

CONTRACT CHEATING IN LITHUANIA

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Abstract

Contract Cheating in Lithuania (Vaškevičiūtė & Ozolinčiūtė, 2021), a study carried out by the Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures in Lithuania, revealed the number of advertisements of contract cheating services among most popular websites of free ads. The study aimed to find out to what extent and by what features the supply of contract cheating services existed in Lithuania. The survey made attempts to answer the following questions: What is the supply of contract cheating services? Is it possible to identify a certain “typical” communication about the suggested contract cheating services?

We selected four most popular Lithuanian websites where ads offering preparation of study works and consultations appeared. The period of which the ads were taken was from 2 August 2021 until 1 September 2021. Our sample consisted of 196 ads that the service suppliers posted within the period. After revising all the advertisements, using the quantitative content analysis we structured the information in categories, such as: declaration of the contract cheating services in the title of the ad, service type indicated in the advertisement, visual materials, visibility of the service provider, assurance of confidentiality, quality assurance, estimated length of the service, guarantee that the service will be performed on due time, contacts, several ways of communicating with service provider, price of service, field of studies.

When evaluating the number of ads in each website throughout the investigation period, we noticed that while approaching the study year (autumn semester starts from September on in Lithuania) the number of advertisements

tended to increase (in one of the cases almost doubled). Although a relatively small proportion of advertisements (one-fifth) already revealed the provision of contract cheating services in the title of the ad, advertisements which offer contract cheating services were present in two-thirds of all advertisements. Most of the ads were illustrated with some visuals, i. e. associative photographs showing pictures of successful higher education completion (e.g., a student dressed up with mantle holding a certificate in his/her hands). In many of the ads, service providers identified themselves with nicknames or used descriptive wording about the service. Then, more than half of the ads provided at least two possible ways to communicate with a service provider assuring high quality, extensive experience, professionalism, compliance of writing works with methodological requirements. Over a fifth of ads communicated about confidentiality. Most advertisements of contract cheating services were offered in various fields of studies. Almost a third of the ads did not refer to the field of studies at all, one quarter of advertisements were offered in the social sciences.

After the study, our Office initiated a meeting with representatives from the websites we used the ads for our study. The survey results were presented, and we further discussed possible actions to tackle the problem. Afterwards, some changes were introduced in each of the national website involved. Furthermore, we communicated the issue on contract cheating services in Lithuania to the online social media and social networking platform Facebook/Meta, and it has already given the first outcomes.

References

Vaškevičiūtė, S., & Ozolinčiūtė, E. (2021). *Nesavarankiško mokslo ir studijų darbų rengimo paslaugų pasiūla Lietuvoje,*

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