DMU

Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies 7 (2022)

Journal homepage: www.jims.dmu.edu.et

DMU-JIDS

Volume 7(1), Jun 2022

Academic Dishonesty in MA in TEFL Students' Term Papers: Prevalence, Forms, and Causes

Mekonnen Esubalew Tariku[1], Yigzaw Kerebih Belete[1]

[1]Department of English Language and Literature, Debre Markos University, Debre Markos, Ethiopia

Corresponding author email address:-

Abstract

This research was done to address the problems of academic dishonesty at a university in Ethiopia. It focused on the prevalence rate, forms and causes of academic dishonesty in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) MA students' term papers. It was descriptive research. The subjects of the study were MA in TEFL students and their course instructors. Hence, 5 instructors and 45 students were sampled comprehensively. The data collection tools were questionnaires for both students and course instructors. Focus group discussions with students were also used. The quantitative data were analyzed using frequency count and percentage, whereas the qualitative ones were analyzed via quote and thematic analysis. The findings showed that the prevalence rate was extensive. The study also revealed that copying a whole paper and paraphrasing were practiced rarely. Taking short ideas directly from a source was committed sometimes. Copying long ideas with (out) small changes, asking relatives to write for them, and fabrications were used often. The study also showed that such academic breaches were associated with personal, instructor, and situation-related reasons, not with demographic data and perception. Hence, it can be concluded that high rate of mixed forms of academic dishonesty were practiced for various reasons.

Keywords: academic dishonesty, academic ethics, plagiarism, term paper, academic integrity

[1] Corresponding Author,
mekonnen_esubalew@dmu.edu.et; https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4161-0844

1. Introduction

The master's degree program for teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) at Debre Markos University, Ethiopia, delivers three research courses (academic communication, research methods and graduate seminar). These courses teach about citation systems. They aim to enable students to present their academic tasks ethically and scientifically.

However, the researchers' experiences were to the reverse. Students in the program were unable to present their term papers orally; they directly read from papers. They also fail to answer questions raised during discussions. They also copied from blogs leaving the references suggested. Again, students from different sections were caught with similar copies. They also presented term papers with mixed citation systems. These problems posed questions in the researchers' minds that students even at the master's degree level were against their course objectives.

Regarding such academic dishonesty, Lambert and Hogan (2004) conducted a study on the status of academic dishonesty in the USA higher institutions. The result showed that academic dishonesty is severe in higher institutions. This, in turn, affects students who are honest and who have good academic performances. Besides, Park (2003) found that 63% to 87% of university students in different disciplines participate in cheating. Park also found that this behavior was transferred to their workplace. Again, McCabe et al. (2001) found that university students in 2001 were 13 times more likely to engage in academic dishonesty than those before the 1980s. Whiteley et al. (1999) also found that 75% of university students in the world commit one or more forms of cheating. Graves and Austin (2008) also state that the amount of cheating has increased threefold. This increment of academic dishonesty makes gifted students engage in academically dishonest behaviors (Abilock 2009).

Studies in the Ethiopian context also showed that students in each grade level particularly adolescents engage in academic dishonesty. Bachore (2016) studied the nature, causes, and practices of academic dishonesty by undergraduate students at Hawasa University. He found that the issue was prevalent at the university. The causes and forms identified were varied. Tadesse and Getachew (2010) also researched 1050 Addis Ababa and Jimma University undergraduate students. The findings showed that the prevalence of academic dishonesty was high among university

students. According to their study, while 96.4% of the respondents admitted they engaged in assignment-related dishonesty, 82.1% and 82% of the respondents reported they committed essay and exam-related dishonesty respectively. Furthermore, Nelson et al. (2012) explained based on their investigation of the effects of cheating at Haramaya University that students cheated during examinations using different techniques. Similarly, Mekuria et al. (2020) conducted a study on different issues of academic dishonesty by undergraduate students of Debre Markos University. The result showed that the majority of Debre Markos University students had a good awareness of cheating and its consequences, but the majority of them engaged in academic dishonesty using different techniques.

So, academic dishonesty is a nagging problem against academic integrity at higher institutions. For a variety of reasons, adolescent learners usually prefer academic dishonesty to academic integrity even if school counselors, administrators, and teachers play an important role in helping students achieve academic integrity (Abilock, 2009). Abilock reported that students could not stop committing academic dishonesty although they are expected to adhere to the ethical and professional standards associated with their courses.

Although different researchers identified the reasons for academic cheating and suggested different solutions to minimize it, the issue of academic dishonesty is still unresolved. What makes most researchers wonder is that academic cheating has recently become a socially accepted behavior. Rabi et al. (2006) found that students feel nothing when they are caught by their teachers or peers. Professors have also faced a great problem in differentiating original works from plagiarized ones in academic writing, and they are incapable of identifying where a student takes a particular sentence or the entire text from.

Besides, academic dishonesty can be perceived differently in different contexts and education levels. The results of different studies also vary from country/institution to country/institution. These situations make academic dishonesty a recurrent issue of research in academia and publications (Stapleton, 2012). Thus, the cheating trend in the research site/university at the MA level, the threat in worldwide higher institutions and the severe effects on students' academic competency initiated the researchers to conduct the study. So, the

research tried to investigate the following questions:

- To what extent did postgraduate TEFL students engage in term paper-based academic dishonesty?
- Which types of academic dishonesty were practiced by postgraduate TEFL students?
- What were the causes of academic dishonesty?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Forms of Academic Dishonesty

Different scholars have tried to identify the formsof academic dishonesty. The first is whole-paper plagiarism (Clinciu et al. 2021). This type happens when cheaters take the whole paper from a printed or an online source without reference.

The other type of academic dishonesty is *cut-and-paste plagiarismwithout reference* (Davis, 2000). In this case, cheaters take different ideas from different writers without acknowledgment. That is, they write the ideas as their own.

There is also cut-and-paste plagiarism with references (Farha et al., 2020). This happens with short and long quotations. If direct short quotations are not separated with inverted commas from the rest part, they look like citations paraphrased. Similarly, direct long quotations need to be cited in line with a citation style. Otherwise, they become cut-and-paste plagiarism forms.

On the other hand, ideas can be paraphrased from other writers' work. If these ideas are not acknowledged, that is another form of plagiarism. This is called *paraphrased without reference* (Jocoy and DiBiase, 2006).

Lastly, students writing term papers would also like to pad the bibliography with sources not referred to. Even they may use false data. This form of academic theft is *fabrication/falsifying bibliography/data* (Brown, 2002).

2.2 Causes of Academic Dishonesty

The causes of academic dishonesty are varied. Researchers reported that demographic-related, instructor-related, situation-related, and perception-related factors are among the potential causes. Postgraduate TEFL students can be tempted by one or a combination of these causes. To investigate the cases with the target groups, analyzing how these factors contribute to cheating is necessary. So, the ways each category leads to dishonest actsare discussed under the next sub-headings.

2.2.1 Demographic-related Factors

Previous studies have identified different demographic factors causing academic dishonesty. One of these factors is *age*.

According to the findings, younger students engage in dishonest acts more than older ones (Wideman, 2008). Ercegovac and Jr (2004) specifically found that students younger than 24 are more cheaters. These findings may indicate that age may not be a serious problem with postgraduate students who are older than 24.

A related factor is students' *grade levels*. Students with lower grades are expected to cheat more. In other words, as their grade level increases, their engagement with their academic dishonesty decreases. For example, Wideman (2008) indicated that grade level and academic dishonesty are inversely related.

Likewise, students with a*low-grade point average* (GPA) tend to be more cheaters than others (Ives and Giukin, 2019). This may be due to the fear of academic dismissal. In this case, cheating may serve as a means of survival.

The other determinant is *gender*. However, the relationship between these variables seems inconclusive. On one hand, it was found that males cheat more than females (Wideman, 2008). On the other hand, Chala (2021) reported that there was no difference between females' and males' academic dishonesty prevalence rates. So the correlation between genderand academic theft is inconsistent.

Marital status is also a cause. Unmarried persons were found more cheaters (Pulvers and Diekhoft, 1999). The reason may be that such people have developed a sense of being less responsible for whatever occasion. If they are careless, they may not worry about anyone or any copyright. McCabe et al. (2001) also note that lack of responsibility contributes to academic dishonesty.

Financial dependency is also likely to make students academically dishonest (Pulvers and Diekhoff, 1999). That is, original academic writing needs financial investment in printing and copying related resources. But a student who has run short of money will look for another option that saves money. This option can be printing limited sources and submitting them as one's own.

2.2.2 Personal Reasons

Language gaps can make students dishonest in academic writing. Wideman (2008) indicates that this problem has a positive correlation with academic dishonesty. Indeed, limited lexical and grammatical knowledge may contribute to the failure to comprehend related literature. It can also affect students' writing performance negatively. That is, without adequate

vocabulary and grammar, it is difficult to produce even a sentence. So, students with such language difficulty will fail to produce original academic work.

Competition for getting better grades is also believed to lead to academic dishonesty (Clinciu et al., 2021). Such competition-based plagiarism may be linked to future job opportunities (Wideman, 20008). Graduates with better GPAs are likely to get jobs easily while the rest will remain unemployed. As a result, even parents, close relatives or friends maystir students to score high (Taylor et al., 2002). When these students fail to achieve this desire through their efforts, they may become stressed and commit academic dishonesty.

Laziness can also contribute to academic dishonesty (Witherspoon et al., 2010). Whether students are low or high scorers, carelessness is a disease that infects the originality of academic work.

Lastly, term paper writing requires *note-taking skills* like analyzing, synthesizing, summarizing, and paraphrasing ideas from other sources. So students lacking such skills may fail to take notes carefully and prefer academic dishonesty to academic integrity (Bamford and Sergiou, 2005).

2.2.3 Instructor-related Factors

Just like the factors discussed above, instructor-related factors cause academic dishonesty. The first one is *laissez-faire* (Pickard, 2006). Students are known for studying not only the subject matter but also the instructors' behaviors. When they know that he/she is soft, they can do their academic work in any way they like. So, indifferent instructors can be causes of academic dishonesty in this way.

Secondly, the instructors' *poor academic dishonesty detection strategies* can contribute to students' dishonest behavior. Mixed citation systems, language level difference across pages, poor organization, poor flow of ideas, old source citation, etcetera. can be indicators of dishonesty. Instructors may fail to notice these signals due to low research skills or less teaching and/or advising experience (Rabi et al., 2006). But this failure allows students to escape easily. So loose vigilance may be a cause (Gerdeman, 2000).

An *authoritarian teaching style* can also contribute to academic dishonesty (Ercegovac and Jr, 2004). When an instructor is over dictator/perfect, students may feel that they will not succeed in the course. Then, to present quality work and get passing grades, they will be tempted to present others' works as their own by

engaging in any form of academic dishonesty.

Instructors' reactions to lame excuses for academic dishonesty also matter. If instructors tolerate dishonest acts in assignments (Alleyne and Phillips, 2011), students will perceive that such acts are acceptable in any academic writing.

The *subject matter* can also make students academically dishonest. For example, if the subject matter is unimportant, they may not devote time and energy to produce original academic work (Gerdeman, 2000). Similarly, when it is uninteresting, they will act in the same way (Gerdeman, 2000). These two examples can be true of assignments and term papers for a course. Regarding thesis work, candidates are expected to select the area that interests them. But in certain cases, students may be required to do atask on the title that does not interest them.

2.2.4 Situation-related Factors

Situational factors may also cause academic dishonesty. An example is group *memberships/social life* (Wideman, 2008). If some peers in a group have cheating behaviors, the rest will also like to behave in the same way. In certain cases, the honest ones may think that the cheaters are getting advantages over them. Such peer pressure is likely to cause academic dishonesty.

Another situation worth mentioning is *workload*.This happens when learners are overloaded with various academic and personal tasks (Ercegovac and Jr, 2004). As a result, students lack adequate time for doing and submitting quality academic work. Meanwhile, they worry that missing a deadline effectuates academic delays. Consequently, students will be forced to compromise deadlines with academic dishonesty.

Likewise, *task difficulty* can push students to demonstrate unethical academic behavior (Ercegovac and Jr, 2004). The difficulty may be due to language gaps, topic unfamiliarity or anything else. Whatever it is, the difficulty is said to be one contributor to academic cheating since no one wants to get lower grades as a result.

An institutional academic *honor code* can also correlate with academic dishonesty (Ercegovac and Jr, 2004). It can be so when the code is not communicated to the students or when the students do not understand it (Wideman, 2008). That is, unawareness of the code can affect the students' performance. On the other hand, the honor code may not be severe (Macdonald and Carrol, 2006). Or students may not hear of

any punishmentimposed so far. This may cause students to exhibit unwanted academic behaviors. But Pulvers and Diekhoft (1999) indicate that this variable has a low rate of contribution.

The recent headache is advancements in the*internet and technology* (Wideman, 2008; Witherspoon et al., 2010). Nowadays, ample databases are accessible. Different search engines are also in use. Technological innovations like smartphones, palmtops and so on have also made source downloads easier. These conditions have further aggravated the cheating behaviors.

2.2.5 Perception-related Factors

The last factor that correlates with academic dishonesty is the perception of penalties (Ives and Giukin, 2019). That is, students may view *cheating as acceptable* (Witherspoon et al., 2010). Their reasons may be that they have not experienced or heardaboutany penalty so far.

Students may also think that the *penalty will not be severe* (McCabe and Trevino, 1997). For example, grade deterrence is reported as less deterring.Besides, students may believe that they will not be caught by instructors (Witherspoon et al., 2010).

Besides, *unawareness of how to avoid academic dishonesty* is reported as a demographic variable (Bamford and Sergiou, 2005). One who lacks quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing techniques cannot avoid academic dishonesty. One who cannot take careful notes during review and one who is unable to detect plagiarism using software is also likely to engage in academic dishonesty.

Finally, academic dishonesty can be *unintentional* (Song-Turner, 2008). Without his or her knowledge, an academic writer can write phrases or sentences that are exact copies of unknown sources to the writer. Such cases can be detected with the help of software or proofreaders. Otherwise, the writer cannot identify such faults.

3. Methods

3.1 Design, Setting and Participants

The study aimed at examining the prevalence rate, forms, and causes of academic dishonesty in the term papers for MA in TEFL courses. So the study was descriptive research with quantitative and qualitative data to describe the existing situations of academic dishonesty. Creswell (2012, p376) notes descriptive study is used "… to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the population."

The study was conducted at a branch and a main campus of ... University. The sites were selected purposively. The reason was

the presence of frequent, informal academic dishonesty reports. The study subjects wereMA in TEFL prospective graduates in regular, extension, and summer modalities, and their course instructors. Thus, five instructors and 45 students were sampled comprehensively since their number was manageable.

3.2 Data Collection Instruments

The data collection instruments were developed based on the literature review and Ives et al. (2017) academic dishonesty protocol. The instruments were questionnaires for MA in TEFL students and their course instructors, and focus group discussions with the students. The questionnaire for graduating students was an anonymized self-report protocol format. The purpose was to find out the prevalence rate, forms,and causes of academic breaches. Similarly, the questionnaire for the course instructors was used to substantiate the data collected from students.

The items in the students' and the instructors' questionnaires were semi-structured (mainly close-ended and partly open-ended). The closed-ended items were prepared based on tick, yes/no, and five-point Likertscales.That is, the scales on prevalence rate were very serious, serious, somehow, not serious, and no dishonesty. The items for demographic data were fill-in and underline type, while those for perception were yes/no type. The scales on forms of academic dishonesty and personalreasons were always, often, sometimes, rarely, and never. The scales on instructor-related reasons were all, most, some, few, and none. The scales on situation-related reasons were strongly agree, agree, indifferent, disagree, and strongly disagree.

The open-ended items were prepared for two reasons. First, they were used to gather detailed data from respondents as the items gave the chance for them to forward their ideas freely. Second, it was believed that the respondents could give additional data which were not included in the closed-ended items.

Besides, the focus group discussions with MA in TEFL students were used to collect data on the prevalence rate, types, and causes of academic dishonesty. The main purpose was to get aggregate data instead of individual responses. The discussions were held in Amharic The responses were translated into English during analysis.

3.3 Data Analyses Techniques

This study employed quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques. The data from close-ended questionnaire items were analyzed through descriptive statistics.

The analysis can be reported through verbal descriptions, percentages, frequency tables and graphs like histograms (Seliger and Shohamy, 1989). From these ways of reporting, tables with frequency and percentages as well as verbal descriptions were used to analyze the data and show the situation of academic dishonesty.

The data obtained from the focus group discussions were analyzed in the form of quotes and themes. According to Creswell (2012), first, a close reading of the raw text was done to identify similar themes and details. Then, the raw data were transcribed, translated, coded and categorized into meaningful units based on the research questions. Since some text segments could be coded into more than one category, the results found were again revised and refined. Finally, all the qualitative data were interpreted and discussed through descriptions, quotes, and thematic analysis techniques.

4. Results

4.1 Academic Dishonesty Prevalence Rate

Table 1: Students' and instructors' responses to the academic prevalence rate

Respondents	Very seious		Serious		Some how		Not serious		No dishonesty	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Studnet	23	51	15	33	7	16	-	-	-	-
Instractor	3	60	2	40	-	-	-	-	-	-

The first research question was to examine the extent to which academic dishonesty was practiced in MA in TEFL students' term papers. In that case, students (51%) and instructors (60%) responded that the prevalence rate was very serious. Other students (33%) and instructors (40%) said it was serious. Most focus group discussants also indicated that no one did his/her term paper on his/her own. Specifically, Debas said, 'Plagiarism is the friend of the generation.' Daniel added that it is a common practice. Yifru further pointed out that term papers are like oral literature. But few said they did term papers by themselves. Based on this analysis, it is possible to say that the prevalence rate of academic dishonesty in MA in TEFL termpapers was alarming.

4.2 Forms of Academic Dishonesty Committed

Table 2: Students' and instructors' responses to whole-paper academic dishonesty practice

Items		Always				Often				Sometimes				Rarely				Never			
		S		I		S		I		S		I		S		I		S		I	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
copied whole paper from	printed source without reference					1	2	1	20	1	2			39	87	4	80	4	9		
	online source without reference					1	2	1	20	3	7			35	78	4	80	6	13		
	a student's term paper without consent					2	4	1	20	39	87	3	60	1	2	1	20	3	7		
	student's term paper with consent	3	7	1	20			1	20	32	71	3	60	4 9				6	13		

Keys: S = Students; **I** = Instructors

The second issue was to identify the forms and frequency of the academic dishonesty practiced. About whole paper copy-paste, in particular, students (87%) and instructors (80%) answered copying a whole paper from a printed source without reference was practiced rarely. Likewise, students (78%) and instructors (80%) said that copying a whole paper from an online source without reference was committed rarely. Besides, 87% and 60% of the students and the instructors respectively said that copying ideas directly from another student's term paper without consent was used sometimes. Also, 71% and 60% of the students and the instructors respectively replied that copying ideas directly from another student's term paper with consent was used sometimes. This analysis may show that whole paper copy from different sources was practiced at different frequencies.

Table 3: Students' and instructors' responses to direct quote academic dishonesty practice

Items		Always				Often				Sometimes				Rarely				Never			
		S		I		S		I		S		I		S		I		S		I	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
copyied short ideas directly from	printed sources without quote marks but with reference			1	20	6	13	1	20	26	57	3	60	6	13			7	16		
	printed sources with quote marks but without reference			1	20	3	7			34	76	3	60	2	4			6	13	1	20
	printed sources without quote marks and reference	3	7	1	20	3	7	1	20	25	56	3	60	3	7			11	24		
	online sources without quote marks but with reference	2	4	1	20	4	9	1	20	28	62	3	60	4	9			7	16		
	online sources with quote marks but without reference			2	40	2	4	2	40	3	7			5	11	1	20	35	78		
	online sources without quote marks and reference			1	20	2	4			37	82	3	60	4 9		1	20	2	4		
took long ideas directly from	sources without indention and reference			1	20	31	69	3	60	2	4	1	20	3	7			9	20		
	sources with indention but without reference					34	76	3	60	2	4	1	20	6	13	1	20	3	7		

Keys: S = Students; **I** = Instructors

Regarding short quote dishonesty, students (57%) and instructors (60%) said that copying ideas directly from printed sources without quote marks but with references was used sometimes. They (76% and 60% of the students and the instructors) also replied that cutting and pasting ideas directly from printed sources with quote marks but without reference was practiced sometimes. Again, 56% and 60% of the students and the instructors respectively answered that copying ideas directly from printed sources without quotation marks and references was used sometimes. Still, the students (62%) and the instructors (60%) said copying ideas directly from online sources without quotation marks but with references was used sometimes. Lastly, 82% and 60% of the students and the instructors respectively replied that copying ideas directly from online sources without quotation marks and references was practiced sometimes. On the other hand, 69% and 60% of the students and the instructors respectively responded

that taking long ideas directly from sources without indention and references was used often. Similarly, the students (76%) and the instructors (60%) indicated that taking long ideas directly from a source with indention but without reference was practiced often. So, it can be said that long-quote academic dishonesty was more frequent than short-quote forms

Table 4: Students' and instructors' responses to other forms of academic dishonesty practice

Items		Always				Often				Sometimes				Rarely				Never			
		S		I		S		I		S		I		S		I		S		I	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
modification by	making small changes without reference	1	2			24	53	3	60	3	7	1	20	4	9	1	20	13	29		
	putting sentences in different order without reference	1	2			37	82	3	60	1	2	1	20	3	7	1	20	3	7		
requesting	relatives to write for them	2	4			30	67	3	60	5	11	1	20	4	9			4	9	1	20
bibliography	fabrication			1	20	36	80	4	80	3	7			4	9			2	4		
paraphrasing	without reference	2	4			2	4	1	20	3	7	1	20	31	69	3	60	7	16		

Keys: S = Students; **I** = Instructors

Concerning other forms of academic dishonesty, the students (53%) and the instructors (60%) said that copying ideas from sources by making small changes (replacing a few words with synonyms) without reference was committed often. Likewise, 82% and 60% of them respectively replied that copying ideas by putting one or two sentences from sources in a different order without reference was often used. Also, the students (67%) and the instructors (60%) responded that requesting relatives to write term papers and submitting them as their own was practiced often. Furthermore, the students (80%) and the instructors (80%) indicated that padding out the bibliography with references that were not used was committed often. On the other hand, the students (69%) and the instructors (60%) replied that paraphrasing ideas from one or more sources without reference was practiced rarely. This may indicate that modification, ordering, and fabrication were frequently used forms.

The focus group discussions also showed that copy-paste from soft/hard copy materials was common. Discussants specifically reported that they copied whole term papers and one or more paragraphs from a source.

Hence, one can notice that the MA in TEFL students committed different forms of academic dishonesty with different frequency levels.

4.3 Causes of Academic Dishonesty

Table 5: Students' responses to demographic reasons

Demographic		f	%
Age	20-24		
	25-50	45	100
GPA	2.5-2.9	3	6.7
	3.0-3.49	21	46.7
	3.5-4.0	21	46.7
Sex	Male	34	75.6
	Female	11	24.4
Grade level	Postgraduate	45	100
Martial status	Married	33	73.3
	Unmarried	12	26.7
Financial status	Dependent	5	11.1
	Independent	40	88.9

Regarding demographic causes of academic dishonesty in term papers, the data showed that all the students' ages were above 23. Those with below 3.0 GPAs and those with 3.0 and above GPAs were 6.7% and 93.4% respectively. In terms of gender,75.6% and 24.4% were males and females respectively.Their grade level was postgraduate. And 73.3% of them were married. Concerning their financial status, 88.9% of them were financially independent. So, these demographic data may show that age, cumulative grade point, gender, grade level, marital status, and financial status were not among the causes

.

Table 6: Students' and instructors' responses to personal reasons

Items	Always				Mostly				Sometimes				Rarely				Never			
	S		I		S		I		S		I		S		I		S		I	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
peer pressure to score high	6	13			25	56	3	60	4	9	1	20	4	9	1	20	6	13		
fear of dismissal	5	11	1	20	26	58	3	60	8	18	1	20	3	7			3	7		
limited vocabulary	4	9	1	20	23	51	4	80	7	16			8	18			3	7		
limited grammar	4	9			25	56	4	80	10	22	1	20	5	11			1	2		
inability to take notes	1	2	1	20	23	51	3	60	9	20			6	13	1	20	6	13		
need to score high for job opportunities	26	58	3	60	6	13	1	20	7	16	1	20	3	7			3	7		

Keys:S = Students; **I** = Instructors

Concerning personal reasons for academic dishonesty, the students (56%) and the instructors (60%) rated peer pressure to score high gradesmostly. Besides, they rated fear of dismissal (58% of the students and 60% of the instructors), limited lexical knowledge (51% of the students and 60% of the instructors), limited grammatical knowledge (56% of the students and 50% of the instructors), and inability to take notes carefully from sources (51% of the students and 60% of the instructors) mostly. The students in the focus group discussion also indicated that they had language (vocabulary and grammar), writing (paraphrasing, summarizing, organizing, and quoting), and higher-order thinking (analyzing, synthesizing) skill problems. They added that they cheated because of these limitations. In addition, 58% of the students and 60% of the instructors rated the need to score high for employment always. The students in the group discussion also supported the idea that they were ambitious to secure good grades and get better job opportunities. They also said that friends push each other to score good grades by cheating. Thus, it can be said that fear of dismissal, desire to score high, peer pressure, and skills gap seemed to be the personal causes of academic dishonesty

.**Table 7:** Students' responses on their perceptions towards copying a whole source

Items	Acceptable		Unacceptable	
	F	%	F	%
copying a whole printed paper without reference	1	2	44	98
copying a whole online source without reference	3	7	42	93
copying idea directly from another student's term paper without consent	1	2	44	98
copying idea directly from another student's term paper with consent	7	16	38	84
submitting another student's whole work			45	100

The students were also asked if their dishonest behaviors were due to their perception problems. Concerning whole source copy, 98% of them responded that copying a whole printed paper without reference is unacceptable. They (93%) also said copying a whole online source without reference was unacceptable. They (98%) again replied that copying ideas directly from another student's term paper without consent is plagiarism. Still, they said that copying ideas directly from another student's term paper with consent (84%) and submitting another student's whole work (100%) are dishonest behaviors. This analysis may imply that the students were aware that copying a whole paper from a source is wrong.

Table 8**:** Students' responses to their perceptions of a direct copy

Items		Acceptable		Unacceptable	
		F	%	F	%
taking long ideas directly from a source	without indention and reference	2	4	43	96
	without indention but with reference	15	33	30	67
	with indention but without reference	1	2	44	98
	with indention and reference	27	60	18	40
copying short ideas directly from a source	without quote marks and reference	6	13	39	87
	with quote marks but without reference	4	7	41	91
	without quote marks but with reference	12	27	33	73
	with quote marks and reference	30	67	15	33

The students were asked about their perceptions of a direct copy. They responded that taking long ideas directly from a source without indention and reference (96%), without indention but with reference (67%), and with indention but without reference (98%) are unacceptable. They also said that copying short ideas directly from sources without quotationmarks and references (87%), with quotation marks but without

references (91%), and without quotation marks but with references (73%) were unacceptable. On the other hand, they said that taking long ideas directly from a source with indention and reference (60%) andcopying short ideas directly from a source with quote marks and references (67%) are acceptable. This may still show that students had no perception problem with long/short direct copy academic dishonesty.

Table 9: Students' responses to their perceptions of deals

Items	Acceptable		Unacceptabl	
	F	%	F	%
ordering a relative to write term papers for them	14	31	31	69
making peers write term papers for them	7	16	38	84
buying printed term papers			45	100
buying online term papers	2	4	43	96
paying another person to write term papers for them	1	2	44	98

The students were also asked about their perceptions of deals. They (69%) said that ordering a relative to write term papers for them is unacceptable. They (84%) also replied that making peers write term papers for them is a dishonest act. Again, they said that buying printed term papers (100%) and buying online term papers (96%) are unacceptable. They (98%) also answered that paying another person to write term papers for them is unacceptable. Still, this is likely to show that the respondents were aware of bargain-based dishonesty.

Table 10**:** Students' responses on their perceptions towards modifications/fabrications

Items		Acceptable		Unacceptable	
		F	%	F	%
copying idea from a source by	replacing a few words with synonyms without references	9	20	36	80
	making small changes with references	23	51	22	49
	putting one or two sentences from sources in a different order without references	7	16	38	84
	putting one or two sentences from sources in a different order with references	24	53	21	47
paraphrasing idea from	one or more sources without references	9	20	36	80
	one or more sources with references	40	89	5	11
fabrication	in-text citation without truly reading sources	5	11	40	89
	padding out the bibliography with references not cited	6	13	39	87

Modification and fabrication-related perception questions were also asked. The students replied that copying ideas from sources by replacing a few words with

synonyms without reference (80%) and putting one or two sentences from sources in a different order without reference (84%) are unacceptable. Similarly, they said paraphrasing ideas from one or more sources without references (80%), referencing materials without truly reading them (89%), and padding out the bibliography with references that were not used (87%) were unacceptable. However,the students perceived copying ideas from sources by making small changes with references (51%), copying ideas by putting one or two sentences from sources in a different order with references (53%), and paraphrasing ideas from one or more sources with references (89%) are acceptable.

The focus group discussants also indicated that they had no perception problems. They stated that they directly copied others' work without paraphrasing and/or acknowledging even if they knew about plagiarism. Thus, except for the two items rated acceptable, the analysis may indicate that students had no perception problems. Even the confusion with the two items might have happened due to a clarity problem. Generally, however, the students seemed to be aware of the (un)acceptable ways of writing term papers.

Table 11: Students' and instructors' responses to instructor-related reasons

Items		All				Most				Some				Few				None			
		S		I		S		I		S		I		S		I		S		I	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
tolerance	no penalty	23	51			5	11	4	80	7	16		20	6	13			4	9		
failure to detect dishonesty from	mixed citations					5	11			4	9			13	29	2	40	23	51	3	60
	language level difference across pages	3	7			3	7			10	22	1	20	6	13	1	20	23	51	3	60
	poor organization	1	2			5	11			9	20			6	13	1	20	24	54	4	80
	poor flow of ideas					5	11			7	16			6	13	1	20	27	65	4	80
tasks/ topics	unimportant							3	7	7	16	1	20	7	16	1	20	28	62	3	60
	uninteresting	1	2			3	7			7	16	1	20	8	18	1	20	26	58	3	60
being	over dictators	3	7			2	4			5	11			10	22	1	20	25	56	4	80

Keys: S = Students; **I** = Instructors

Students and their course instructors were asked about instructor-related reasons. Here, 51% of the students and 80% of the instructors replied that all the instructors were tolerant and did not take a strong penalty against plagiarism. The focus group participants also said that students wrote their term papers by copying from others since their instructors did not worry about plagiarism; the instructors usually focused on the contents of the paper. They rather appreciated or gave greater marks/grades to those who cheated; they did not punish such students though they knew the case. So

everyone copied directly from online and printed sources when writing implications and conclusions particularly.

However, 51% of the students and 60% of the instructors indicated that instructors were able to notice plagiarism from mixed citation systems and language level differences across pages. Besides, 54% and 65% of the students respectively, and 80% of the instructors replied that instructors were able to notice plagiarism from poor organization and poor flow of ideas. The respondents (62% and 58% of the students respectively and 60%of the instructors) also said that instructors did not give unimportant and uninteresting topics. And 56%of the students and 80% of the instructors answered that instructors were not over dictators.

Thus, it seems possible to say that the issue is not with the nature of the topics given, the instructors' ability to identify plagiarism using indicators, the instructors' behaviors, and thenature of support. Instructor-related plagiarism cases were likely to be due to the tolerance or absence of strong measures against academically dishonest students

Table 12: Students' and instructors' responses to situation-related reasons

Items		Strongly Agree				Agree				Indifferent				Disagree				Strongly Disagree			
		S		I		S		I		S		I		S		I		S		I	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
peers'	plagiarizing behaviors	4	9	3	60	30	67	1	20	4	9			2	4			5	11	1	20
belief	cheaters get advantage	23	51	1	20	12	27	3	60	3	7			3	7	1	20	4	9		
not hearing	about a student penalized	12	27	1	20	27	60	3	60			1	20	5	11			1	2		
innovations	the internet & technology	17	38	1	20	22	49	3	60	3	7	1	20	1	2			2	4		
honor code	not severe	3	7	1	20	2	4	2	40	4	9			1	2	2	40	35	78		
	not communicated	1	2	1	20	5	11	1	20	7	16	1	20	3	7	1	20	29	64	1	20
	not understanding	1	2	1	20	7	16	1	20	3	7	1	20	5	11	2	40	29	64		
stress due	lack of time/deadline	17	38			7	16	2	40	8	18	1	20	6	13	1	20	7	16	1	20
to	workload	13	29			9	20	1	20	9	20	2	40	7	16	1	20	7	16	1	20

Keys: S = Students; **I** = Instructors

Students and instructors were also asked in the questionnaire about situation-related reasons for academic dishonesty in the MA in TEFL term papers. In reply, 67% and 9% of the students and 20% and 60% of the instructors respectively agreed and strongly agreed that peers' plagiarizing behaviors influenced students. The students in the focus group discussions also indicated that they committed plagiarism since their classmates did not worry about it. Similarly, 27% and 51% of the students and 60% and 20% of the instructors agreed and strongly agreed respectively that the belief cheaters

get an advantage over non-cheaters contributed to their plagiarism. Again, 60% and 27% of the students and 60% and 20% of the instructors respectively agreed and strongly agreed that not hearing about a student penalized was a cause of plagiarism. Furthermore, 22% and 38% of the students and 60% and 20% of the instructors agreed and strongly agreed that internet and technological innovations had tempted the students to plagiarize. The focus group discussants also noted that the expansion of technology has aggravated plagiarism. However, 40% and 20% of the instructors respectively agreed and strongly agreed and 78% of the students strongly disagreed with the severity of the honor code. Besides, responses about honor codecommunication, failure to understand it, lack of time, and workload did not clearly show whether the respondents agreed or disagreed. Such responses might probably indicate that these issues were not common problems, differing from student to student.

Hence, it can be concluded that peers' plagiarizing behaviors, the belief cheaters get an advantage over non-cheaters, not hearing about studentspenalized or mild penalties, and internet and technological innovations seemed situation-related reasons.

5. Discussions

The first research question was to identify the prevalence rate of academic dishonesty in postgraduate TEFL students' term papers. The data analysis revealed that the prevalence was alarming. This finding is almost similar to the cheating rate among secondary school and undergraduate students. Duggan (2008) reported that the behavior is inevitable at all educational levels. Bachore (2016), Chala (2021), Mekuria et al., (2020), Tadesse and Getachew (2010), Whiteley (1998), and Whiteley et al. (1999) also found that it is high in tertiary institutions. So, this study's finding supports the global findings.

The second question was about the forms of academic dishonesty in MA in TEFL students' term papers. The analysis showed that the students committed different forms of academic dishonesty at different frequency levels. That is, copying a whole paper (rarely), paraphrasing (rarely), taking short ideas (sometimes), copying long ideas with (out) slight modifications (often), and fabrications (often) were practiced. These findings corroborate the findings on whole-paper plagiarism (Clinciu et al. 2021), cut-and-paste plagiarism without reference (Davis, 2000), cut-and-paste plagiarism with reference (Farha et al., 2020), paraphrased

without reference (Jocoy and DiBiase, 2006), and falsifying bibliography (Brown, 2002). However, the previous studies did not show their prevalence frequency.

The last question was to identify the determinants associated with the different forms of academic dishonesty committed. In this regard, the study showed that there was no age, GPA, gender, grade level, marital status, and financial status boundary as demographic causes. This finding contradicts McCabe et al. (2001), Wideman (2008), and Ercegovac and Jr (2004) who found students younger than 24 are more cheaters. It is also against Pulvers and Dieckoff (1999) and Wideman (2008) who indicated that grade level and academic dishonesty are inversely related. It does not also supportthe claim that students with lower grade point averages tend to be more cheaters than others (Cuadrado et al., 2019; Wideman, 2008). In the case of gender, the present finding supports Chala (2021) that there was no genderdifference regarding academic dishonesty. However, the current finding contradicts Ives and Giukin (2019) who found males more cheaters. Still, the recent finding partly supports and partly contradicts the finding of Lin and Wed (2007) stating that the correlation between gender and academic theft is likely to vary from context to context. The findings on marital status and financial dependency also contradict Pulvers and Diekhoff (1999). Theyfound that unmarried and financially dependent persons were more cheaters.

Secondly, the study showed that fear of dismissal, desire to score high, peer pressure, and skills gap seemed to be the personal reasons for academic dishonesty. These are in line with other researchers' findings. For example, Ercegovac and Jr (2004) and Wideman (2008) noted that fear of dismissal had a contribution. Similarly, McCabe et al. (2001) and Taylor et al. (2002) found that interest in scoring high for future employment could lead to dishonest behavior. Ives and Giukin's (2019)andWideman's(2008)study on peer pressure also had a similar finding. Bamford and Sergiou (2005) also found that paraphrasing, summarising, and the like skills seemed to contribute.

Besides, the study depicted that the students were awareof (un)acceptable ways of writing term papers. Therefore, their perception was not a reason. This contradictsBamford and Sergiou's (2005), Cuadrado et al. (2019), and Ives and Giukin's (2019) finding that low awareness correlates with academic dishonesty.

The Instructor-related plagiarism casewas tolerance. Alleyne and Phillips (2011) and Ercegovac and Jr (2004) also found that tolerance or lack of strong measures could cause academic dishonesty.

Lastly, the belief cheaters get an advantage over non-cheaters, vocabulary and grammar deficiency, and internet and technological innovations seemed situation-relatedreasons for academic dishonesty. Wideman (2008) and Witherspoon et al. (2010) also respectively found that language gaps and innovations were determinants.

6. Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, some conclusions were drawn. First, The high academic dishonesty prevalence rate with different theft forms and reasonsseems alarming. The analysis showed that the student respondents had poor language skills (vocabulary and grammar), writing skills (summary, paraphrasing, organization, etc.), and higher-order skills (analysis, synthesis, interpretation, reflection, evaluation, etc.). Because of such deficiencies, most of these respondents committed academic dishonesty. On the contrary, instructors seem unconcerned; they do not trace back to previous works. Besides, the high academic prevalence seems to be associated with personal, instructor-related, and situation-related reasons, not with perception or demography.

7. Recommendations

In line with the conclusions made above, the following recommendations were forwarded. The high academic dishonesty prevalence rate needs the involvement of different stakeholders. personal, instructor-related, and situation-related reasons for plagiarism need serious attention. It will also be important to establish institutional and national databases to control copies from previous works. Well-prepared entrance exams shall also be administered from the very beginning to reduce skill and language command-related issues. Moreover, training on certain skills (paraphrasing, summarizing, note-taking, idea generation and organization, etc.) should also be given after admission. Instructors need also to take a strong penalty when a plagiarism case is found and announce the measures taken. Above all, different academic units (department, college dean, academic director, academic v/president, etc. offices) should establish and communicate honor codes.

Acknowledgements

The researchers cordially thankDebre Markos University. The research was done under the auspices of the university in

2018/19 academic year. Besides, we earnestly owe our gratitude toCODE'sContext Matters' research grant program. It has covered the expenses for the presentation of the research findings at the PALFA conference in Lusaka, Zambia in October 2021. Finally, we thank the then MA in TEFL prospective graduates in regular, extension and summer programs and their course instructors in Debre Markos University for their willingness to participate in the study.

References

Abilock, D. (2009). Guiding the gifted to honest work. *Knowledge Quest*, 37(3), 12–15.

Alleyne, P. & Phillips, K. (2011). Exploring academic dishonesty among university students in Barbados: An extension to the theory of planned behavior. *J. Acad Ethics*, 9, 323-338. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-011-9144-1

Bachore, M. M. (2016). The Nature, Causes, and Practices of Academic Dishonesty/Cheating in Higher Education: The Case of Hawassa University. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(19), 14 – 20.

Bamford, J.& Sergiou, K. (2005). International students and plagiarism: an analysis of the reasons for plagiarism among international foundation students. *Investigations in University Teaching and Learning*, 2(2), 17–22.

Brown, D. L. (2002). Spotlight on ... cheating must be ok – everybody does it. *Nurse Educator*, 27(1), 6 – 8.

Chala, W. D. (2021).Perceived seriousness of academic cheatingbehaviors among undergraduate students:an Ethiopian experience. *International Journal forEducational Integrity*, 17(2), 1 – 15. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40979-020-00069-z

Clinciu, A. I., A-M.Cazan&Ives,B.(2021). Academic dishonesty and academicadjustment among the students at university level: an exploratory study. *SAGE Open*, 1–9.https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211021839

Creswell, J. W. (2012). Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research (4th Ed.). Pearson Education Inc.

Cuadrado,D., J. F. Salgado & Moscoso,S. (2019). Prevalence and correlates of academic dishonesty:towards a

sustainable university. *Sustainability*, 11(21), 2 – 20. https://doi.org/10.3390/su11216062

Davies, P. (2000). Computerized peer assessment. *Innovations in Education & Training International*, 37(4), 346-355, DOI: 10.1080/135580000750052955

Duggan, F. (2006). Plagiarism: prevention, practice, and policy. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 31*(2), 151-154. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602930500262452

Ercegovac, Z. & Jr, R. J. V. (2004). Academic dishonesty, plagiarism included, in the digital age: a literature review. *College & Research Libraries*, 65(4), 301-318. https://doi.org/10.5860/crl.65.4.301

Farha, R. A., Mukattash, T. & Al-Delaimy, W. (2020). Predictors of plagiarism research misconduct: a study of postgraduate pharmacy students in Jordan. *Journal of Academic Ethics*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-020-09386-x

Gerdeman, R.D. (2000). Academic dishonesty and the community college. (Report No. ED 2000-07-00). Los Angeles, CA: Clearinghouse for Community Colleges. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED44784)

Graves, S. M. &Austin'S. F. (2008). Student cheating habits: a predictor of workplace deviance. *Journal of Diversity Management, 3*(1), 15–22. https://doi.org/10.19030/jdm.-v3i1.4977

Hughes, C., Julia, M., & McCabe, D. L. (2006). Academic misconduct within higher education in Canada. *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 36(2), 1-21.

Ives, B. & Giukin, L. (2019). Patterns and predictors of academic dishonestyin Moldovan University students. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 1-18.https://doi.org/10.1007/s10805-019-09347-z

Ives, B., Alama, M., Mosora, L. C., Mosora, M., Grosu-Radulescu, L., Clinciu, A. I., Cazan, A., Badescu, G., Tufis, C., Diaconu, M. & Dutu, A. (2017). Patterns and predictors of academic dishonesty in Romanian university students. *Higher Education, 74*(5), 815–831. DOI: 10.1007/s10734-016-0079-8

Jocoy, C. &DiBiase, D. (2006). Plagiarism by adult learners online: a case study

in detection and remediation. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 7(1), 1-17. https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v7i1.242

Johnson, N. & Dalen, J. (1988). Management and the Psychology of Schooling. Flamer.

Joyce, D. (2007). Academic integrity and plagiarism: Australasian perspectives. *Computer Science Education*, 17(3), 187–200. https://doi.org/10.1080/08993400701538062

Mekuria, B., Demissie, T. & Kerebih, Y. (2020). Students' perception and practices of academic dishonesty: the case of Debre Markos University, Ethiopia. *The International Journal of Humanities and Social Studies*, 8(1), 144 – 151. https://doi.org/10.24940/theijhss/2020/v8/i1/HS2001-034

Lambert, E. G. & Hogan, N. L. (2004). Academic dishonesty among criminal justice majors: a research note. *American Journal of Justice*, 29(1), 1 – 20. DOI:10.1007/BF02885701

Lin, C. H. S., & Wen, L. Y. M. (2007). Academic dishonesty in higher education a nationwide study in Taiwan. *Higher Education*, 54, 85-97. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-006-9047-z

Macdonald, M., & Carroll, J. (2006). Plagiarism - a complex issue requiring a holistic institutional approach. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 31(2), 233–245. https://doi.org/-10.1080/02602930500262536

Marsh, B. (2007). *Plagiarism, alchemy, and remedy in higher education*. State University of New York Press.

McCabe, D. L., Trevino, K. L., & Butterfield, K. D. (2001). Cheating in academic institutions: a decade of research. *Ethics & Behavior*, 11(3), 219-232. http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/-S15327019EB1103_2

McCabe, D.L., & Trevino, L.K. (1997). Individual and contextual influences on academic dishonesty: a multicampus investigation. *Research in Higher Education*, 38, 379-398. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1024954224675

Nelson, D. Devardhi J. & Abdulaziz, D. (2012). Effects of cheating on

accurate assessment. *Star Journal*, 1(3), 68-74. https://doi.org/10.4314/star.v1i3.98800

Park, C. (2003). In other (people's) words: plagiarism by university students – literature and lessons. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 28(5), 471-488. https://doi.org/-10.1080/02602930301677

Pickard, J. (2006). Staff and student attitudes to plagiarism at University College Northampton. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 31(2), 215-232. https://doi.org/10.1080/-02602930500262528

Pulvers, K. & Diekhoff, G. M. (1999). The relationship between academic dishonesty and college classroom environment. *Research in Higher Education*, 40(4), 487 – 498.

Rabi, S. M., Patton, L. R., Fjortoft, N. & Zgarrick, D.P. (2006). Characteristics, prevalence, attitudes, and perceptions of academic dishonesty among pharmacy students. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 70 (4), 1 – 8. DOI:10.5688/aj700473

Seliger, H. W. and E. Shohamy. (1989). Second Language Research Methods. Oxford University Press.

Song-Turner, H. (2008). Plagiarism: academic dishonesty or 'blind spot' of multicultural education? *Australian Universities' Review*, 50, 39-50.

Stapleton, P. (2012). Gauging the effectiveness of anti-plagiarism software: an empirical study of second language graduate writers. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 11, 125–133. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2011.10.003

Tadesse T. & Getachew, K. (2010). An exploration of undergraduate students' self-reported academic dishonesty at Addis Ababa and Jimma universities. *Ethiop. J. Educ.* 5c, 5(2): 79-99. https://doi.org/10.4314/ejesc.v5i2.65375

Taylor, L., Pogrebin, M., & Dodge, M. (2002). Advanced placement-advanced pressures: academic dishonesty among elite high school students. *Educational Studies: A Journal of the American Educational Studies Association*, 33, 403–421.

Whiteley, J. B. E. (1998). Factors associated with cheating among college students: a review. *Research in Higher Education*, 39(3), 235 – 274.

Whitley, B. E., Jr., Nelson, A. B., & Jones, C. J. (1999). Gender differences in cheating attitudes and classroom cheating behavior: a meta-analysis. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, 41, 657–677. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1018863909149

Wideman, M. A. (2008). Academic dishonesty in postsecondary education: a literature review. *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching & Learning Journal*, 2(1), 1 – 12.

Witherspoon, M., Maldonado, N. & Lacey, C. H. (2010). Academic dishonesty of undergraduates: methods of cheating. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Denver, Colorado, 1 – 28.