Review of: "Perceptions of Academic Dishonesty: Insights from the University of Tehran"

Henk Louw[1]

1 North West University South Africa

General comments:

The paper investigates a relevant problem. I do have a few questions about the research questions and questionnaire design, though. If these are addressed, I feel you could split this article into two and get more mileage from your work. The distinction between academic misconduct on the one hand (like fabricating and manipulating data at the PhD level) and plagiarism and ghostwriting (at the undergraduate level) can, for example, merit closer analysis of your data. In terms of the seriousness of offences, a first-year student submitting a ghostwritten paper for a minor assessment in a minor subject is quite far removed from a 6th-year doctoral student submitting falsified data that can get patients killed.

Consider a follow-up in which you break down some of the vague terms into specifics. What exactly do you see as "cheating" in an exam? This term could constitute any of a multitude of actions with vast differences in the level of seriousness of the offence. The term "academic dishonesty," as applied to professors, could likewise mean so many different things to different people that the results are (in my opinion) too vague to use. If one student sees strict marking as dishonesty from a professor, that is a far cry from a professor who falsified data or published plagiarized work. Likewise, the Turnitin white paper lists (I think) 10 types of plagiarism in order of gravity, and I find it irresponsible to group all of that together under just "plagiarism." Statistical analyses fall flat when the defining terms in the questionnaires are not clearly defined (and in some cases even explained with examples), so I'm still not sure what your students' perceptions are. I have not seen the full questionnaire, though. I would like to see the complete questionnaire as an addendum.

I found your literature section focused enough for the context in which the research is conducted, but would like to see it brought into the context of the global question, especially since you start off with the global picture – i.e., the prevalence of the internet. After your literature section, you jump straight into the method, but I'm left wondering what exactly the research questions are that you wish to answer. Could you crystallize them based on your background and literature so that there is a clearer match with the method?

As part of your background, could you please indicate what steps/training your institution makes available for educating students and staff about plagiarism identification and prevention, as this may influence your results? Or if you lack space for this, just indicate IF there is training at all.

I find it a bit of a vague, blanket statement that "the majority of universities take a middle stance which is more likely

inclined towards loosening monitoring and measures." I think the issue is much more nuanced than that. There are a lot of practical issues at play here, for example, the time constraints of reporting plagiarism. Plenty of research on the issue also indicates that students commit plagiarism for lack of skill rather than malicious intent, which complicates procedures. You do allude to it by quoting Hemati Alamdarloo, Shojaee, Salimi, & Arjmandi (2017).

Question: why do you claim that a strict approach can alienate students? I mean, if definitions are relatively clear (they are usually not) and teaching is aimed at clear outcomes, an approach needs to be strict; otherwise, quality and standards go out the window. You suggest it yourself on page 4. Please back this up with a few references. You may wish to refer to research on Academic Literacy or Language for Specific Purposes/Academic Purposes on this.

Question: what is a "super senior"?

Question: Why did you exclude students with a history of psychological disorders?

Question: I'm wondering why you left out the incomplete questionnaires. You sometimes learn a lot from the questions people decline to answer, and there are statistical methods that allow for the use of incomplete data.

Question: What is "article evolution"? Did you mean evaluation/assessment?

Demographics: balanced spread. Well done.

Editing and language: There are a few small language errors. Do a good proofreading.