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Academic dishonesty and its impact on virtual education: A view from the University Context

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Abstract---Academic dishonesty has been widely addressed in studies worldwide, highlighting the increase that this practice has had in regard to the educational context. The interest of the authors was to present a broader view of a real problem in higher education. The main objective of this research was to examine the incidence of academic dishonesty in virtual education from a perspective framed in the context of university education based on theoretical analysis and empirical investigation. The study was based on a predominantly qualitative mixed approach, where theoretical and empirical methods were applied, such as the analytical-synthetic in which theoretical references on the subject were analyzed, determining the main indicators that laid the conceptual bases of the investigation, the deductive -inductive that circumscribed the framework of the research and as an empirical instrument the survey with closed questions applied to 260 students of different academic levels from three universities in the coastal region of the country, which are: Santa Elena Peninsula State University, Salesian Polytechnic University of the Ecuador and the Technical University of Manabí. The results were obtained by quantifying the percentage of frequency in each of the response options for each question. According to the results obtained contrasted with the theory based on this research, it is concluded that the practice of academic dishonesty is a relevant activity that has an impact on virtual education.

Keywords---Academic dishonesty, virtual education, university context.

Introduction

Academic dishonesty has been widely addressed in studies worldwide, highlighting the increase that this practice has had regarding the educational context. The interest of the authors is to present a broader view of a real problem in higher education.

This situation has increased in recent years and with greater relevance in the current moments in which education is undergoing a transformation towards a hybrid modality, which the Academic Regime Regulations of the Council of Higher Education of Ecuador, CES, in its article 74th. (CES, 2020), describes as the one in which the components of teaching communication, practical learning and autonomous learning are developed for all hours or credits, through a combination of face-to-face, semi-face-to-face, online and/or distance processes; It is used for this physical and digital educational resource, interactive multimedia technology and virtual learning environment that organizes the interaction of the actors of the educational process, synchronously or asynchronously, through digital platforms (p. 33).

The hybrid modality in its development, with the recursive use of virtual tools, is causing teachers' control to be a little more limited; and on the other hand, the situation has led to students being more inclined to look for new applications, programs and pages in the vast world of technology and the Internet. With the spread of plagiarism, technology has given us access to hundreds of pages of all kinds of information. Some of them are copies of copies and do not have an exact indication of who wrote them. In this section, I love how easy it is to quickly find and get information. So who should put an end to plagiarism? (Camana F., 2019) Coinciding with Camana, access to hundreds of pages on the internet has triggered a series of psychological and social circumstances in students, such as ease, which constitutes a tempting aspect when executing a task. assigned and this adds to the lack of interest, lack of motivation, lack of time and disorientation, which intensify the seriousness of the topic presented in this research. As described (Atkins & Nelson, 2001); (Espinosa, Francisco & Moreno, 2016); (Perromat, 2021).

Although the problem is not new, the revolution that the Internet has caused in the way people find and access information has increased plagiarism in the educational sector. Students must complete and submit assignments, essays or problem solutions and all information with a single click.

As university professors and with years of experience in the interaction of the teaching-learning process, many actions referred to as academic dishonesty or also known as academic fraud have been evidenced, actions such as: Plagiarism of information, copying in exams, improper charging for works assigned as homework, bibliographic citations without declared author, among others. It could be thought that these actions are present in a higher percentage in secondary education, considering that students at these levels are still inexperienced young people, but the reality is that in the university context this problem is also evident at alarming levels, this situation in the The university context is contradictory since, as they express it (Medina & Verdejo, 2016), where

it is evident that higher education thrives in a culture of academic honesty. This lack of culture undermines the reputation of the university institution and the confidence in its graduates.

As representatives immersed in higher education, it is our duty to detect, combat and change this reality, fight to prevent the proliferation of these dishonest habits in students and promote the skills that will change this painful panorama in the reality of professional training of people. It must be taken as a start in taking measures to eradicate this bad habit that has become a frequent custom and that often goes unnoticed by the teacher, either for reasons of ignorance of the laws or simple laziness, we must have full knowledge and awareness of what Ecuadorian laws establish regarding this issue.

The Political Constitution of Ecuador, in Art. 351 (p. 142) highlights the principles under which the higher education system of our country will be governed, among which it indicates quality, relevance, comprehensiveness, self-determination to produce thought and knowledge (Ecuador, 2008). We emphasize the term integrity taken from the point of view of morality, probity, integrity, and that they constitute synonyms of what we are dealing with in this investigation.

Likewise, in the Organic Law of Higher Education, LOES, in its article 207 literal h, mentions committing fraud or academic dishonesty among the offenses that will be sanctioned to teachers, students and researchers (CES, 2010). Continuing in line with the regulations on the subject, we also refer to what is stated in Article 77, literal and referring to the technological infrastructure, where it states that Higher Education Institutions, HEIs, will guarantee informational protection in the computer platform, implementing mechanisms of control to combat fraud and academic dishonesty, for which they must incorporate controls into their computer platform to guarantee the originality of student work (CES, 2020).

This same regulation establishes exactly what for this Ecuadorian regulation is considered within the parameters of ethics and academic honesty, which for the purposes of this investigation is cited: The IES will issue policies of ethics and academic honesty without prejudice to the norms established for the purpose. Fraud or academic dishonesty is understood as any action that, in violation of the principle of academic transparency, violates copyright or fails to comply with the ethical standards established by the IES or by the professor, for the evaluation processes and/or the presentation of academic results. learning, research, or systematization. They configure behaviors of fraud or academic dishonesty, among others are the appropriation of ideas or information from peers within evaluation processes; use of information supports for the development of evaluation processes that have not been authorized by the teacher; reproduction in substance, through literal copying, paraphrasing or synthesis of intellectual or artistic creations, without observing copyright; agreement for the impersonation of identity or the performance of activities in evaluation processes, including titling work; unauthorized access to reagents and/or answers for evaluations.

As a specific reference to the topic discussed, what is stipulated in the General Regulations of the Organic Law of Intercultural Education is recorded (p. 62-64), where everything about academic dishonesty, its types, prohibitions, and

obligations and is expressed in a specific chapter. disciplinary educational actions related to training in academic honesty

Art. 223.- Academic dishonesty. It is considered academic dishonesty to present as one's own academic or intellectual products that were not the result of the effort of the student or any member of the educational community or incur in any action that grants an undeserved advantage in favor of one or more members of the educational community. in accordance with the provisions of these Regulations and the Institutional Coexistence Code.

Art. 225.- Prohibitions and obligations. Members of the educational community are expressly prohibited from committing any act of academic dishonesty, and the obligation to report in a timely manner any act of academic dishonesty of which they are aware. In case of violating these rules, they will be duly sanctioned in accordance with the provisions of these regulations and the specific regulations issued for this purpose by the Central Level of the National Educational Authority.

Art. 226.- Educational disciplinary actions related to training in academic honesty. Educational establishments must carry out academic activities aimed at training all students in academic honesty, to prevent and/or correct the commission of acts of academic dishonesty, in accordance with the regulations issued by the Central Level of the Educational Authority for this purpose. National. Students who commit acts of academic dishonesty will be subject to the disciplinary actions established in these Regulations and will also receive a grade of zero on the task or exam in which they committed the act of academic dishonesty. The Central Level of the National Educational Authority will issue a regulation that details the educational and disciplinary actions related to the training in academic honesty of students according to their educational level and sublevel. (Education, 2012).

Method

For the writing of this work, an intensive and detailed documentary analysis was carried out on the subject presented, which provided valuable theoretical information, an essential basis for the development and understanding of the object of investigation, in addition an exploratory questionnaire was designed (survey) based on the one used in the author's research work (Diez, 2015), the same one that was applied by the authors to groups of students considered as the random sample of this research, said sample was taken from three universities in the country: Universidad Técnica de Manabí, Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena y Universidad Politécnica Salesiana del Ecuador.

This work gives an account of the results obtained with students from public higher education institutions on the Ecuadorian coast, the subjects who participated formed a random sample of 285 students, since it included all the students to whom the questionnaire applies taught classes, allowing classify this research as exploratory and descriptive. The survey contained 12 multiple-choice questions about academic dishonesty practices in students and professors. The topics of the survey were mainly: cheating in exams and plagiarism of material

from the Internet; This survey was conducted anonymously to ensure the reliability of the responses.

Discussion

Article 224 of the organic law of intercultural education Chapter VII, raises the types of academic dishonesty the types of academic dishonesty, where this includes acts of plagiarism, cheating, or fraud in the academic field, either with work done in the educational institution as those carried out outside it, these acts are of type I and II and III as shown in figure 1 (Ministry of Education, 2015).

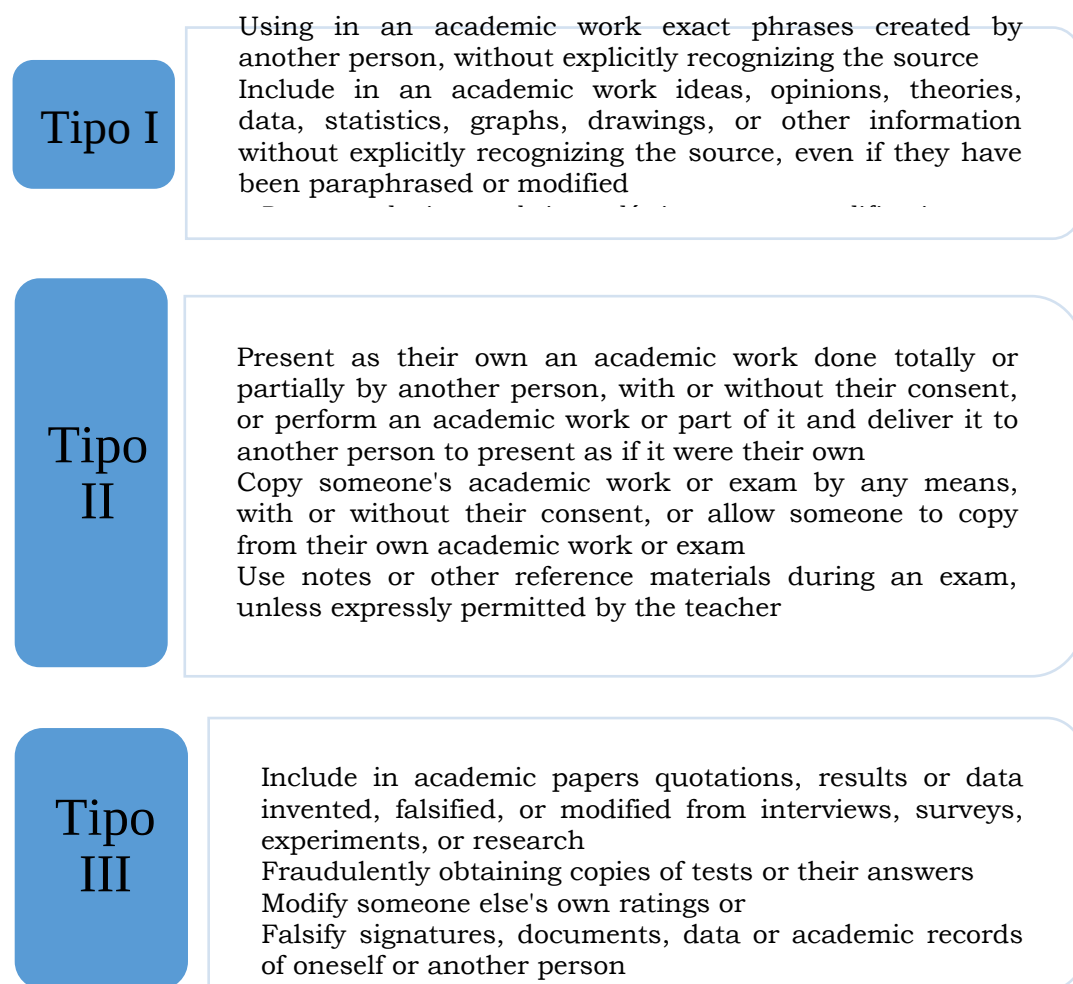


Figure 1. Types of academic dishonesty
Source: (Ministry of Education, 2015)

In the regulations of Ecuador, it has been noted that fraud is a problem that is clear in the normative process of education, where it is more typified in its articles, which leads us to carry out an analysis of why it continues in practice. of this activity that is evident in all areas of educational work. The theme has connotations in the educational process in virtuality and that have been explored in different conceptions by various authors, from the different forms of terminology used to refer to them to the causes that could affect their use.

In the study carried out by Violeta Cebrián Robles, Manuela Raposo-Rivas, Manuel Cebrián de la Cerna and José Antonio Sarmiento Campos, in their work Perception on the academic plagiarism of Spanish university students, they concluded that despite the fact that students know what plagiarism is plagiarism and its consequences, the fact of plagiarism itself is justified by at least three types of interrelated causes, they classify three types: internal (specific to the subject, with an internal locus), external (outside the subject, with a external locus) and disinterest. How each of these causes devised by them is related to plagiarism or dishonesty is different, being the one that predominates mainly where the student tries that the plagiarism committed is partial, especially in those cases in which the motivation to commit it derives from causes internal problems related to lack of subject matter and task expertise. (Cebrian-Robles, Raposo-Rivas, Cebrián de la Serna, & Sarmiento-Campos, 2018)

A similar concept highlights the criterion of (Morey, Sureda, Oliver & Comas, 2013), which has argued that students perceive that they have worse skills and academic results and who do not feel a positive link with the studies and the school or institute, in this case they present a higher probability of incurring in dishonest acts, and in this sense the students must be prepared the conditions to live their academic performance, not as a slab and stigma but as a value, emphasizing the learning process and individual effort, while fostering the channels and stimuli of linkage between the student and the educational center and the teachers are, all of them, important steps in favor of the promotion of academic honesty in secondary education

It is also necessary to glimpse the issue of academic dishonesty from the point of view of the institution, because although it is true or honesty is a value that is instilled from within the family, it is also true that a comprehensive education entails tending to transmit this type of action through example and the detection and subsequent amendment of these attitudes that harm not only the student in their training as a professional and future contribution to society, but also to the institution that trains them.

Taking into consideration the maelstrom of information available in cyberspace and taking into account the current circumstances caused by the health emergency, due to the global pandemic due to the Covid-19 virus, it is experienced that dishonest behavior in students has multiplied an alarming way, becoming a common practice in students when presenting homework, taking exams, and this under the tutorship of the teacher, who, taking virtuality as an excuse, does not consider the possibility of putting a stop to the students under his responsibility, which corresponds to what is valued by (Tello, & Gallent, 2021).

So that students do not start these dishonest practices in their first year of degree, that they do not adopt an already inherited attitude, encouraged by a lack of training on the correct management of information, work must be done so that teaching reaches its objectives and that he conscientiously fulfills his academic tasks. This meaning has also been considered by authors such as (Medina & Verdejo, 2019) who propose the relevance of investigating academic dishonesty lies, on the one hand, in investigating the frequency with which the associated behaviors occur and the reasons that cause it; in order to minimize friction with academic values and the subsequent deterioration of the prestige, trust and image of educational institutions in society.

It is also stated that honesty is the key to success in life, since it will determine the correct path on which students should walk. However, it is the decision of each one to follow this path or turn his back on it. The educational mission of universities is based on the belief that academic integrity represents a value. The commitment to academic integrity also generates tangible benefits such as the credibility and prestige of the students, professors, researchers, creators and administrators of an institution and of the academic degrees it confers. (Rodriguez, Chuc Couoh, & Uitzil Uuh, 2012).

The results were obtained and quantified considering the percentage of frequency in each of the response options for each question. Next, the figures obtained from the results evaluated in a research process are presented. Due to the limited length of this text, only some results considered relevant, and indicators of the problem are shown. Figure 1 shows responses related to the exchange of information with other students.

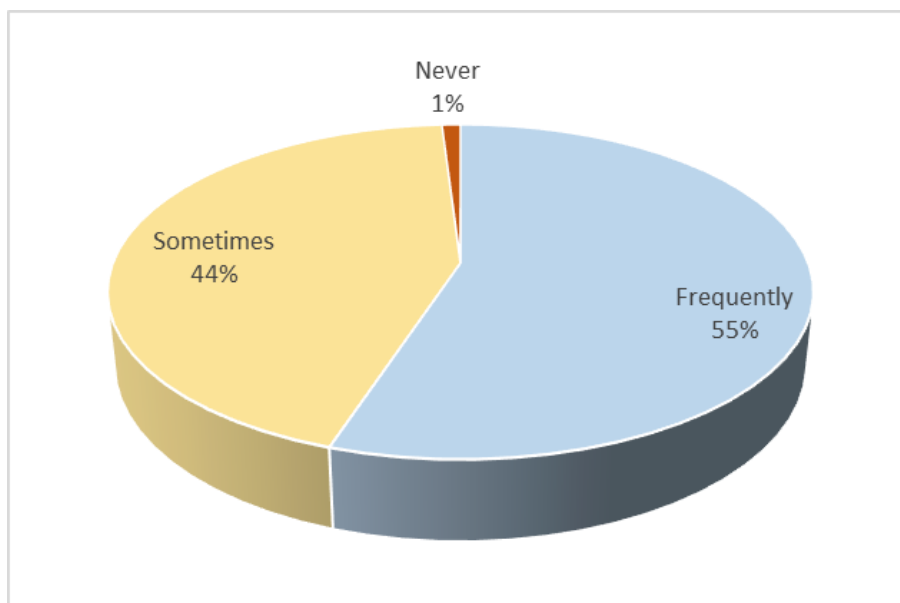


Figure 1. Answers are provided to other classmates

Here the answers appear sometimes and frequently, demonstrating that academic fraud exists on many occasions.

In figure 2, related to the copying of internet material presented as their own

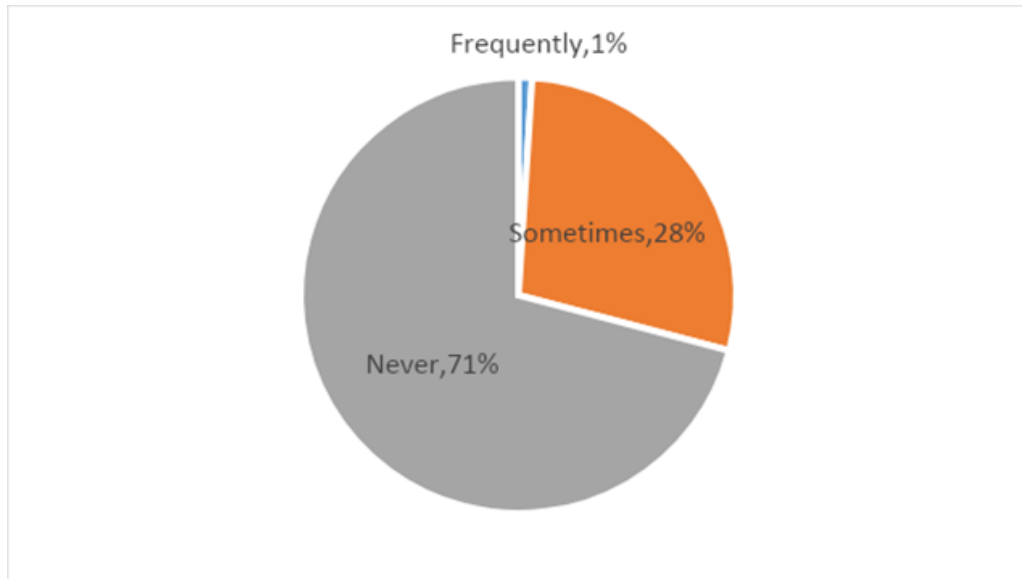


Figure 2. Internet material copied as one's own

As can be seen in the following indicators, the responses to "Sometimes" in significant percentages: Providing answers to another classmate during an exam, 42.1%. Exchange jobs online, 24.6%. Copy fragments of printed sources (books, newspapers, magazine articles, etc.) and have used them without citing to write their own academic works, 33.7%. Knowing people who are dedicated to carrying out tasks or jobs and who are paid to do so, 32%. If the previous answer was affirmative, in an approximation of how many people you know, from 1 to 3 people 88.6%.

It was noted that the words were repeated a few times, demonstrating academic dishonesty in the students of the population studied. In the other questions consulted, the students were able to answer that if they made plagiarism errors with their groupmates, copy from books if they cited or evidenced the authors. What was represented in figures 1 and 2 were clear examples that support the investigation corresponding to as referred by (Gallent & Tello, 2017), the greater the feeling of distance, the more plagiarism is produced.

The stress caused by the current health situation plus other factors such as the distance from face-to-face classrooms, the accumulation of online tasks, distraction at home, poor understanding during asynchronous classes, economic problems, among others, have caused an increase in these dishonest practices in university students, finding in them an immediate solution to their academic requirements.

One of the factors to combat corruption from education itself, it is essential to provide values in the teaching process, rules that can be guided by parents and educators such as habits, customs, in their daily program, in this context the

students can guide their actions based on what they judge to be correct or incorrect actions; In addition, institutional conditions can be developed that promote values to students where honesty must be the element that decides the educational process, thereby allowing citizens capable of facing problems and providing adequate solutions to be incorporated into society without the need to implement dishonest actions that involves them breaking with the ethics and values taught in the social process (Martínez, 2015).

Conclusion

The data presented show a normal problem among young university students, and support the importance of continuing to investigate this type of situation present not only at the higher level but also at other levels of education, in addition, to continue guiding teachers and students about these dishonest practices that end with the objective of education, which is to provide a quality education where individuals are capable of contributing to society, not only in knowledge but also in value and economic contributions.

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