

PATTERNS AND PREDICTORS OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY IN ROMANIA AND MOLDOVA

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Abstract: More than 20 scholars from four countries have come together as a research team to study academic integrity in higher education. This presentation has four goals:

- To share results from two studies of more than 2400 university students in Romania and Moldova. These studies explored the patterns of plagiarism and cheating reported by these students, predictors of plagiarism and cheating, and reasons for engaging in plagiarism and cheating.
- To share current projects and future research plans for the group.
- To invite interested scholars to join our efforts.

Rationale: The Prime Minister of Romania relinquished his doctoral degree in December of 2014 amid accusations that he plagiarized substantial parts of his dissertation. The Prime Minister of Moldova resigned in the summer of 2015, amid reports that his high school and university diplomas were fraudulent. Both countries are members of the European Higher Education Area (Bologna Process), and Romania is also a member of the European Union. These memberships have put both countries under some pressure to reform their systems of higher education. Academic integrity is a part of these reform processes.

Method: Based on the content of 37 previous survey studies in other countries, we developed and validated a survey for university students that included three sections. One section solicited information about demographics characteristics of participants. A second section asked for participants experiences and attitudes regarding 22 academic behaviors that might be considered dishonest. The third section asked participants to rate the importance of 23 different possible reasons for engaging in these behaviors. Depending on the availability of appropriate technology and connectivity, surveys were either completed online or on paper by about 2400 university students in 11 universities in the two countries.

Results: Five interpretable factors accounted for about 55% of the variance in how often students engaged in the 22 behaviors. Three of these factors were identical when comparing the results from the two samples. These three factors were cheating on assignments, using unauthorized information on a test, and having the wrong person take a test. Behaviors that did not factor the same way in the two countries included plagiarism, not reporting the inappropriate behavior of others, using false data, making up false excuses to get extra time, and sabotaging the work of others. How acceptable students believed these behaviors were, and how often students saw other students engage in these behaviors independently explained significant variance in how often students engaged in these behaviors. The following predictors were not significantly related to how often students engaged in these behaviors: age, gender, institution, class, specialty, academic grades, and whether or not students are receiving scholarships, although these predictors have yielded significant results in other, smaller studies. We found no interpretable factors for students' ratings of the importance of the 23 reasons for engaging in these behaviors.

Conclusions: While more researchers have been raising concerns about academic integrity worldwide in recent years, this study addresses some concerns about the extant literature, including problems with representativeness of samples, and the comparability of results derived

from different instruments. These limitations point up the need for more multi-country studies, as well as meta-analyses. They also bring focus to the challenges of implementing interventions to reduce behaviors that conflict with academic integrity. In addition, this research is based on the work of a team of more than 20 scholars from four countries. We currently have two papers under review, and three others in development, along with plans for future projects. I will discuss the affordances and challenges of Getting Connected by creating, and coordinating a large international team of researchers.

Key words: cheating, plagiarism, Romania, Moldova, academic integrity, academic dishonesty

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