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Opinions of Montenegrin University Students and Teachers about Plagiarism and its Prevention

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☞ This research paper aims to identify the opinions of university students and teachers about plagiarism and how to prevent it. We employed qualitative techniques, providing three case studies to participants and asking open-ended questions based on these cases. One hundred and forty-five people participated in this study, including bachelor, master, and doctoral students and university teachers. We performed a thematic analysis of the text received from the participants' responses. The results show that the participants were serious about plagiarism if academic stakeholders commit it; however, they expressed a lenient attitude toward ghostwriters. They also felt there was a need to provide training in academic writing for them to feel confident about their writing and not copy from others. Some awareness sessions on academic integrity should also be conducted.

Keywords: plagiarism detection, plagiarism punishment, student, university teacher

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Mnenja študentov in univerzitetnih učiteljev Univerze v Črni gori o plagiatorstvu in njegovem preprečevanju

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☞ Namen tega članka je ugotoviti mnenja univerzitetnih študentov in učiteljev o plagiatorstvu in njegovem preprečevanju. Uporabili smo kvalitativne tehnike, tako da smo udeležencem ponudili tri študije primerov in na njihovi podlagi postavili vprašanja odprtega tipa. V raziskavi je sodelovalo sto petinštirideset oseb, med njimi dodiplomski, magistrski in doktorski študentje ter univerzitetni učitelji. Izvedli smo tematsko analizo besedil, ki smo jih prejeli iz odgovorov udeležencev. Rezultati kažejo, da so udeleženci resno obravnavali plagiatorstvo, če so ga zagrešili akademski deležniki, vendar so izrazili prizanesljiv odnos do t. i. ghostwriterjev oziroma piscev, ki pišejo v imenu drugih. Menili so tudi, da je treba zagotoviti usposabljanje na področju akademskega pisanja, da bi se počutili samozavestno pri pisanju in da ne bi prepisovali od drugih. Izvesti bi bilo treba tudi nekaj srečanj za ozaveščanje o akademski integriteti.

Ključne besede: odkrivanje plagiatorstva, kaznovanje plagiatorstva, študent, univerzitetni učitelj

Introduction

Plagiarism has become one of the most dangerous threats to the quality of research and education across different regions and cultures (Glendinning, 2016b; Thomas, 2017; Vučković et al., 2020). In this paper, plagiarism is understood to be ‘presenting work/ideas taken from other sources without proper acknowledgment’ (Tauginienė et al., 2018, p. 35) or ‘presenting someone else’s words and/or ideas as your own without appropriate attribution’ (Ellis et al., 2018, p. 1). The description of Fishman (2009) is more accurate:

“Plagiarism occurs when someone uses words, ideas, or work products attributable to another identifiable person or source without attributing the work to the source from which it was obtained in a situation in which there is a legitimate expectation of original authorship in order to obtain some benefit, credit, or gain which need not be monetary.” (p. 5).

Therefore, plagiarism is breaking an academic community’s ethical rules that relate to authorship. It is a type of cheating because ideas, research results or other authors’ papers are presented as one’s own. Furthermore, Fishman’s (2009) definition includes a key motive for plagiarism, which is perceived as the intention that the one who plagiarises wants to obtain some benefit that might not necessarily be commercial.

Many individuals, groups, and even institutions are breaking academic rules, with modern technology, the internet, and social media ‘helping’ them to plagiarise and to create new forms of cheating (Lancaster, 2019; Tauginiene et al., 2018). Plagiarism has become one of the most serious moral problems in (higher) education and research. It has a very strong negative influence on the reputation of higher education institutions and on ‘the ethics that the student will bring into the business or medical or home improvement fields we depend on’ (Aaron & Roche, 2013, p. 162). Moreover, plagiarism is a moral issue and ‘therefore a highly emotional issue’ (McLeod, 1992, p. 7). Plagiarism is recognised by that wider public audience as a university’s inability to produce quality knowledge, both in education and research.

The objective of this article is to describe Montenegrin university students’ and teachers’ opinions on three cases of plagiarism given through case studies. We decided to use qualitative methodology to find out our respondents’ opinions about these situations. Our respondents (110 students and 35 university teachers) completed written questionnaires with long-form answers on the issues described in three case studies.

Theoretical Background

Identifying the Type of Plagiarism

Aiming at having international cooperation and easier and trustful mobility across universities, academics should agree upon the meaning of plagiarism, its' types, measures of acceptable text overlapping, and similar issues. In today's world of science, plagiarism is considered unethical behaviour, and it should be prevented and/or punished. In order to achieve this, it is important to recognise various forms where plagiarism occurs. Thus, various classifications or typologies of plagiarism exist.

Among taxonomies of cheating behaviour, Tauginienė et al. (2019) have identified 17 forms of plagiarism: find-replace plagiarism, image plagiarism, invalid source, patchwriting, self-plagiarism, slicing, translation plagiarism, verbatim plagiarism, clone plagiarism, citation amnesia, meat extenders, multimedia plagiarism, multiple submission, simultaneous submission, boilerplate plagiarism, code, and idea plagiarism. In addition, the authors state three outputs which represent the types of plagiarism, such as augmented publication, covert duplication, and redundant publication.

The names of certain forms clearly suggest the way in which plagiarism occurs. For instance, *slicing plagiarism* implies taking parts of other authors' texts and their 'distribution' throughout one's own paper. The term *meat extenders* relates to taking key parts of another author's text and their 'covering' or extending by means of one's own statements.

Essential differences among the mentioned forms of plagiarism exist. Some occur as a consequence of an unacceptable manner of academic writing (most of them are mentioned in the first group), while some appear to be a consequence of a bad intention to publish papers as soon as possible or to publish as many papers as possible (multiple and simultaneous submissions, as well as the three forms of outputs). Multiple form combinations appear frequently as well (Tauginienė et al., 2019), which makes it difficult to recognise plagiarism to a great extent. Some variants of plagiarism are visible without any deeper analysis (e.g., verbatim plagiarism), while some other types are not so obvious (e.g., patchwriting or mosaic plagiarism) (Tauginienė et al., 2019).

Belter and du Pre (2009) found that several forms are the most frequent plagiarism types (e.g., verbatim plagiarism and/or improper paraphrasing). Furthermore, they found forms that are questionable from the point of authorship, such as the submission of other authors' papers as original pieces of writing or different forms of unethical collaboration in paper writing (Belter & du Pre, 2009).

Plagiarism types were precisely described by those academics particularly oriented towards plagiarism and academic integrity research. However, there is no common understanding of plagiarism among European academic representatives, even those working in the same institution (Glendinning, 2016b). Moreover, there is no clear measure of the percentage of overlap text according to which we may evaluate the originality of a piece of text. In the existing literature, researchers found considerable differences in acceptable text matching (Ison, 2015) and types of plagiarism (Calvert Evering & Moorman, 2012).

One should bear in mind that plagiarism is not just students' unethical behaviour. There is a large amount of data that shows university teachers' and researchers' ethical misconduct in research publishing (Calvert Evering & Moorman, 2012). Furthermore, it is not uncommon for university teachers to publish their students' work as their own (Bartlett & Smallwood, 2004). From the point of view of some researchers (Calvert Evering & Moorman, 2012), that situation is more problematic because university teachers are role models for their students. If they behave unethically, it is a very clear sign to students of what they should do to become 'successful' during their university studies and beyond, that is, in their professional practice.

Often connected with plagiarism, the second severe form of academic fraud is contract cheating or ghostwriting (Sivasubramaniam et al., 2016). Glendinning (2016b) found that there was significant concern about ghost authorship in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland among her respondents in research encompassing universities from all the then-member countries of the European Union. The research showed very functional practices of ghost authors, who successfully use different channels, especially social networking, to find clients (Sivasubramaniam et al., 2016). The ghost authors confirmed that they work very fast; sometimes, they may finish a master's thesis in a single day (Shahghasemi & Akhavan, 2015).

Socio-cultural and historical context in plagiarism understanding

Plagiarism is socially and culturally constructed; therefore, it is difficult to develop a universal understanding of it even today (Calvert Evering & Moorman, 2012). It is well known that cultures shape individuals' behaviour, and some authors made a distinction between those cultures that are stricter in plagiarism punishment and the others that do not consider plagiarism as 'a big deal' (Brodowsky et al., 2019; Thomas, 2017).

Today, plagiarism is mostly considered unethical behaviour, but we should bear in mind that this was not always the case. It is precisely that fact

that may, at least in part, explain today's insufficiently harmonised opinions on plagiarism. Namely, throughout history, plagiarism was a sort of *mimesis* or imitation (Buerger, 2002; McLeod, 1992; Thurmond, 2010). Concepts of authorship appeared approximately at the same time when two other concepts appeared, that is, 'the romantic notion of the single, original author expressing his innermost feelings through art, and the capitalist notion of private property' (McLeod, 2010, p. 12). The first perception of plagiarism as unethical happened at the beginning of the 18th century when the first copyright law was adopted in England (Thurmond, 2010). This does not mean that plagiarism was widely accepted as unethical at that time, and writers continued to imitate others throughout the 18th century and beyond (Thurmond, 2010). The most important change happened when 'writing began its transformation from primarily a search for truth and beauty to an economic pursuit [...] the writer became the owner of the thing he created' (Thurmond, 2010, p. 12).

Even today, there is no common understanding of plagiarism and its nature. The idea of owning words and ideas is a Western idea and '[s]tudents from certain Middle Eastern, Asian, and African cultures are baffled by the notion that one can "own" ideas since their cultures regard words and ideas as the property of all rather than as individual property' (McLeod, 1992, p. 12). Western cultures are oriented towards individuals and their private ownership, while Eastern cultures are more collectivistic (Brodowsky et al., 2019). According to some authors, in post-communist countries, 'plagiarism is implicitly or even explicitly tolerated' (Bilic-Zulle et al., 2008, p. 140). One of the explanations obviously is a treatment of ownership; in post-communist societies, a vivid idea of collective property remains.

In contrast, we should bear in mind that strong acceptance of cultural causes as prerequisites for plagiarism occurrence could be seen as a stereotype towards the researchers from these societies, as Brodowsky et al. (2019) pointed out. It is clear that culture influences individuals, but it is also important to underline that there is no such culture in which all individuals are the same. The research community has found many plagiarism cases both in the West and in the East, and there is no clear evidence that some regions and cultures are more or less prone to plagiarism occurrence (Martin, 2011). Nevertheless, transition societies, such as Montenegro, are certainly more exposed to challenges and dilemmas related to this issue.

The Most Frequent Plagiarism Causes

There are many causes of plagiarism, and this type of misconduct 'arises from ignorance, opportunity, technology, ethical values, competition, and lack of clear rules and consequences' (Bilic-Zulle et al., 2008, p. 140). Modern technology is frequently 'accused' of fostering plagiarism, but some researchers claim that there is no significant difference in the occurrence of plagiarism before and after the introduction of the Internet (Ison, 2015). Nevertheless, the availability of other people's papers, which is made possible by the Internet, is a certain challenge for individuals and should be taken into account as a factor that can influence the appearance of plagiarism. This is especially important when facing the opportunities provided by artificial intelligence, which could fundamentally change learning at all levels, including universities (Kodelja, 2019).

Carnero et al. (2017) found several factors causing plagiarism, such as 1) lack of teaching/learning on research ethics and lack of writing skills, and consequently poor awareness of the plagiarism problem, and 2) tolerance towards plagiarism and lack of institutional policies, which could be attributed to corruption and specific cultural values. Indeed, students rarely have courses on academic writing and research ethics, which poses a serious problem for many, and they often use that fact to justify their cheating (Vučković et al., 2020). Furthermore, tolerating plagiarism during written assignments, for instance, conveys the message that copying is acceptable.

Comas-Forgas and Sureda-Negre (2010) suggested that there are three main domains that may explain plagiarism: 1) factors connected with students (e.g., poor time management or bad learning strategies, etc.), 2) factors derived from modern technologies (e.g., easy way to find sources and copy-paste text), and 3) factors connected with the university teacher and/or course (e.g. some teachers do not show too much interest in students' writing assignments, or their assignments are not relevant, e.g., too much high theory). Comas-Forgas and Sureda-Negre (2010) found that many factors concerning university teachers' roles enable plagiarism, for example, lack of teachers' coordination and giving too many and/or too complicated assignments, lack of skills in assignment creation, or lack of digital skills, among others. These factors could also be understood as determinants that should be addressed via appropriate university courses.

In one fictional case study, Calabrese and Roberts (2004) vividly explained how sometimes hard pressure by academic culture, with the primary motto of 'publish or perish', could negatively impact lecturers and researchers. In addition, researchers are not the only university members under pressure because students also frequently find themselves in this situation (East, 2010). Therefore,

‘even good people will make bad decisions when under stress or pressure, when they are tired, or when it benefits them just a little bit’ (Bertram Gallant, 2016, p. 24). For Bertram Gallant (2016), the necessity is to create an ethical culture, which could be achieved if we teach each academic member moral reasoning.

Plagiarism Prevention and Punishment

From university teachers’ point of view, it is better to prevent some ethical misconduct than to deal with them *post-festum*. Plagiarism prevention could be treated from the perspective of teaching that will encourage students’ academic writing skills (e.g., proper citation) and their ethical reasoning. Furthermore, plagiarism detection and punishment is quite a disturbing task for many university teachers. Davis (2011) stated that ‘[m]anaging student plagiarism can cause instructors to feel as if they are serving educational institutions in the role of investigator rather than educator’ (p. 160). The same opinion was voiced by Brabazon (2015), insisting that ‘we should prioritize prevention above all’ (p. 15). However, quite the opposite attitudes towards plagiarism detection also exist, and some researchers claim that it is a part of teachers’ regular job to check students’ papers for plagiarism (Rosenberg, 2011). In addition, both local and global social changes make teachers’ tasks more and more complicated (Gaber & Tašner, 2021), so continuing training is necessary.

Students plagiarise intentionally or unintentionally (Belter & du Pre, 2009; Uzun & Kilis, 2020). In some studies, it was found that unintentional plagiarism is more frequent (Glendinning, 2016b). Unintentional plagiarism is a result of the lack of knowledge and skills in academic writing, for example, a lack of skills to paraphrase and, in a broader sense, to use sources and literature. This type of plagiarism could be resolved relatively easily: universities should develop appropriate courses for students. There are many good practice examples of university courses given online in the form of academic writing practicums or in a broader content area, such as academic integrity courses (Belter & du Pre, 2009).

Many higher education institutions have developed standard roles and procedures connected to plagiarism prevention and appropriate sanctions for those who break the rules. They have developed honour codes, ethical codes, and other rules; many of them also use text-matching software (ETINED, 2018; Glendinning, 2016a, 2016b; Peković et al., 2021; Vučković et al., 2020). Plagiarism detection software is often very expensive, and, more importantly, it has not yet been adapted to be used for different languages and their scripts (Bilic-Zulle et al., 2008). Bilic-Zulle et al. (2008) questioned software matching tools

(plagiarism software) as a part of the control procedure in some elements; for example, the software is unable to recognise the matching of non-continuous text parts (e.g., tables, figures); these parts are often very important in presenting research results in many scientific fields. Furthermore, ‘Web-based services, such as Turnitin or EVE, would be inappropriate for checking essays written in a language other than English, especially those written in “small” languages, such as Croatian, due to the limited amount of source texts’ (Bilic-Zulle et al., 2008, p. 145). Moreover, some languages, such as Serbian or Montenegrin (which are also ‘small’ languages), use two alphabets (Cyrillic and Latin) that are considered equal in public use. These alphabets are convertible, and each text could be written in both of them with simple conversion letter by letter; this fact additionally complicates software checking. Writing in ‘small’ languages is further disturbed by translation possibilities: the software is unable to recognise translated pieces of text.

The above-mentioned interventions are important, but their influence is insufficient. A large amount of evidence indicates that these procedures do not function well in practice due to different contextual factors (ETINED, 2018; Glendinning, 2016a, 2016b).

Research Context

Montenegro is a country with one public and three private universities, with a total student population of approximately 23,000. More than 80% of this population is enrolled at the public university without scholarship fees for the bachelor’s and master’s levels. Problems of academic integrity came into focus through the joint project of the European Commission and the Council of Europe *Strengthening Academic Integrity and Combat Corruption in Higher Education* (Peković et al., 2021). Even before that, universities had ethical codes, and there were cases of their violation. However, academic integrity was not treated holistically as a topic for teaching, research and policy until the joint project (Peković et al., 2021). In 2018, The Council of Europe Platform ETINED published a report in which it was said that respondents from Montenegro did not consider academic integrity to be significantly threatened. The same report provides values for the dimensions of academic integrity (policies, sanctions, software, prevention, communication, knowledge, training, research, transparency) by country. On a scale of 0–4, no value for Montenegro reached a value of 2 (ETINED, 2018, p. 75).

One of the outputs of the mentioned joint project was the national Law on Academic Integrity, which was adopted in March 2019. Additionally,

a text-matching software, iThenticate, became a regular tool, and procedures were developed for checking masters' and doctoral theses and other publications that are part of the regular university publishing. Online courses were designed in 2019 for students, and these courses are obligatory for each student starting with the 2019/2020 enrolment year (Univerzitet Crne Gore, 2019b). These are the two courses, one of which deals with academic writing, while the other relates to terms which belong to academic integrity (What is academic integrity? What are the basic ethical principles in teaching and education? etc.). The effect of all these measures has not been entirely evaluated, given the relatively short period of time that has passed since the systematic activities in this field started. However, some development has been achieved in relation to the ETINED report (2018) because the University of Montenegro was certified for academic integrity by the *Institute of Research and Action on Fraud and Plagiarism in Academia* (IRAFPA), which means that the issue must be present in teaching, research, and university policies (Peković et al., 2021).

One of the first steps in improving academic integrity was made through the national research project entitled 'Strengthening Academic Integrity – An Interdisciplinary Research Approach to Ethical Behaviour in Higher Education' (SAI). The starting research point for empowerment was ETINED's report on academic integrity from 2018. The SAI project has several published research papers (Peković et al., 2021; Vučković et al., 2020) which described different issues on academic integrity in Montenegro and showed that, among others, training on academic integrity issues is necessary.

Method

Our aim in this research was to identify students' and teachers' opinions about plagiarism made by several actors (student, teacher, student + ghostwriter) with the purpose of creating (part of) a strategy to prevent plagiarism. The main research question was: Which measures do our respondents propose for plagiarism prevention and/or punishment? We opted for a qualitative methodology based on three case studies (Yin, 1994).

The Participants

The participants of the research were the students of bachelor, master's, and doctoral studies (N=110: 84 BA, 22 MA and 4 PhD) and university teachers (N=35). The greatest number of students are from the Faculty of Philosophy (56 BA, 12 MA and 2 PhD), then from the Faculty of Philology (23 BA, 5 MA,

2 PhD), from the Faculty of Science and Mathematics (17 BA, 2 MA) and from the Faculty of Electrical Engineering (15 BA, 3 MA). Eighteen university teachers are from the Faculty of Philosophy (2 full professors, 5 associate professors, 5 assistant professors, and 6 teaching assistants), 10 teachers from the Faculty of Philology (2 associate professors, 4 assistant professors, and 4 teaching assistants), 5 teachers from the Faculty of Science and Mathematics (2 associate professors, 1 assistant professor, 2 teaching assistants) and 2 teachers from the Faculty of Electrical Engineering (2 full professors). These are students and university teachers from different study programmes at the same university.

Research Design

An electronic questionnaire was sent to the participants' e-mail addresses, and only those respondents who wanted to participate in the research responded. The questionnaire was sent to the addresses of student representatives, who distributed it to student groups. It is not possible to determine the percentage of responses received in relation to the number of addresses to which the questionnaire was sent. After the respondents completed the questionnaires, we made a thematic content analysis of their long-form answers (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The posted questions were: What were the main reasons for unethical behaviour? Who is the most responsible for academic misconduct in this case? How to protect academia from plagiarism (Punishment and prevention measures)?

Instrument

The questionnaire consisted of three case studies and three questions about them. Case studies were written by the authors of this paper as complete cases, not just segments, and included in the questionnaire with three identical questions for each. Below, we describe the case studies to which the questionnaire was attached.

The first case study was developed around the following actions: 1) a very good student forgot the deadline for submission of his written assignment; 2) he asked his teacher for a deadline extension, but his teacher was not interested in listening; 3) the student decided to write his assignment using many internet sources (i.e., mosaic plagiarism); 4) the teacher gave the highest grade for this work because he did not check sources.

The second case study described the university teacher's ethical misconduct. The teacher published a monograph that was a compound of his students'

final written papers without proper acknowledgement. Several students found out about this, and they were strongly affected and disappointed. In the case study, they started to discuss the ways to regain their authorial rights.

In the third case study, the student cheated regarding her final thesis. She employed a ghost author and submitted the thesis to her supervisor. The teacher immediately recognised that the paper was plagiarised, but she did not know anything about ghostwriters. She decided not to do anything against this obvious plagiarism because the student told her she would get a job as soon as she finished her studies.

Data Processing

Braun and Clark (2006, p. 87) proposed six steps in thematic content analysis: 1) familiarising oneself with the data, 2) transcribing data, 3) reading the data, initial coding, searching for categories and themes, 4) reviewing themes, 5) defining themes, and 6) writing the report. Becoming familiar with the data was initially carried out and consisted of reviewing all questionnaires and recording their completion. Since we used questionnaires in the research and the respondents wrote their long-form answers, the transcription stage was omitted. After it was determined that all questionnaires were completed (respondents wrote longer answers to all questions), the researchers moved on to the third phase: reading the data, initial coding, and searching for categories and themes, which continued through new assessments (4th phase), until the final definition of topics (5th stage) (Braun & Clark, 2006). The final report (6th stage) was written as the final stage.

Coding involved identifying meaning units in written answers, and categorisation concerned linking codes into semantically close groups. Both processes included answers to the first and second questions (explanation of the reasons for plagiarism and, in this sense, determination of responsibility). The answers to the third question (prevention and punishment measures) were also compatible with such an analysis process. Therefore, three questions (which were identical for each case study) were directly related to each other, meaning that the responses to the first and second questions directly pointed to the response to the third question. This means that it was sufficient to determine the codes, categories, and topics according to the first two questions and then associate responses to the third question with them.

We found a total of 14 categories based on 84 codes. For example, codes such as *he didn't review the work*, *he shouldn't have communicated that way*, *he doesn't know the students*, *he doesn't care about the student's work*, etc., are

classified into the category of the teacher's lack of pedagogical competence. The categories are grouped into three topics.

Coding was done by one researcher (without using specific software because all the material obtained from the respondents was in the local language), after which another researcher applied the coding grid to the raw written material. After that, the kappa (AG k) coefficient was calculated, which is 0.83, which means that the reliability is satisfied (Krippendorff, 2004). The high value of the reliability coefficient was obtained thanks to the fact that the researchers participated evenly in all phases of the research.

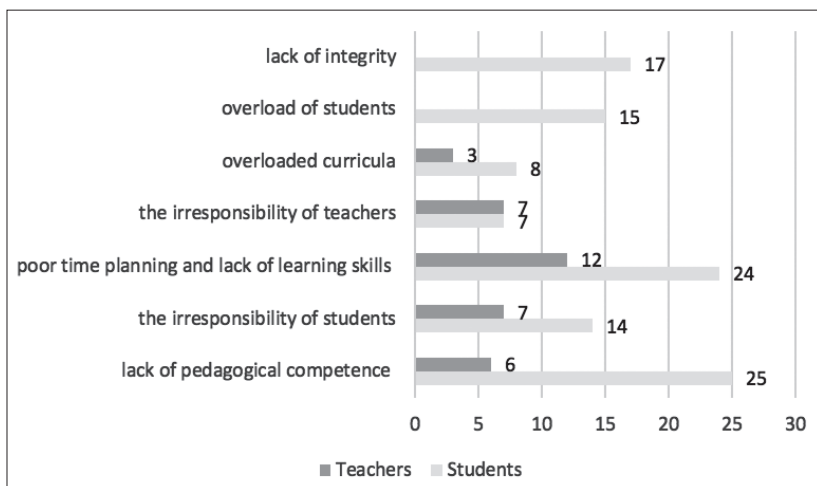
Results

Reasons for plagiarism according to case studies

The reasons for plagiarism in the first case study, in which a student plagiarised a seminar paper, have been categorised and presented in Figure 1. The frequencies of answers of students and teachers are in the same figure.

Figure 1

Student's plagiarism



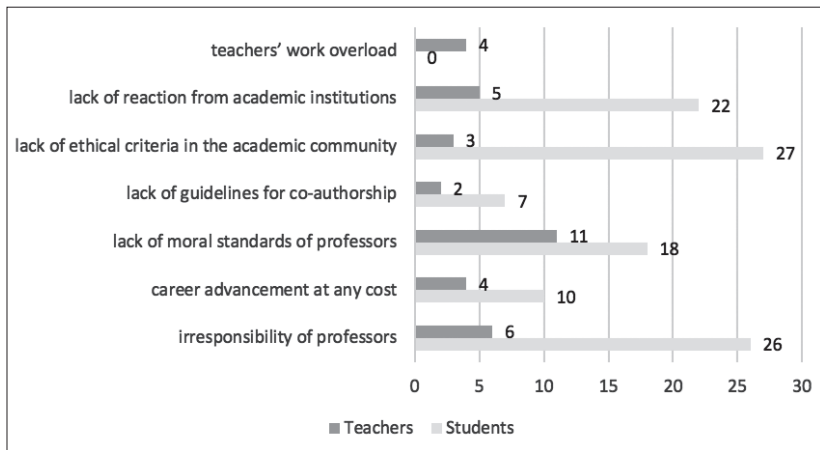
The results indicate that the students' answers are more diverse (a total of seven categories were found), while the teachers' answers are more homogeneous and are classified into five categories. The majority of students believe that the main reason for plagiarism in the first case study is the teacher's lack of pedagogical

competence, and the majority of teachers point to the students' poor planning of study time and lack of learning skills. The same category of poor time planning and insufficiently developed learning skills was recognised by a large number of students as important. The problem of lack of pedagogical competence of teachers was also observed by a sub-sample of teachers. In addition to those two leading categories, the respondents drew attention to several other important factors.

The reasons for plagiarism in the second case study are shown in Figure 2.

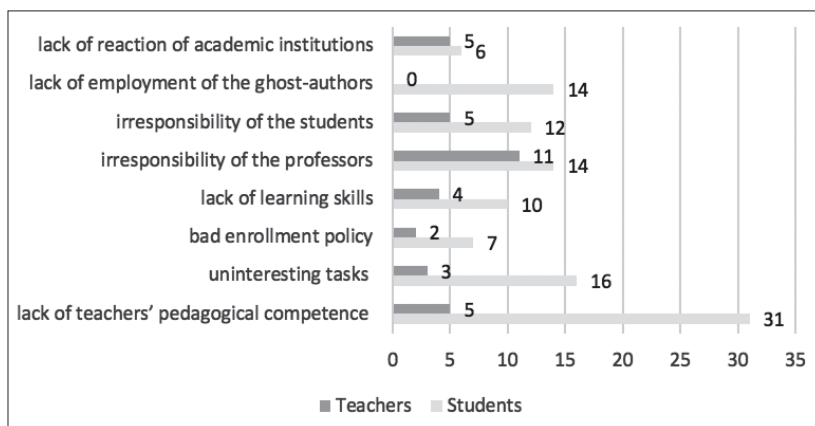
Figure 2

Teacher's plagiarism



In the second case study, students and teachers marked the causes of plagiarism in similar categories, with one more category that we identified in the university teachers' answers (teachers' work overload). The ranking of the categories by frequency in the subsamples is not the same. In the student subsample, the order of reasons by frequency is lack of ethical criteria in the academic community, irresponsibility of university teachers, lack of reaction from academic institutions, and lack of moral standards of university teachers. The order of categories in the subsample of teachers is lack of moral standards of university teachers, followed by irresponsibility, lack of institutional reaction, and teachers' work overload.

The third study included contract cheating, and in the very case of plagiarism, combined with the misdemeanour of purchasing work, including the roles of the student and ghost author, as well as the teacher, indirectly. The reasons for such a phenomenon are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3*Student's and ghost author's plagiarism*

The third case study resulted in the answers classified in the following order: the lack of teachers' pedagogical competence, uninteresting tasks, irresponsibility of the teachers, the lack of employment of ghost authors, and the lack of study skills. Though classification relies on the opinion of the students' respondents, the teachers shared rather the same opinion. However, the teachers did not identify any category by which the ghost author 'is justified' by the lack of employment.

Responsibilities of actors involved in the problem of plagiarism

In the previously offered description, it is evident that some reasons appeared to be related to each case study. Each of the stated reasons, as well as the explanation of the respondents, can almost unambiguously be recognised as part of the responsibility of:

1. university teachers and the academic community,
2. students or
3. wider social context.

Having this in mind, the researchers classified the respondents' answers according to three identified topics: the responsibilities of university teachers and the academic community, the responsibilities of students, and the responsibilities of society. These results are somewhat compatible with those from the research of Comas-Forgas and Sureda-Negre (2010) but exclude the factor of

modern technology, which our respondents did not mark as ‘responsible’ for plagiarism in any of the cases. This corresponds to the research carried out by Ison (2015).

Teachers’ and Universities’ Responsibilities

Lack of Pedagogical Competencies

Our respondents assign part of the responsibility to university teachers, and this applies not only to the situation in the second case study in which the teacher published students’ works without proper acknowledgement but also to each of the described situations. However, the university teacher’s behaviour in the first case study (student plagiarism) has been illustrated by the comments:

The teacher did not act adequately and wasn’t, as a pedagogue, at all aware of the qualities of the students standing in front of him; he was rigid in his reactions to someone who, after all, needed to learn more about academic behaviour from him. (UT)⁵

It is particularly troubling that he (the teacher) did not carefully review the work and thereby reacted to the student’s non-academic action. He could also use anti-plagiarism software. All participants should be punished. (UT)

There are clear suggestions about the lack of pedagogical competencies and demonstrated irresponsibility of university teachers, as confirmed by some other comments (Figure 1). These results agree with those obtained by the previous research (ETINED, 2018; Vučković et al., 2020). The quote, as well as other comments from this category, precisely describe the situation that occurred as a result of the university teacher’s inappropriate pedagogical reaction (codes such as: *does not know the students, does not react flexibly, does not provide adequate evaluation*).

Uninteresting Tasks and Overly Demanding Curriculum

Setting tasks for students could be done more skilfully (the following comment refers to case study 3):

The assignments we do are sometimes uninteresting – the topics are often similar. (S)

Uninteresting tasks, meaning tasks that do not motivate students to be more active, are a particular difficulty. Since setting tasks is part of the teacher’s

5 University teacher-respondent – sign UT, student-respondent – sign S.

pedagogical skill, strengthening this skill would prevent problems resulting from poorly chosen assignments, which is also the finding of other researchers (Comas-Forgas & Sureda-Negre, 2010). Some students' comments point to the overload of students:

I don't see what bothered him to postpone the deadline for handing in the work. Sometimes, we are absolutely overloaded, and no one wants to postpone a deadline. (S)

The comment also raises the issue of student overload and the curriculum being too demanding, which was identified in other research (East, 2010).

Overloading University Teachers

Respondents from both sub-samples especially point out that sometimes it happens that one of the teachers does not read the students' works, which is also part of the teacher's professional responsibility:

Some teachers don't care what we do at all. If they cared, they would give us good instructions. Maybe they are overloaded, too. (S)

If the teacher sometimes does not read the assignment in detail, I cannot deprive him of responsibility. However, I can say that university teachers are also overburdened with administration, but also with the large amount of papers they review. In addition, they all engage in scientific research. (UT)

With the introduction of the Bologna Declaration in Montenegro, the practice of written assignments increased significantly, so practically all subjects have two colloquiums in written form, and a significant number of them include a written final exam. In addition, the significant number of subjects involve the preparation of seminar papers, essays, and other written works, leaving university teachers in a situation in which they review large amounts of students' written assignments.

Lack of Ethical Criteria, Inconsistency of Response in the Academic Community

For the case study in which the university teacher accepted the candidate's plagiarised work (Case Study 3), respondents expressed negative judgements:

The teacher perceives the thesis too frivolously and turns a blind eye to the unfortunately frequent practice of buying papers. (UT)

In addition to the fact that they believe that such cases often happen in reality, students point to another phenomenon, which is the uneven attitude of university teachers towards student cheating.

With some university teachers, everyone copies, but some don't allow it and nobody thinks to copy. You never know what you will come across, or what is right. (S)

The lack of clear ethical criteria in the academic community and/or their absence or inconsistent application can be an indicator of an inconsistent system of values. This might as well be a signal of a missing ethical culture (Bertram Gallant, 2016). Such a problem affects individuals, be they teachers or students, and puts them in a position of uncertainty that can often lead to assessments that are not ethically acceptable. The personal integrity and possession of moral norms of an individual can be seriously threatened if the community does not have a coherent system of values, which initiates the need for academic discussions on various issues of ethical reasoning.

Lack of Guidelines on Co-authorship and Lack of Academic Integrity

The teacher who usurped students' original works (case study 2) caused negative reactions in both subsamples:

It is unbelievable – receiving titles and recognitions gained by one's work and effort. Unfortunately, it is not a rare occurrence. I'm in favour of punishment. (S)

Or: I know this happens, and it's terrible; I believe that earlier, before the modern possibilities for checking plagiarism, there were more events like this, although, of course, everything always depends on the person, and a teacher is only a person, a bad person = a bad teacher. This is where I see a problem – in institutions, in universities that do not take punitive measures against such persons. An additional problem is that we do not have clear rules on co-authorship, so it is possible to come across various 'combinations'. (UT)

Both comments point to the lack of moral integrity of the individual, while the second one points out the lack of reaction of the system. Universities should also have clear rules on co-authorship and apply them consistently, along with the mandatory use of anti-plagiarism software.

Two doctoral students were more moderate in their assessment of the case study because, in their opinion, the mentor is also the co-author of the paper. Admittedly, they also point out that the works should have been published

in co-authorship, and not as independent works:

I have two papers with my mentor; I am the first author. The mentor didn't write parts of the paper, but he gave me suggestions, remarks, and literature...and I think it's okay for him to be a co-author. (S)

Bad Selection of Candidates During Enrolment

Some respondents point to a poor selection of candidates during enrolment (case study 3):

Today, everyone is a student. Some have never studied but enrol in colleges and graduate. (S)

This is a common opinion among the Montenegrin public. Specifically, it is a fact that the number of students has increased since the beginning of this century, and universities generally do not have entrance exams, but enrolment is done by ranking according to high school performance.

Students' Responsibilities

The Lack of Learning and Time Management Skills

Some students' comments describe a perspective from which it is noticeable that there is a need for better organisation of learning. In addition to being burdened with numerous obligations, a possible lack of academic writing skills, as well as learning skills, appears as an additional problem:

Nobody taught me how to write academic texts. We need academic writing training. (S)

I admit that I have a problem with planning my studies. Sometimes, I leave everything for the last minute, and some tasks are unclear to me. (S)

Several students observed poor time management as the cause of unethical students' behaviour and proposed some kind of training to prevent cheating:

We haven't had good work habits since high school. A lot is learned in the campaign. (S)

The Lack of Students' Responsibility

According to our respondents, students also often exhibit irresponsible behaviour:

They have no responsibility towards the task and obligation. They did not develop responsibility when needed in primary and secondary school. (UT)

Similar attitudes were found in the students' comments:

And students often make mistakes – they think that university teachers will not review the work, and they wait from five to twelve to finish something. (S)

Like some other skills or habits that students should acquire before coming to university, the lack of responsibility is a problem that must be addressed at the level of the educational vertical.

Responsibilities of Persons outside the Academic Community

For the third case study, the respondents say that it sounds familiar to them, i.e., that at least once they were in a situation where one of their colleagues 'finished something' (exam, evaluation) quickly because 'something is waiting for him/her'. Tolerance for this phenomenon varies among the respondents:

Cheating is bad, but I think things like this happen. I am for punishment; there is no one else. (UT)

Or:

Of course, this happens, and of course, I am in favour of punishment or prevention. I think some people wait for a job for years, while those who don't have an *appropriate connection* have to wait for a job for years. (S)

The respondents are aware that plagiarism is not fair and that it implies benefits at the expense of the work of others. They indicate the wider social context in which plagiarism is acceptable:

The value system in society is being completely disrupted. Buying works is no longer a shame. (S)

The societies in transition inevitably go through fluctuations and instabilities in the value system (Bilić Zulle et al., 2008), so reforms that imply changes at all levels are necessary, and education must play a leading role in this.

It is interesting that the role of a ghostwriter is not much commented on in a negative light. The respondents did not seem to clearly identify their responsibility, mainly due to the fact that they are not seen as part of the academic community that should take responsibility. The respondent points out:

You can find them around every corner. The procedure looks like this: first, they take the money and then copy it from the Internet. That's how business is done today. They freely advertise their service, or they have been recommended by those who have already paid for some papers.

These advertisements have been available even to university teachers, and they do nothing about it. (S)

Several student respondents believe that the buying and selling of final works occur as a result of lack of employment – people become ghost authors because they cannot find a job (Figure no. 3).

Punishment Measures

Somewhat similar to respondents in the previous research (Vučković et al., 2020), those who participated in this study offered relatively compatible methodologies for solving the challenge called *plagiarism*, as all their answers could be classified into a total of four categories. The student respondents were rather lenient in the measures that should be taken against the student who plagiarised, so they suggest the following solutions: a new topic for the paper (41), cancellation of points (35), lowering the grade (30), and only four comments which highlight the ideas of being banned from taking exams in a defined exam period. However, university teachers' ideas could be classified into two categories: punishment (29) and improvement of the teacher's communication competencies (6). The punishments proposed by university teachers also vary in degree and intensity, from a repetition of the work to banning the exam and public reprimands. Those that could be characterised as stricter (in 19 comments) predominate, as they imply longer-term sanctions for the student. Interestingly, university teachers pointed out the importance of improving the communication skills of teachers, apparently sticking consistently to the reason for the lack of pedagogical competence of teachers. This was previously mentioned as important in understanding the plagiarism that occurred in both samples.

The second case study has shown a high homogeneity of comments and answers. The answers of students and university teachers could be classified into only two categories. In addition, punishments dominate in both subsamples (96 students and 31 teachers), followed by the category of strict control (14 students and 4 teachers). In contrast to the somewhat lenient attitude towards a student who plagiarised a seminar paper, both groups of respondents propose much harsher punishments in the case of the university teacher who plagiarised, up to the revocation of an academic title. The strict control of works with anti-plagiarism software is recommended as an obligation of the university.

The third case study was particularly complex, as it included three people who were involved in the case of plagiarism of the final thesis. The participants in the third case study also deserved punishment (student and mentor),

according to the majority of our student respondents (94). Other students believe that the paper should be written again with another mentor (16). It is indicative that the student respondents do not propose punishment by the academic community for the ghost author, but they blame him/her for a 'bad job' and call for responsibility towards the student who ordered the work (25 comments include ideas about the relationship between the student and the ghost author of the paper). These comments indicate that ghost authorship is not a priori treated as an unacceptable phenomenon, as it should be in accordance with the rules of academic integrity. The teacher-respondents would also punish the mentor and the student (29), and several of them would demand the same attitude toward the ghost author (6).

Discussion

The answers and comments of our respondents were clear and quite simple to code, categorise and thematise, which implies that they understand well and clearly describe the issue in question. University teachers and students from our research sample further provided fairly homogeneous responses (categories are similar) to the questions asked, which is encouraging, as it indicates their similar perception of plagiarism and its consequences. Both groups of respondents have a solid understanding of the causes and responsibilities of individuals in given cases of plagiarism. Such data agree with the previous research on academic integrity in the same social context (Vučković et al., 2020). This is a sign that the members of the academic community in Montenegro interpret the mentioned problems in a similar way and perceive the problem of plagiarism as unethical behaviour. It confirms the progress in treating the problem of academic integrity to a certain extent, compared to the period covered by the ETINED report (2018).

The reasons or causes of a phenomenon represent the foremost factor that should be acted upon in order to prevent it. Working on the causes that lead to plagiarism implies the introduction of preventive measures and appropriate procedures. The central question of our interest concerned the measures that should be taken in relation to the committed academic offence. Considering that the case studies involved different members of the academic community as violators of academic integrity, preventive measures imply activities towards different target groups. The main identified causes of plagiarism for which persons within the academic community are responsible are lack of pedagogical competence and responsibility, overly demanding curriculum and uninteresting tasks, overload of university teachers, lack of community and individual

ethical criteria, inconsistency of response in the academic community, lack of guidelines on co-authorship and lack of academic integrity, poor selection of candidates during enrolment, lack of learning skills and time management and irresponsibility of students. We classified all the mentioned factors into three groups of measures:

- 1) Improvement of teacher competences – improvement of pedagogical skills (in particular: work on design of tasks, responsibility for feedback, development of a curriculum that would more evenly and moderately burden students), improvement of responsibility and academic integrity of teachers. Activities focused on teacher competencies were also considered in the research carried out by Comas-Forgas and Sureda-Negre (2010), ETINED (2018), and Glendinning (2016a), among others. This problem clearly seems to correspond to the context of Montenegrin higher education, because the majority of teachers, excluding those who acquired teaching skills after their initial education, do not go through systematic training for the implementation of teaching (Vučković et al., 2023). In addition, the focus of the activities of university teachers in Montenegro has significantly shifted from teaching and working with students to research, as evidenced by *The criteria for academic and scientific promotion* (Univerzitet Crne Gore, 2019a). These criteria exclusively place the results of research work as the utmost condition for advancement to a higher academic position. Therefore, teaching is rather marginalised in the *Criteria* and apparently in practice as well.
- 2) Improvement of students' competencies – improvement of learning skills and time management, work on strengthening students' responsibility and their academic integrity, learning about moral reasoning and academic writing. Among other things, the studies by Belter, and du Pre (2009), Brabazon (2015), Comas-Forgas and Sureda-Negre (2010), Glendinning (2016a, 2016b) emphasise the improvement of students' skills. Our respondents from both groups recognised a significant portion of the causes for plagiarism, which has been strongly supported but the recent results of the matriculation exam where several hundred graduates were found to have cheated (<https://www.vijesti.me/vijesti/drustvo/660245>).
- 3) Strengthening of the attitude of the academic community towards plagiarism – improvement of ethical regulations and their consistent application (reaction in appropriate situations, adoption and observance of rules on co-authorship, application of anti-plagiarism software), more optimal workload of teachers and students (curriculum redesign),

improvement of enrolment policy. Essentially, all factors concerning the attitude of the academic community towards AI issues could be covered by the term *academic culture*, which is particularly directly discussed by the research of Bertram Gallant (2016), and which is indirectly supported by other studies, such as Bilic-Zulle et al. (2008).

Several causes for plagiarism which have been mentioned (lack of responsibility, lack of community and individual ethical criteria, inconsistency of response in the academic community) are directly related to the obviously inappropriate attitudes of the academic community. Such shortcomings must be systematically treated, and the beginning of training should also include pre-university levels. Namely, the issues of responsibility, ethical criteria and consistency in response have not been adequately resolved in the Montenegrin education system, which is further evidenced by the recent result of the matriculation exam.

Two categories of reasons for the appearance of plagiarism (potential lack of work for ghost authors and lack of a coherent system of values in society) remain outside the scope of universities and are a task that should be dealt with by the whole society.

Conclusions

The respondents, judging by the comments, understand the harmfulness of plagiarism and associate the offence with the ethos of the academic community. As expected, both groups of respondents attribute the greatest responsibility for cases of plagiarism to university teachers and universities. Then, the responsibility falls upon students, while the factors affecting the wider community come into third place in importance.

Respondents indicated the need to strengthen academic integrity through preventive measures, which comprise training for students and teachers, as well as the consistent and clear application of rules by the university. These aspects can be recognised as a part of the academic culture (Bertram Gallant, 2016). The topic of academic integrity and especially the prevention of plagiarism encouraged the respondents to announce proposals that predominantly focus on improving the teaching and learning process.

Specifically, the occasional lack of pedagogical competence of teachers, along with insufficient responsibility, as well as the lack of learning skills, academic writing, and irresponsibility of students, are said to be the important reasons that influence ethical misconduct in the academic community. This has

also been confirmed by the results of previous research (Glendinning, 2016b). Moreover, the respondents highlighted the need to redesign the curriculum, which often sets too high demands and can negatively affect the unnecessary increase in the workload of all participants in university teaching. If, in addition to these shortcomings, universities do not protect the academic space with rules that are consistently applied (use of software and application of ethical codes), then various cases of plagiarism may become a common occurrence.

Respondents wrote in more detail about preventive measures than about punishment, but the fact that their answers to the question about punishments include appropriate suggestions cannot be neglected. The most severe punishments were intended by both groups for university teachers first. Some more lenient measures were intended for students, and then the most lenient ones for the people outside the academic community. These measures vary in type and intensity, and respondents agree that they must be applied in order to protect academic integrity. Taking this into consideration, comments about prevention are more dominant than those about punishment in terms of content richness and volume. Thus, it could be said that our respondents prefer preventive measures over punitive ones.

The basic limitations of this research stem from the application of the qualitative methodology, so it is recommended that the next research task in the field of this topic be elaborated precisely by introducing a quantitative way of researching the problem. The main reason for using quantitative methodology lies in the fact that appropriate, representative samples and the use of inferential statistics offer the possibility of generalising the results. The generalised results can certainly have a stronger influence on the academic community to approach the improvement of academic integrity more diligently and with more activities, thereby directly improving the results of teaching and research.

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