense against academic corruption.

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