Section: Current topics in research ethics & academic integrity

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A scoping review of the topics, issues and needs in current academic integrity literature

Academic integrity is a field of study that has been evolving through the years. Research conducted on academic integrity includes aspects such as academic integrity policies, teaching academic integrity from pre-university to university levels, development of educational materials and publication ethics (Davis, 2022; Fudge et al., 2022; Glendinning, 2013; Johansen et al., 2022; Sefcik et al., 2020). Globally, there have been initiatives to uplift the concept and principles of academic integrity and to collaborate towards fostering a culture of integrity in educational and research settings. Such initiatives are visible through the establishment of international networks such as the European Network for Academic Integrity (ENAI) and the International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI), and research projects that have promoted discussions among experts, contributing to the development of resources (e.g. policies, educational

materials and guidelines) and building an understanding over the main issues within the academic integrity field (Bjelobaba et al., 2022; Davies, 2023; Johansen et al., 2022).

Academic misconduct has been identified as one of the key issues within the academic integrity field (Gallant & Rettinger, 2022; Hughes & Eaton, 2022). Academic misconduct includes actions associated with plagiarism, data manipulation, contract cheating, supervision issues and authorship abuse which may affect people who are seriously disadvantaged by the misconduct of others (Bretag, 2013; Gallant & Rettinger, 2022; Gunsalus, 1998; Hughes & Eaton, 2022). Current literature demonstrates some prevalence and experiences related to academic misconduct among students, researchers, and academics. Fanelli (2009), in his meta-analysis study, reported that nearly 2% of researchers admitted having falsified data, and 34% admitted having engaged in other questionable practices. Similarly, in their Dutch survey study targeting academics and researchers, Gopalakrishna et al. (2022) reported that 4% of participants admitted having engaged in data manipulation and over 50% admitted to at least one questionable practice. Among students, plagiarism seems to be one of the main concerns, with Bretag (2013) reporting plagiarism rates at undergraduate level ranging from 19% to 81%. Similar percentages are also reported at graduate and postgraduate levels (Gilmore et al., 2010).

The prevalence of academic misconduct and the recognition of the impacts such actions have on the quality of school education and the scientific outputs have led to initiatives at the European level and beyond to tackle them. An example of such an initiative is the Erasmus+ project FAITH (Facing Academic Integrity Threats; Project number: 2021-1-TR01-KA220-HED-000027559). The FAITH project recognises the need to support Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the establishment of minimum standards for academic integrity policies (Project Result 1) while helping academics and undergraduate students to prevent, deter and detect academic misconduct through evidence-based guidance and training materials (Project Result 2). Additionally, the FAITH project recognises that victims of academic misconduct (e.g. people who have seen their work plagiarised, whistleblowers who have been targeted for reporting misconduct, and people who were denied credit due to unfair practices for research they genuinely contributed to (Sivasubramaniam et al., 2021) may lack support from their institution to report and seek advice on the unethical behaviours of others. Having that

in mind, the project has implemented an online portal to support victims of academic misconduct, the Victim Support Portal (Project Result 3).

Focusing exclusively on Project Result 3 and to better understand the needs of victims of academic misconduct, we first started by mapping recent literature on academic integrity to comprehend the main topics and issues that are reported and identify the gaps. Here we present the findings of a scoping literature review we did to:

a) explore the main topics covered by the literature on academic integrity over the last ten years (2013-2022);
b) identify the type and prevalence of reported academic misconduct;
c) identify studies addressing victims of academic misconduct and supporting mechanisms available at the institutional level to support victims.

Development of our methodological framework started by conducting a literature search in the Scopus database, using our defined keywords (e.g. academic misconduct, questionable practices, whistleblower) and inclusion and exclusion criteria (i.e. type of publication, timeline (2013-2022), scientific field, etc.) to ensure only relevant studies were included in the analysis. Our search retrieved 185 studies that were tagged, based on variables such as publication details, topic, content, and methods.

Our findings suggest that publications on academic integrity issues are rising, despite some fluctuations, with publication numbers showing a general tendency to increase within the last ten years (2013-2022), with a dramatic proliferation from 2018 (n = 8) to 2021 (n = 29). Researchers have mainly utilised article publication (95.6%) as a method of dissemination, followed by book chapters (2.2%) and conference papers (2.2%). Among the most selected journals for article publications are the Journal of Academic Ethics (13%), Accountability in Research (10%), and Science and Engineering Ethics (8%). Regarding methods of inquiry, most studies used quantitative techniques (65.9%) for data collection and analysis over qualitative (21.6%) and mixed methods (12.4%). Finally, the thematic analysis revealed six main themes: **1)** academic integrity, **2)** academic integrity policy, **3)** academic misconduct, **4)** research integrity, **5)** research misconduct, and **6)** whistleblowing. We identified almost no studies on victims of academic misconduct and institutional support mechanisms for victims.

Our findings suggest that current studies focus mainly on academic integrity and perspectives and experiences on academic dishonesty. Literature focusing on victims of academic misconduct, institutional support mechanisms available for victims, and the role of whistleblowers are overlooked topics. Consequently, in this presentation, we will discuss the need for studies addressing victims of academic misconduct and effective support mechanisms for victims, the reasons for the scarcity of studies and how the research we are conducting on the FAITH project will raise awareness for the victims of academic misconduct. Policymakers, academics, researchers, and those interested in academic integrity issues, in general, will benefit from this presentation by engaging in a discussion about how institutions should act in supporting victims of academic misconduct and the role of the FAITH project in addressing this issue.

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