

PERCEPTIONS AND ILLUSIONS OF STUDENTS REGARDING PRESUMABLY UNDETECTED CHEATING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN GREECE

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KEY WORDS

academic integrity, Covid-19, exam cheating, contract cheating

The COVID-19 pandemic forced a violent readjustment of educational practice, with higher education institutions globally adopting a hybrid mode of education. Our case study focuses on Greece, as in this country, only a single institution among all Greek universities had been offering e-learning education programs in place prior to the advent of the pandemic.

This lack in infrastructure and experience on how to plan and implement assessment of students who followed online or hybrid courses led to egregious instances of breaches of academic integrity (Abukari, 2016). During all exam periods in 2020 and 2021, systematic attempts of students to cheat have been identified ranging from inventive ways to gain access to course content to posts in social media ads asking for private tutors who would be willing to impersonate students in the exams and take them in their stead. An attempt has been made to examine the extent and impact of such actions as well as to document student perceptions on issues of academic integrity and scientific/research ethics.

Literature suggests that student perceptions on what constitutes breaches of academic integrity may differ according to their educational background and progress in their studies (Amigud et al, 2019). Violations of academic integrity – i.e. students cheating on exams in the context of a sudden transition from live to remote education – constitute a grave issue

and reveal a failure on behalf of faculty to impart scientific principles to students (Stella-Maris et al, 2017).

Recent publications suggest that breaches of academic integrity have seen an increase in universities of both developed and developing countries – certainly a salient finding, as it highlights the causes which recently led to an increase in attempted exam cheating or contract cheating in technologically advanced countries like Greece (Ellis et al, 2018).

Given that in order to address any issue, one needs to fully comprehend its nature, the present study focuses on how a sample of Greek students interprets academic integrity. There are significant differences not only across disciplines and institutions, but also in the ways individual students and members of faculty understand and employ basic terms as well as in the actions they take towards preventive or corrective measures, or the excessive quotation of source texts. To this end, we designed an original questionnaire, taking into consideration the most common instances of academic integrity violations. The survey revealed a marked discrepancy on the one hand between expectations set by universities and faculty, and on the other hand the manner in which students perceive what constitutes proper academic conduct of their studies. Students' perceptions as well as their illusions are highlighted and discussed.

The topic examined in this context, although it focuses on findings from data analysis from a specific area, is actually relevant to academic settings in many other countries (Khomami, 2017; Marsh, 2017). The research presented focuses on the analysis of breaches of academic integrity during exams from the perspective of students. The main research objectives are listed below:

1. Collect data relevant to breaches of academic integrity in higher education in Greece during the pandemic period.
2. Identify possible factors motivating students to breach academic integrity.

3. Compare findings in relation to other similar surveys.

Our methodological approach is based on qualitative research (qualitative and non-numerical data) as well as quantitative research (quantitative or numerical data). Therefore for this study, the methodology chosen is that of the mixed method – we designed a survey that would collect data for both quantitative and qualitative study. The survey was conducted based on a questionnaire to make a systematic investigation of the characteristics, opinions and the relationship between the variables of the questionnaire. The sampling method chosen is group sampling, with a minimum of 120 students.

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