

European Journal of Education Studies

ISSN: 2501 - 1111 ISSN-L: 2501 - 1111 Available on-line at: <u>www.oapub.org/edu</u>

doi: 10.5281/zenodo.832326

Volume 3 | Issue 8 | 2017

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' OPINIONS ON CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM

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Abstract:

The aim of this research is to find out the reasons for cheating and plagiarism tendencies and behaviours of university students, to suggest solutions with these findings and to contribute to the literature on this topic. Descriptive methods were used in this research. The research population consists of students from the Faculty of Sport Sciences. Two separate measuring instruments were used in the research to collect qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data were collected from 220 students while quantitative data were from 32 students. Frequencies were calculated for qualitative data and the common statements found were analysed. Normal distribution of the quantitative data was observed and the data were not distributed normally. Therefore; Mann-Whitney U test was applied for dual groups and Kruskall-Wallis test to groups more than two, from non-parametic tests. According to the results obtained from the study; more than half of the participants cheated. These results showed that the tendency for reference dishonesty, homework project dishonesty and cheating was at medium level while research reporting plagiarism is at a lower level. The main reasons behind cheating and plagiarism according to student views were the fear of receiving a low grade, taking the easy way out and not studying, rote-learning based education system and teachers not making a fair and equal evaluation. In order to prevent cheating and plagiarism which became current issues in education system, instructors must not frighten the students with grades, must enhance exam inspection and try for students to like the courses.

Keywords: plagiarism, cheating, dishonesty, university students

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1. Introduction

Cheating and plagiarism are important issues in the education system. It is proved that cheating is common in academic institutions and increased significantly in the last thirty years (McCabe et al., 2001). Cheating became more common among students in the recent years; in parallel to the capacity growth of information on the internet, there has been a significant increase in plagiarism and academic dishonesty (Lau et al., 2013; Sisti, 2007; Breen and Maassen, 2005). It has been theorised that the increase of cheating in university students is linked to the loss of ethical values in society (Yeşilyaprak, 1996). A connection between cheating at school and showing unethical behaviours at workplace has been confirmed (Sims, 1993).

The lexical meaning for cheating is "*receiving help from somebody else in an exam or looking at the book or notes*" (Demiray, 1988) and for plagiarism is "*presenting somebody else's work as one's own*" (Demiray, 1988). Cheating dates back to Ancient China where civil service exams were made in separate jars after the participants were searched thoroughly in order to prevent cheating (Selçuk, 1995 ref. from Brickman, 1961).

There can be no arguments on how beneficial scientific researches, projects, publications and other academic studies are to a country's development. Ethics is a very important subject in science like in every other field. One of the main issues of science ethics is honesty. According to the honesty concept, studies conducted by a scientific persona must be striking and must have no concerns on monetary gain or personal fame (Aydın, 2012). Academic dishonesty is a versatile and harmful behaviour that includes cheating, plagiarism and fraudulent conduct (Yazıcı et al., 2011). Academic dishonesty which sometimes occures from ignoring the honesty concept and sometimes from researchers not having enough knowledge on scientific research ethics, is one of the unethical behaviours that affect the quality of education and scientific studies negatively. These behaviours that are more common in high school and higher education levels are seen as cheating, plagiarism or unauthorised help (Giluk and Postlethwaite, 2014).

Academic dishonesty, especially cheating is seen as a normal behaviour by students which is among the reasons why it is so frequently preferred (Chapman et al., 2004). Tendencies on academic dishonesty that we witness at undergraduate level are based in primary and high school levels because of the rote-learning based education system (Semerci, 2004). Today, academicians express that they are against academic dishonesty. However; they present unethical behaviours sometimes due to their low foreign language levels and time limits, and sometimes to their lack of knowledge on academic dishonesty (Eret and Gökmenoğlu, 2010).

University students use cheating as copying from another students' homework and letting other students copy their homework (Yardley et al., 2009; Akdağ and Güneş, 2002). Reasons for cheating among university students include course difficulties, receiving high grades, insufficient time limits for preparation, difficulties in finding time for studying, fear of failure and low risk of getting caught (Yazıcı et al., 2011). In Bozdoğan and Öztürk's study, prospective teachers specified reasons for cheating as the importance of grades in the system, passing a course being more important than knowledge, the evaluation system forcing the students to memorisation and commentbased questions not being asked.

In Semerci and Sağlam's study (2005) participants expressed that methods targeted at learning must be used instead of memorisation-encouraging learning methods and invigilators must be more meticulous in order to prevent cheating. In another study, reasons for plagiarism tendencies in university students were detected as; time limitations, grade pressure, insufficient instructions and indifference towards courses (Uzun et al., 2007). Cheating attempts of university students are usually punished. According to the disciplinary regulations applied in our higher education system, cheating and plagiarism behaviours of students are penalised. In accordance with the mentioned Student Disciplinary Regulations (RG: 28388, 18.08.2012) Article 5 d) Cheating in exams are punished with reprimand, Article 7 –e) Cheating or allowing cheating and f) Plagiarism in seminars, dissertations and publications are punished with one semester suspension, Article 8 -d) Cheating in exams with blackmailing, preventing cheating students from exiting the examination room, taking an exam for somebody else and letting somebody else take an exam for the applicant are punished with two semester suspension. Also with software programmes such as Turnitin and Ithenticate becoming more commonly used, postgraduate dissertations and student homeworks are checked for plagiarism. These software programmes perform comparisons with a substantial amount of data on the internet and determine the similarity rates in dissertations and homeworks with references from other sources.

The topicality of cheating and plagiarism necessitated further research on these subjects. Therefore, the aim of the study is to learn the reasons for plagiarism and cheating tendencies of undergraduate students, suggesting solutions for these and contributing to the literature on this subject.

2. Material and Method

Descriptive method was used in the research. The research population consists of students from a university's Faculty of Sport Sciences in the Central Anatolia region. Two separate measuring instruments were used in the research to collect qualitative

and quantitative data. A written form with three open cloze questions about cheating and plagiarism behaviour, reasons and prevention solutions developed by the researchers to collect qualitative data. This form has been distributed to a study group of 32 volunteering final year students from the Faculty of Sport Sciences.

For the quantitative data, the Academic Dishonesty Tendency Scale (ASEÖ) developed by Eminoğlu and Nartgün (2009) was used. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were used for the scale's structure validity. The exploratory factor analysis showed that the total variance of the scale was 53.17% and that the factor load for the items in the scale vary between ,40 and ,74. The results of confirmatory factor analysis showed that the fit indexes of the model are acceptable (Eminoğlu and Nartgün, 2009). Factor analyses stated a total of 22 items under four sub dimensions as following; "tendency for cheating", "tendency for dishonesty in homework and projects", "tendency for dishonesty in researching and reporting" and "tendency for dishonesty regarding references". Reliability coefficient for the whole scale has been detected as ,90. In order to apply the scale, permission from the first author who developed the scale has been asked. For scale evaluation, five point likert scale was used. Research population consists of 497 students from the Faculty of Sport Sciences. According to Ural and Kilic (2006), the lower limit of samples from 500 population has been calculated as 217 for mistakes that are 0.05 tolerable. 220 Faculty of Sport Sciences volunteers have participated in the research.

Qualitative data obtained from interview forms were calculated for frequency and common statements were found and analysed. Reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) of the quantitative data from the scale were found as ,82. Normal distribution for the data were observed and no normal distribution was detected. Therefore; Mann-Whitney U test was applied for dual groups and Kruskall-Wallis test to groups more than two, from non-parametic tests.

3. Findings

3.1. Findings related to the qualitative data

The written answers of the final year student group from the faculty of sport sciences were analysed and common statements were detected. The students'frequency of cheating in exams and using an already existing homework from the internet as their own, opinions on the reasons for cheating and plagiarism and on how to prevent plagiarism and cheating in exams are listed in Table 1 according to their frequency.

23 final year sport sciences students out of 32 stated that they have cheated while 7 stated that "they have not cheated", 4 that "they downloaded a prepared homework from the internet" and 1 that "submitted a revised homework that has been done before". It has been determined that more than half of the participants have cheated. For reasons of cheating and plagiarism; 8 of the participants expressed "the fear of receiving a low grade", 5 of them "taking the easy way out", 5 "not studying", 3 "rote learning based education system", 3 "the wrong methods of studying", 2 "teachers not making just and equal evaluation", 2 "teachers threatening students with grades" and 2 participants stated "laziness".

According to the participants, the main reasons for cheating and plagiarism are the fear of receiving low grades, taking the easy way out and not studying. In terms of preventing cheating and plagiarism, 4 of the participants suggested that "teachers should not threat hen students with grades", 4 that "inspection in exams should be strengthened", 4 that "teachers should get the students to like the course", 2 that "students should be given seminars to prevent cheating", 2 that "there should be more different types of exams", 2 that "teachers should renew themselves and not ask the same questions every year", 2 that "the punishment for cheating should be heavier" and 1 stated that "students should make necessary preparations for exams on time". In order to prevent cheating and plagiarism, instructors should not threaten the students with grades, should increase inspection in exams and make students like their course, according to the participants.

Questions	Behaviours	Frequency
Have you ever cheated in an	I Have Cheated	23
exam, used an already	I Have Not Cheated	7
existing homework from the	I Have Downloaded an Already Existing Homework from the Internet	4
internet or behaved in a similar way?	I Have Submitted a Revised Homework That Has Been Made Before	1
	The Fear of Receiving a Low Grade	8
	Taking the Easy Way Out	5
What are the reasons behind	Not Studying	5
cheating and plagiarism?	Rote Learning Based Education System	3
	Wrong Studying Methods	3
	Teachers Not Making Just and Equal Evaluation	2
	Teachers Threathening Students with Grades	2
	Laziness	2
	Teachers Should Not Threathen Students with Grades	4
	Inspection in Exams Should Be Strenghtened	4
	Teachers Should Get the Students to Like the Course	4
How can cheating and	Cheating Cannot Be Prevented	3
plagiarism be prevented?	Students Should Be Given Seminars to Prevent Cheating	3
	Teachers Should Renew Themselves and Not Ask the Same Questions	2
	Every Year	
	There Should Be More Different Types of Exams	2
	Punishment for Cheating Should Be Heavier	2
	Students Should Make Necessary Preparations for Exams on Time	1

Table 1: Statements Obtained from Qualitative Data and Their Frequency

3.2. Findings related to the quantitative data

Table 2 shows the arithmetic mean and standard deviation points of opinions related to sub dimensions of academic dishonesty tendencies of students that participated in the research. Average of points of opinions related to sub dimensions of academic dishonesty tendencies of students that participated are respectively; "reference dishonesty" (x=3.05±.752), "homework and project dishonesty" (x=2.95±.696), "tendency for cheating" (x=2.74±.976) and "research reporting dishonesty" (x=2.56±.863). It has been confirmed that reference dishonesty, homework project dishonesty and tendency for cheating are at medium level and research reporting dishonesty is at a lower level.

Table 2: Average mean and standard deviation points of opinions of the students related to sub dimensions of the scale

of the students related to sub d	imensions of u	he scale	
Dimensions	X	S	Point Line
Tendency for cheating	2.74	.976	3
Homework project dishonesty	2.95	.696	2
Research reporting dishonesty	2.56	.863	4
Reference dishonesty	3.05	.752	1

Mann-Whitney U Test results of students' opinions regarding the sub dimensions of their academic dishonesty tendencies are given in Table 3 according to their genders. A statistically significant difference between students' opinions according to their genders on the dimensions of Cheating (U=5390, p>.05), Homework project dishonesty (U=5652, p>.05), Research reporting dishonesty (U=5329.5, p>.05) and Reference dishonesty (U=4921.5, p>.05) was not detected.

Points for female and male students' opinions on the sub dimension of the scale regarding their academic dishonesty tendency evaluation are calculated as following; for "reference dishonesty" female (x= $3.01\pm$.663) dimension and male (x= $3.07\pm$,794), "homework project dishonesty" (Female x= $2.95\pm.604$, male x= $2.95\pm.741$), "cheating tendency" (Female x= $2.69\pm$.878, male x= $2.77\pm$ 1.025), "research reporting dishonesty" (Female x= $2.46\pm.809$, male x= $2.62\pm.888$).

Dimensions	Gender	Ν	Х	S	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	Р	Difference
Cheating and tendency	Female	72	2.69	.878	115.0	9090.0	5930.0	.753	-
	Male	148	2.77	1.02	117.9	18171.0	-		
Homework project dishonesty	Female	72	2.95	.604	114.1	8674.0	5652.0	.917	-
	Male	148	2.95	.741	113.1	16977.0	-		
Research reporting dishonesty	Female	72	2.46	.809	103.2	7847.5	4921.5	.217	-
	Male	148	2.62	.888	114.3	16462.5	-		
Reference dishonesty	Female	72	3.01	.663	109.5	8104.5	5329.5	.744	-
	Male	148	3.07	.794	112.4	16648.5	-		

Fable 3: Mann-Whitney U Test points and standart deviation values for students'
opinions regarding the sub dimensions of their academic dishonesty tendencies

N=220, P*<0.05

Table 4 shows the Kruskall-Wallis analysis results for academic dishonesty tendencies of students participated in the study according to their departments. According to student participants' departments with Kruskall Wallis analysis results performed between their Cheating tendency [X²(2)=1.08, p>.05], Homework project dishonesty $[X^{2}(2)=4.41, p>.05]$, Research reporting dishonesty $[X^{2}(2)=0.18, p>.05)$ and Reference dishonesty [X²(2)=2.35, p>.05] dimensions, a statistically significant difference was not detected.

Points regarding the opinions of students for the sub dimensions according to their departments are calculated as following; "cheating tendency" (Sports management Coaching x=2.64±.934, Teaching x=2.76±1.01), "homework project $x=2.82\pm.981$, (Sports management x=2.96±.730, Coaching x=2.85±.752, Teaching dishonesty" x=3.03±.615), "research reporting dishonesty" (Sports management x=2.57±.795, Coaching x=2.57±.929, Teaching x=2.56±.867), "reference dishonesty" (Sports management x=3.07±.710, Coaching x=2.95±.814, Teaching x=3.15±.703).

Table 4: Kruskall-Wallis test results and standard deviation values for academic
dishonesty tendencies of students according to their departments

Dimensions	Department	Ν	X/5	S	Mean Rank	df	X ²	Р	Difference
Cheating tendency	Sports Management	61	2.82	.981	121.6				
	Coaching	74	2.64	.934	110.2	2 1	.08	.582	-
	Teaching	85	2.76	1.01	117.3	-			
Homework project dishonesty	Sports Management	61	2.96	.730	113.6	24	4.41	.110	-
	Coaching	74	2.85	.752	101.2	-			
	Teaching	85	3.03	.615	122.7	-			
Research reporting dishonesty	Sports Management	61	2.57	.795	112.3	2 0	0.18	.914	-
	Coaching	74	2.57	.929	108.4	-			
	Teaching	85	2.56	.867	108.2	-			
Reference dishonesty	Sports Management	61	3.07	.710	112	2 2	2.35	.308	-
	Coaching	74	2.95	.814	101.5	-			
	Teaching	85	3.15	.703	116.6	-			

N=220, P*<0.05

Table 5 shows the Kruskall Wallis analysis results for academic dishonesty tendencies of students participated in the study according to their class years. According to student participants' current class years, a statistically significant difference between their Cheating tendency [X²(3)=.651, p>.05], Homework project dishonesty [X²(3)=.418, p>.05] was not detected.

A statistically significant difference was detected between the students' Research reporting dishonesty dimensions [X²(2)=0.38, p<.05] with Kruskall Wallis analysis results according to their class years. According to the Mann-Whitney test results performed in order to find the group that causes the difference, a statistically significant difference between 2^{nd} year students and 1^{st} , 3^{rd} , 4^{th} year students was detected. When the mean rank on these opinions are taken into consideration, it is seen that 1^{st} Year students (x=2.66), 3^{rd} Year students (x=2.67) and 4^{th} Year students (x=2.65) have more tendency on Research reporting dishonesty when compared to 2^{nd} Year students (x=2.31).

A statistically significant difference was detected between the students' Reference dishonesty dimensions $[X^2(2)=.009, p<.05]$ with Kruskall Wallis analysis results according to their class years. According to the Mann-Whitney test results performed in order to find the group that causes the difference, a statistically significant difference between 2nd year students and 3rd, 4th year students was detected. When the mean rank on these opinions are taken into consideration, it is seen that 3rd Year students (x=3.20) and 4th Year students (x=3.20) have more tendency on Reference dishonesty when compared to 2nd Year students (x=2.80).

Points regarding the opinions of students for the sub dimensions according to their class years are calculated as following "cheating tendency" (1st year x=2,73±,970, 2nd year x=2.63±.955, 3rd year x=2.84±.900, 4th year x=2.78± 1.05), "homework project dishonesty" (1st year x=2.99±.685, 2nd year x=2.85±.644, 3rd year x=3.00± .770, 4th year x=2.98±.717), "research reporting dishonesty" (1st year x=2.66±.963, 2nd year x=2.31±.809, 3rd year x=2.67±.854, 4th year x=2.65±.804), "reference dishonesty" dimension (1st year x=3.06±.828, 2nd year x=2.80±.690, 3rd year x=3.20±.683, 4th year x=3.20±.712). Although a significant difference was not detected between the opinions on cheating tendency according to class years, the cheating tendency seems to increase as class year increases (Table 5).

Dimensions	Class	Ν	Х	S	Mean Rank	SD	\mathbf{X}^2	Р	Difference	
Cheating tendency	1	53	2.73	.970	115.33	3	1.63	.651	-	
	2	58	2.63	.955	108.15	_				
	3	39	2.84	.900	123.31	_				
	4	70	2.78	1.05	120.58	_				
Homework project dishonesty	1	53	2.99	.685	114.16	3	2.83	.418	-	
	2	58	2.85	.644	101.78	_				
	3	39	3.00	.770	121.37	_				
	4	70	2.98	.717	117.33	_				
Research reporting tendency	1	53	2.66	.963	114.84	3	8.40	.038*	2<1,3,4	
	2	58	2.31	.809	89.65	_				
	3	39	2.67	.854	119.52	_				
	4	70	2.65	.804	117.94	_				
Reference tendency	1	53	3.06	.828	107.14	3	11.6	.009*	2<3,4	
	2	58	2.80	.690	89.80	_				
	3	39	3.20	.683	127.50	_				
	4	70	3.20	.712	122.60	_				

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N=220, P*<0.05

4. Results and Discussion

According to the results obtained in the study; it has been concluded that more than half of the students cheated. This result coincides with Bozdoğan and Öztürk's (2008), Eraslan's (2011) and Lin and Wen's (2007) results. It can be said that cheating is common among university students (Yeşilyaprak, 1996). In accordance with the results; students' reference dishonesty, homework project dishonesty and cheating tendency are at medium level, whereas their research reporting dishonesty is at a lower level. Similarly in Lin and Wen's study, academic dishonesty including cheating during exams, copying homework, plagiarism and document falsification is common.

A significant difference between students' opinions on their academic dishonesty tendency according to their departments of study was not detected. This result coincides with the results obtained from Gümüşgül et al.'s (2013) study. Gümüşgül et al. (2013) has detected that academic dishonesty tendency levels of college of physical education and sports students differ according to their departments.

A significant difference between students' opinions on their academic dishonesty tendency according to their genders was not detected. Similarly, there are studies that show there are no differences between students' academic dishonesty tendency opinions in terms of their genders (Whitley et al., 1999; Ünlü and Eroğlu, 2012; Dozier, 2014; Garcíaa and Herreraa, 2013; Hu and Lei, 2015). On the other hand, there are studies in the literature showing that male students cheat and plagiarise more than female students (Lin and Wen, 2007; Akdağ and Güneş, 2002; Selwyn, 2008).

It was detected in the study that first, third and fourth year students have more "research reporting dishonesty" tendency than second year students. Third and fourth year students have more "reference dishonesty" tendency than second year students. Although a statistically significant difference between opinions on "Cheating" tendency according to class years was not detected, it was concluded mathematically that as class year increases, cheating tendency increases accordingly. It can be said that as class year increases, reference dishonesty and cheating tendency increases with it in the study. Similarly in Gümüşgül et al.'s study (2013), it was seen that academic dishonesty tendency of students differ among college of physical education and sports students. In Akdağ and Güneş's study (2002), it was detected that cheating tendency decreases as class year increases, contrary to the study results.

According to student views, the main reasons behind cheating and plagiarism are the fear of receiving low grades, taking the easy way out and not studying, route based learning education system, wrong methods of studying and teachers not making just and equal assessments. There are studies showing similar results (Yazıcı et al.; 2011; Uzun et al., 2007; Bozdoğan and Öztürk, 2008). In order to prevent cheating and plagiarism which became the current issue in the education system, instructors must not threaten students with grades, inspection in exams must be strengthened and instructors must get the students to like their courses.

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