



# **Research Misconduct in China: Towards an Institutional and Emotional Analysis**

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# Introduction

- **Academic integrity issues are severe in China**
- **Research gaps: the causes of the misconduct from aspects of **institutional setting** (e.g., university administrative system, policy making and implementation) and individuals' **emotional feeling**.**
- **Main arguments in this study:**
  1. **The Chinese version of “publish or perish” policy causes *emotional unwillingness* to faculty members.**
  2. **When no other appropriate means to cope with the negative emotions (e.g., legally and ethically fast preparation for submitting required documents) and working stress, engaging research misconduct becomes a choice to release stress and “**emotional rewards**” to faculty members.**

# Adopted Theories

- **Sociological and criminological concepts and theories:**

1. **Weberian and Chinese bureaucracy (university administration setting)**
2. **Sociology of emotions (human emotions can be shaped and influence by social environment)**
3. **Criminology of emotions (the strain–negative emotions–crime/delinquency link)**

# Methodology

- **Qualitative approach** (more than 100 in-depth semi-/non-structured interviews)
- **Participants:** faculty members, scholar-based administrators (e.g., faculty deans, department chairs), research postgraduate students (M. Phil and PhD).
- **Locations:** faculties of a natural science discipline of three Chinese universities (ranking from the top elite to the bottom elite).
- **Data collection duration:** 2021-2024
- **Means:** online interviews

# Methodology (continued)

- **Length: 45-60 mins/interview**
- **Procedure:**
  - 1. Each participant was provided an individual link;**
  - 2. Interview questions were adjusted based on interviewees' background**
  - 3. Follow-up questions were asked if data was incomplete**
- **Supplementary materials: national announcements, public news, universities published documents and announcements, faculties and departments' unpublished records**

# Findings

- **The Chinese government seeks for academic and technological development: the World First-Class University and First-Class Academic Discipline Construction (known as the Double First-Class Initiative).**
- **One key means to achieve this goal is to increase university rankings in major ranking systems (e.g., QS, THQ)**
- **Chinese universities have developed the means to policies, the Chinese version of “publish or perish” (closely connect publications with job security and promotion):**  
**the institutional constrain**

Central government/Ministry of Education (MOE)



National demands of academic developments

Universities



More publications for increasing university rankings

Faculties/departments



The Chinese version of “publish or perish”

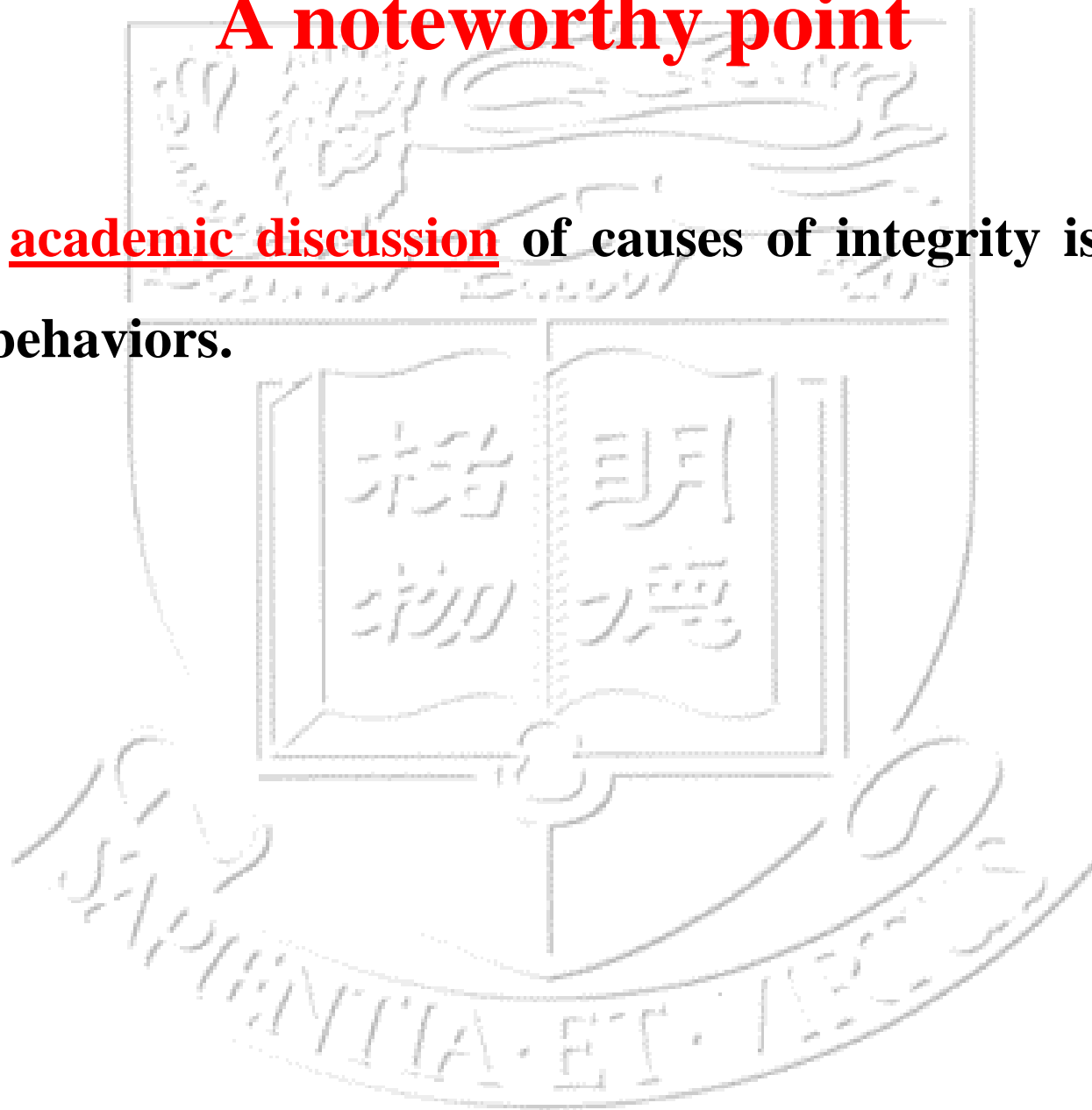
Faculty members

# Findings (continue)

- The policies brings huge working pressure to faculty members, i.e., publishing studies in high impact factor (IF) journals (T1/T2 of SCI journals).
- Faculty members have no sufficient way to cope with the pressure.
- Some of them choose to commit research misconduct as coping strategies to bring “**emotional rewards**” (e.g., satisfactory) to themselves and secure their jobs (e.g., getting tenure-track positions).
- Regulations of academic integrity are strict, but middle- and lower-level supervisors tend to be “gentle” to those wrongdoers for more publications.

## A noteworthy point

- This study is an academic discussion of causes of integrity issues, not intend to defend those misbehaviors.



# Questions



- **Are there any sociological, criminological, or other social science theories (e.g., psychological) that can supplement my research topic?**
- **If I want to adopt a quantitative approach to my study, how can this be achieved during the study design and data collection phases?**
- **Have any previous studies examined similar research topics?**