



Policy Matters: Tendencies towards Academic Misconduct*

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Politika Önemlidir: Akademik Suistimale Yönelik Eğilimler*

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Etik Not: Araştırma ve yayın etiğine uyulmuştur. Bu araştırma için Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü Bilimsel Araştırma Etik Kurulu'ndan etik onay alınmıştır (Tarih: 01.07.2021, Sayı: 2021/12-30).

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Abstract

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020, the global education system has been compelled to adopt Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) in response to the threat of the virus. This abrupt shift in teaching methods has yielded anticipated and unanticipated consequences across all levels of education. The objective of this study is to investigate the impact of ERT on academic integrity at a higher education institution situated in the western region of Türkiye. 12 hypothetical academic misconduct scenarios questionnaire was completed by a total of 234 participants. The responses relating to student observations suggest that collusion is perceived to be the most commonly witnessed form of academic misconduct, with many students specifically noting the prevalence of exam outsourcing. However, contract cheating was found to be the least preferred method of academic transgression in this study. Another significant finding suggests based on students observations that in-class activities facilitated by teachers can inadvertently facilitate either collaboration or dishonest practices among students during ERT. It is worth emphasizing that the implementation of well-designed assignments for effective assessments can serve as an initial step towards preserving academic integrity within an academic institution. Consequently, this study underscores the persisting and widespread issue of academic integrity transgressions within higher education, reaffirming its status as an epidemic concern.

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Öz

Mart 2020'de COVID-19'un patlak vermesinden bu yana, küresel eğitim sistemi virüs tehdidine yanıt olarak Acil Uzaktan Öğretimi (AUÖ) benimsemek zorunda kaldı. Öğretim yöntemlerindeki bu ani değişim, eğitimin tüm düzeylerinde beklenen ve beklenmeyen sonuçlara yol açtı. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye'nin batı bölgesinde yer alan bir yükseköğretim kurumunda AUÖ'nün akademik dürüstlük üzerindeki etkisini araştırmaktır. 12 varsayımsal akademik suistimal senaryosu anketi toplam 234 katılımcı tarafından dolduruldu. Bu çalışmanın bulguları, gizli anlaşmanın en sık gözlemlenen akademik suistimal biçimi olduğunu ve sınavlarda dış kaynak kullanımının özellikle öğrenciler arasında yaygın olduğunu göstermektedir. Ancak bu çalışmada kopya anlaşmasının, kopya çekmenin akademik ihlallerde en az tercih edilen yöntem olduğu da öğrencilerin gözlemlerine dayalı olarak bulunmuştur. Bir diğer önemli bulgu, öğretmenler tarafından sınıf içi etkinliklerin, AUÖ sırasında öğrenciler arasındaki iş birliğini veya dürüst olmayan uygulamaları istemeden de olsa kolaylaştırabileceğini göstermektedir. Etkili değerlendirmeler için iyi tasarlanmış ödevlerin uygulanmasının, bir akademik kurumda akademik dürüstlüğün korunmasına yönelik bir ilk adım olabileceğini vurgulamakta fayda var. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma, yükseköğretimde devam eden ve yaygın olan akademik dürüstlük ihlalleri sorununun altını çizerek, bunun bir salgın endişesi olduğunu yeniden doğrulamaktadır.

Makale Bilgisi

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Akademik dürüstlük, akademik suistimal, gizli anlaşma, kopya anlaşması, AUÖ

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Geniş Özet

Giriş

Teknolojik gelişmelerin gücü göz önüne alındığında, AUÖ yoluyla pandemi gibi acil durumlarda bile eğitimin yedeklenebileceği ilk elden deneyimlenmiştir. Mart 2020'de COVID-19'un dünya çapında patlak vermesi ve yayılma tehdidi nedeniyle, öğretim şekli değiştirildi. Bu ani değişim, eğitimin her kademesinde hem beklenen hem de beklenmeyen sonuçlar doğurmuştur. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'nin batısında yer alan bir yükseköğretim kurumunda akademik dürüstlikle ilgili sonuçlara ışık tutmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaca ulaşmak için, nicel ve nitel verilerden oluşan 12 varsayımsal akademik usulsüzlük senaryosu ve odak grup görüşmeleri yoluyla veri toplamak için yakınsak karma araştırma tasarımı uygulanmıştır. Ankete 234 kişi katılırken, odak grup görüşmelerine 18 öğrenci gönüllü olarak katılmıştır. Bu çalışmada, akademik ihlal biçimleri arasında en çok gizli anlaşmaya şahit olunduğu, öğrenciler arasında en yaygın olarak sınav dışı kaynak kullanımının ve en az tercih edilenin ise sözleşmeli kopya çekmenin olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Bir başka bulgu da öğretmen tarafından yürütülen sınıf içi etkinliklerin AUÖ sırasında bir kopya arkadaşı bulmanın yollarını açabileceğidir. Etkili değerlendirmeler için iyi tasarlanmış ödevler, bir akademik kurumda akademik dürüstlüğü korumanın ilk adımı olabilir. Bu çalışma, akademik dürüstlük ihlali girişim ve vakalarının yükseköğretimde salgın bir sorun olmaya devam ettiğini bir kez daha doğrulamaktadır.

Yöntem

Bu çalışmada betimsel araştırma deseni benimsenmiştir. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, birinci sınıf öğrencilerinin varsayımsal akademik usulsüzlük senaryolarını yorumlamaları yoluyla akademik dürüstlük algılarını araştırmaktır. Çalışmanın nicel verilerini oluşturan varsayımsal akademik suistimal senaryoları Lozier'den (2012) uyarlanmıştır. Bu anket on iki (12) senaryodan oluşmaktadır ve bu varsayımsal senaryolarda kullanılan akademik dürüstlük ihlalleri sözleşmede kopya çekme, intihal ve gizli anlaşmadır ve örnek varsayımsal akademik suistimal vakalarının dağılımı eşittir; yani her akademik suistimal türü için üç örnek senaryo bulunmaktadır. Ankette ayrıca akademik suistimal türü olarak kabul edilmeyen üç senaryo da bulunmaktadır. Katılımcılardan her bir senaryoyu değerlendirmeleri ve akademik suistimal teşkil edip etmediğini belirlemeleri istenmiştir. Ayrıca, belirlenen her bir akademik suistimalin ciddiyetini birden (en az ciddi) beşe (en ciddi) kadar değişen 5'li Likert ölçeğinde değerlendirmeleri istenmiştir. Ankette ayrıca her senaryo için, katılımcıların kendi deneyimlerinde bu tür akademik suistimallere şahsen tanık olup olmadıklarını sorgulayan ve "Evet" veya "Hayır" yanıt seçeneklerini içeren bir takip sorusu da yer almıştır.

Sonuçlar

Bu çalışma, İngilizce hazırlık öğrencilerinin kopya çekme senaryolarına yönelik algılarını ve akademik suistimalin ciddiyetini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bulgular, katılımcıların çoğunluğunun intihali diğer tasvir edilen eylemlere kıyasla bir akademik suistimal biçimi olarak gördüğünü ortaya koymuştur. İlginç bir şekilde, öğrenciler sınav sırasında bir kelimeye bakmak veya bir test üzerinde işbirliği yapmak gibi belirli eylemleri akademik usulsüzlük olarak algılamamıştır. Katılımcıların yüzde 50'sinden fazlasının belirli eylemleri akademik usulsüzlük vakası olarak görmedikleri ortaya çıkmıştır. Ayrıca, bu çalışmanın kayda değer bir bulgusu, senaryolarda tasvir edilen gizli anlaşmanın, intihal ve sözleşmeli kopya çekmeye kıyasla ciddi bir akademik suistimal biçimi olarak algılanmamasıdır. Çalışmaya katılanlar, sınıf içi aktiviteler sırasındaki işbirliği ile sınavlar sırasındaki gizli anlaşmayı neredeyse aynı olarak gördüklerini ve bu durumun gizli anlaşmanın akademik suistimal olarak kabul edilmemesine yol açtığını bildirmişlerdir. Çalışma ayrıca, gizli anlaşmanın öne çıktığı akademik usulsüzlük biçimlerine tanık olma sıklığını da ortaya koymuştur. Gizli anlaşmanın daha az ciddi bir suistimal biçimi olarak algılanması, bu tür davranışlara tanık olma olasılığının artmasına katkıda bulunabilir. Çalışma aynı zamanda akademik suistimal biçimlerine tanık olma sıklığını da ortaya koymuş olup, bu konuda gizli anlaşma öne çıkmaktadır. Gizli anlaşmanın daha az ciddi bir suistimal biçimi olarak algılanması, bu tür davranışlara tanık olma olasılığının artmasına katkıda bulunabilir. Bu bulgular, öğrencilerin başta gizli anlaşma olmak üzere akademik suistimallere ilişkin algı ve eğilimlerine ışık tutmakta ve bu tür davranışların ciddiyeti konusunda daha fazla eğitim ve farkındalık ihtiyacının altını çizmektedir. Gizli anlaşma, hem kadın hem de erkek öğrenci katılımcıları arasında en sık gözlemlenen akademik suistimal biçimi olarak öne çıkmaktadır. İlginçtir ki, pek çok öğrenci kopya çekmenin yaygın doğasını kabul etmekten belli bir ölçüde "gurur" duyuyor gibi görünmektedir. Bununla birlikte, bu tür dürüst olmayan uygulamalara kendi katılımları söz konusu olduğunda, gözlemlenme ihtimalinden rahatsızlık ve tedirginlik duymaktadırlar. COVID-19 salgını nedeniyle çevrimiçi öğrenime beklenmedik geçiş, her düzeydeki eğitim kurumunu hazırlıksız yakaladı ve akademik dürüstlüğü korumak için yeterli önlemleri uygulamaya hazırlıklı olmamalarına neden oldu. AUÖ'ye ani geçişin, uygulamalardaki eksiklikleri ortaya çıkardığı ve amacını etkili bir şekilde yerine getiremediği açıktır. Çalışmanın pedagojik çıkarımlarından biri olarak, öğretmenler bu işbirliklerine dikkat etmeli ve öğrencileri sadece sınıf içi bir etkinlik olarak gerçekleşmesi gereken ikili çalışmaların ve grup çalışmalarının sınırlandırılması konusunda bilinçlendirmelidir. Çalışmanın bir diğer pedagojik çıkarımı ise

evrimii eđitimin hem teknik hem de pedagojik aıdan zel uygulamalar gerektirdiđidir. Bu alıřma, đrencilerin akademik suistimali nasıl algıladıkları ve sistemin aıklarına gre nasıl davrandıkları konusunda iyi bir rnek teřkil edebilir. đrencileri yaratıcılıđa ađıran etkili ve iyi tasarlanmış bir dev, iyi tasarlanmış bir deđerlendirmenin nn aabilir. Aksi takdirde, đrenciler evrimii eđitimde tek tıkla internetten devi intihal edebilirler.

Introduction

The significant and rapid transition to online education, driven by the need to adhere to physical distancing measures and mitigate the risk of virus transmission, has necessitated swift adjustments. As recommended by the World Health Organization (2020), over 144 countries have suspended face-to-face education, resulting in approximately 1.2 billion students, spanning from pre-kindergarten to post-secondary levels, continuing their education online (UNESCO, 2020). Within this context, an estimated 26 million students, including 1.4 million post-secondary students across approximately 4,200 colleges and universities, have had to quickly adapt to this sudden shift (Looney & Lusin, 2019).

The massive influx towards online education, prompted by the pandemic, has highlighted the need for the adoption of new procedures and measures to ensure academic integrity. With technology playing a central role in the educational process, students have found increased opportunities for academic misconduct, such as seeking assistance during exams, plagiarizing, and engaging in impersonation, through the utilization of the internet (Etter et al., 2006). Interestingly, students appear to leverage technology more effectively for academic dishonesty, while educators face challenges in utilizing technology for detecting and preventing such misconduct (Johnson & Johnson, 2004). Undeniably, this abrupt transition from face-to-face instruction to emergency remote teaching demands heightened attention to maintain the integrity of educational delivery.

Drawbacks of ERT Relating to Academic Misconduct

The extensive corpus of scholarly literature demonstrates that online education, contrary to popular presumption, has been found to foster greater academic integrity compared to traditional face-to-face instruction (Bretag et al., 2019; Davis et al., 2009; Hart & Morgan, 2010; Stuber-McEwen et al., 2009). However, it is important to acknowledge that the advancement of technology has simultaneously presented opportunities for breaches in academic integrity (Calluzzo & Cante, 2004; Etter et al., 2006; Faucher & Caves, 2009; Granitz & Loewy, 2007).

According to the empirical studies of self-reported academic misconduct incidences (Kidwell & Kent 2008), in traditional face-to-face (F2F) delivery cheating instances are more observed compared to online education. Though the results of the empirical studies alleging less academic misconduct in online education, the results should be approached with caution. It should be noted that the participants of these studies were older than their counterparts participating F2F education and students in online education participate voluntarily. The maturity of students is regarded as an aspect considering freshman's tendency to commit academic misconduct (Miller et al., 2007). Furthermore, it is crucial to consider the variable of voluntary participation in previous studies compared to the mandatory nature of emergency remote teaching (ERT). Additionally, it is important to recognize that previous studies focused on carefully designed online courses that followed the principles of distance education, which may not fully align with the circumstances of ERT. Therefore, some caution can be taken into account when interpreting the findings from those studies in the context of ERT.

Unlike planned online learning, ERT is implemented when unforeseen circumstances necessitate a sudden shift in the mode of teaching and learning regardless of voluntary participation. The COVID-19 pandemic has created an emergency situation that caught all stakeholders off guard. While some educational institutions had already offered online courses, the prevalence of online education in mainstream education was still relatively low compared to traditional F2F education (Bao, 2020). Planned online courses are typically characterized by well-developed curricula, detailed lesson plans, carefully selected materials, and appropriate technological support. Moreover, instructors receive training tailored to the requirements of online education, including how to conduct assessments effectively in a virtual learning environment.

In contrast, drawing upon the clear distinctions between online education and ERT, the latter one is put into use on the grounds of the panic stemmed from the urgent response to assure education continuity in an uncertain circumstance. It is important to recognize that the nature of online education, with its carefully designed structure and preparation, differs significantly from that of ERT. Eaton (2020) highlights that lecturers encountered challenges in adapting to the sudden shift in educational modes and often continued to employ assessment practices, such as the use of multiple-choice test items, that were originally designed for F2F instruction. This approach has led to score inflation and may not effectively address the unique requirements of online education.

Furthermore, White (2020) argues that incidents of academic misconduct have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic and the transition to emergency remote teaching (ERT). The rise in academic misconduct can be attributed to the rapid and ill-prepared shift from F2F to online delivery, which occurred in a state of panic and uncertainty. This sudden change in instructional delivery methods and the unfamiliarity of both instructors and students with the online learning environment have contributed to the challenges associated with maintaining academic integrity during ERT. Moreover, there are some research investigating the effects of COVID-19 has revealed a decline in study hours and a rise in academic procrastination among students in higher education (Biricik & Sivrikava, 2020; Gao et al., 2020). In a similar vein, studying online from home makes it easier for students to procrastinate because they need to motivate

themselves and deal with the challenges of learning alone (Drumm & Jong, 2020; Hong et al., 2021). The lack of motivation and procrastination can pave the way of academic misconduct cases. The study conducted by (Daniels et al., 2021) investigates student motivation, participation, perceptions of success, and cheating in traditional face-to-face and ERT. The findings of the study revealed that students' perceptions of cheating increased, and students believe cheating would go undetected through ERT system.

The Forms of Academic Misconduct in ERT

The prevalence of academic integrity violations has been extensively studied in the literature, with several seminal studies shedding light on this issue (Bowers, 1964; Davis et al., 1992; McCabe & Trevino, 1996; Newstead et al., 1996; Nonis & Swift, 2001). Academic misconduct takes various forms, influenced by factors such as the competitiveness of the academic program, educational context, course difficulty, peer and parental pressure, and the normalization of cheating (Chop & Silva, 1991; Davis, 1992; Mixon, 1996). The underlying concept behind academic misconduct is the act of "standing on the shoulders" of others, as described by Maurer et al. (2006, p. 1051). However, with the advancement of technology, a new form of cheating known as "eCheating" or electronic cheating has emerged, encompassing various forms of dishonesty in online assessment formats (Rogers, 2006).

Valizadeh (2022) explored cheating forms in online exams. It proved that EFL students from university level had cheated in many kinds of forms during online classes including plagiarism, collusion and contract cheating. Similarly, in distance learners setting, learners were more likely to obtain answers from others during an online test (Saleh & Meccawy, 2021; Watson & Sottile, 2010). Other studies relevant to online cheating include students' dishonest collaboration and sharing assignments with one another (Hearn Moore et. al, 2017; McGee, 2013). In the realm of online education, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and contract cheating are commonly observed forms of academic misconduct. These infractions pose unique challenges in the online learning environment. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the students' perceptions relating to most common academic misconduct forms; namely, contract cheating, plagiarism, and collusion.

Plagiarism

The term "plagiarism" originates from the Latin word "plagiare," which referred to the act of kidnapping someone to use as a slave. However, in the context of academia, plagiarism encompasses much more than this literal meaning. Fishman (2016) identifies five characteristics of plagiarism which occurs under these circumstances:

1. when someone uses words, ideas, or work products attributable to another identifiable person or source
2. Without attributing the work to the source from which it was obtained
3. In a situation in which there is a legitimate expectation of original authorship
4. In order to obtain some benefit, credit, or gain which need not be monetary

(Fishman, 2016, p. 5)

It is a complex phenomenon with multiple dimensions, including its moral implications, policy considerations, and its relation to learning how to write in an academic setting. To address plagiarism effectively, institutions develop policies and procedures for detection, regulations, and sanctions. Taking a holistic approach that considers the interconnectedness of these actions is essential in dealing with plagiarism. Park (2003) emphasizes that plagiarism poses a significant challenge to the integrity and quality assurance of academic institutions. However, an earlier study by Hawley (1984) revealed that approximately 25% of students agreed with arguments suggesting that plagiarism is an acceptable behavior.

In L2 setting, the reasons of plagiarism are various. The study carried out by Lines (2016) revealed that students plagiarize for lack of knowledge of paraphrasing, lack of knowledge of integrating ideas and lack of L2 skills that contributing to plagiarism. Flowerdew and Li (2007) propose that novice L2 academic writers, who lack confidence in independently composing academic texts, may opt to reuse others' work to ensure error-free writing. Stander (2020) stated that ESL students are prone to plagiarize more and that is why they need to be educated regarding plagiarism.

The underlying reasons for plagiarism can be attributed to factors at both the institutional and student levels or the teacher-student relationship (Bretag, 2016). Institutions should prioritize promoting academic integrity through educational practices rather than solely focusing on detection and punishment. Therefore, addressing plagiarism as a widespread issue requires a multifaceted approach, similar to other academic integrity violations. Text-matching software can be utilized to some extent to assist in detecting instances of plagiarism as addressing suspected instances of plagiarism consumes considerable time for academic faculty (Keuskamp & Sliuzas, 2007).

Contract Cheating

The term 'contract cheating,' coined by Clarke and Lancaster (2006), is defined as "the process of offering the process of completing an assignment for a student out to tender" (p. 2). Compared to other forms of academic integrity infringements, contract cheating is a relatively new term that was introduced a few years ago (Ison, 2020). A considerable body of evidence highlights the challenge of detecting contract cheating, indicating that tracing contract cheating is much more difficult than identifying other forms of academic misconduct. (Denisova-Schmidt, 2019; Harper et al., 2021; Lines, 2016) Correspondingly, contract cheating is considered the most deceptive form of academic dishonesty, characterized by "deliberate, pre-planned, and intentional" deception (Newton, 2018, p. 2). Despite recent attempts by vendors to develop effective tools for detecting contract cheating, identifying this type of ghostwriting through digital means remains a challenge (Anekwe, 2010; Dawson & Sutherland-Smith, 2018, 2019; Lancaster, 2019; Lines, 2016; Newton, 2018; Rogerson, 2014, 2017; Singh & Remenyi, 2016; Walker & Townley, 2012).

Numerous occurrences of contract cheating serve as substantial evidence for its prevalence across various academic disciplines (Eaton, 2020; Lancaster & Clarke, 2015). Furthermore, it is evident that the advancement of technology contributes to the increasing prevalence of contract cheating (Rogerson, 2017). Needless to say, the current state of contract cheating is worsened by the provision of a sense of legitimacy and the utilization of persuasive and aggressive marketing techniques by commercial essay mills (Rowland et al., 2018). These essay mills entice individuals into engaging in contract cheating by normalizing and presenting it as a legal practice (Medway et al., 2018). Additionally, the marketing strategies employed by ghostwriting services have experienced a surge during the pandemic (White, 2020), thereby raising concerns among responsible educators. Furthermore, since the epidemic, calls to use cheating services have increased significantly on a global scale (Lancaster & Cotarlan, 2021). Contract cheating services have boosted their marketing strategies and improved their accessibility for students by capitalizing on the pandemic (Seeland et al., 2020).

Genuine, real-world assignments are frequently recommended as effective measures to deter academic dishonesty overall. (Howard, 2007). To effectively combat contract cheating, Juola (2017) highlights the significance of stylometry as a well-established technology that can be employed to address a crucial issue in the field of education. Stylometry refers to the analysis of linguistic and stylistic patterns in written texts to identify unique authorship characteristics. Furthermore, in higher education, there appears to be a lag in the level of attention and effort dedicated to comprehensively addressing the expanding prevalence of contract cheating. Consequently, several challenges persist in detecting contract cheating. These include the difficulty of identifying essays that are entirely produced by third parties from scratch, the ease of access to essay mills facilitated by technological advancements, and the insufficient strength of institutional measures and policies, which collectively contribute to the perpetuation of contract cheating.

Collusion

Collusion encompasses the convergence of multiple components, working together in synchrony involving secretive cooperation and deliberate deceptive intentions, within the context of academic misconduct. (McGowan, 2016). Collusion has commonalities with other academic integrity infringements such as submitting another student's assignment as one's own, which falls within the ambit of both plagiarism and collusion. In essence, the underlying motivation behind all breaches of academic integrity is rooted in dishonesty.

Collusion, considered as one of the most serious academic misconduct forms due to its fuzzy nature, often leading students to mistakenly perceive it as collaboration. For instance, Carroll and Appleton (2001) note that "almost everyone struggles to distinguish where collaboration ends and collusion begins" (p. 15). Given that this tension between collaboration and collusion, Perry (2009) suggests that the positive educational practice of group work and high levels of student integration may inadvertently contribute to collusion. Rohmana et. al (2022) explored investigated academic integrity in online EFL classrooms at university level with 35 students. 61.1% of them were engaged in contract cheating and plagiarism. 38.9% respondents collaborated with others on individually assigned work; that was collusion. This explains why students have difficulty in recognizing the border line between collaboration and collusion.

According to the findings of various studies (e.g., Hard et al., 2006; Trost, 2009), more than 50% of students in higher education openly admit to engaging in collusion. Barrett and Cox (2005) highlight that "the boundary between students legitimately helping each other and colluding with each other cannot be realistically defined in a way that covers all assignments" (p. 117). All in all, the multifaced and fuzzy nature of collusion requires to be embraced all its dimensions with the help of a holistic approach.

Students' Perception of Academic Misconduct

Perceptions are shaped by an individual's environment and surroundings (Kowalski & Westen, 2004). These perceptions provide insights into individuals' beliefs and can offer clues about their actions (Pajares, 1992). Therefore, it can be inferred that students' perception of academic integrity influences their attitudes and behavior. Understanding students'

perceptions of academic integrity violations holds significant importance in exploring the underlying motives and factors contributing to such misconduct (Ashworth & Bannister, 1977; Spaulding, 2009).

Schmelkin et al. (2008) suggest that students' perception of the seriousness of academic misconduct offenses varies. Students are inclined to consider some actions as falling outside the boundaries of academic integrity, even though these actions can still be classified as academic misconduct (Jordan, 2001). This variability in perception of academic integrity is also influenced by cultural factors. For instance, a cross-cultural study conducted by Lupton et al. (2000) comparing U.S. and Polish students revealed substantial differences in their perception of academic misconduct. Polish students, in line with their perception, considered cheating on an examination to be a less serious academic integrity violation compared to their U.S. counterparts. Interestingly, the percentage of academic misconduct incidents attributed to Polish students (61%) was significantly higher than that of U.S. students (24%). This highlights the crucial role of students' perception of academic integrity in understanding the severity of academic misconduct.

In the realm of online education, there is a prevailing belief among faculty members and students that it is relatively easier to become involved in instances of academic misconduct (Kennedy, 2000). Faculty members, in particular, hold the perception that academic misconduct is more prevalent in online education (Dietz-Uhler, 2011; Hancock, 2011; Watson & Sottile, 2010). It is evident that effectively addressing the challenges of academic integrity in online education, as well as detecting the types of academic misconduct in which students are more likely to engage, heavily relies on gaining a deep understanding of students' awareness and perceptions. By examining the awareness and perception of students, it becomes possible to trace and address issues related to academic integrity in the online education setting. This understanding plays a crucial role in developing strategies to promote and maintain academic honesty in online learning environments.

From this standpoint, this study set out to explore the students' perceptions of academic integrity during ERT. The research questions of this study are as follows:

Research Questions:

RQ1: Do the participants consider the cases of a) contract cheating b) collusion c) plagiarism as cheating?

RQ2: How seriously do the participants consider the scenarios of academic misconduct?

RQ3: Have the participants witnessed a) contract cheating b) collusion c) plagiarism?

RQ4: What are the participants' perceptions regarding the trajectory (increase or decrease) of academic integrity violations during Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT)? Additionally, is there a notable distinction in the perceptions of academic misconduct between female and male participants?

Methodology

Participants and Setting

The study was conducted at a public university located in the western region of Türkiye, specifically within the School of Foreign Languages, during the spring term of the 2021-2022 academic year. The participants consisted of 234 students who were studying English as a foreign language (EFL). Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, the students were enrolled in online English classes, with a total of 25 hours per week. Throughout the year, students were expected to successfully complete at least three modules, ranging from beginner to pre-intermediate or intermediate levels. These modules included A2 and B1 levels, as well as a repeat module for those who did not pass the A2 level. Each module had a duration of 14 weeks. As part of the Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) arrangements, certain modifications were made to the assessment process. Specifically, the number of exams focusing on productive skills was increased, with four speaking exams and seven writing assignments in each module.

In terms of participant demographics, the majority fell within the age range of 18 to 22 years old. Out of the 234 participants, 147 were female (62.8%) and 87 were male (37.2%). The participants represented various majors, including Industrial Engineering, Civil Engineering, Business Administration, Labor Economy and Industrial Relations, International Relations, Chemistry, Electronical Communication Engineering, and Environmental Engineering. The participants were non-native English speakers, and their first language is Turkish.

Ethical approval was obtained for this research from the Scientific Research Ethics Committee of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University School of Graduate Studies (Date: 01.07.2021, 2021/12-30)

Data Collection Tools

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the perception of academic integrity among freshmen students through their interpretation of hypothetical academic misconduct scenarios (refer to Appendix I). The hypothetical academic misconduct scenarios constituting quantitative data of the study adapted from Lozier (2012). This questionnaire consists of twelve (12) scenarios and contract cheating, plagiarism, collusion are the academic integrity

transgressions employed in these hypothetical scenarios, and the distribution of the sample hypothetical cases of academic misconduct is equal; namely, there are three sample scenarios for each academic misconduct types. There are also three scenarios in the questionnaire which are not regarded as a form of academic misconduct. The participants were asked to evaluate each scenario and determine whether it constituted academic misconduct. Additionally, they were requested to assess the seriousness of each identified academic misconduct on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from one (least serious) to five (most serious). The questionnaire also included a follow-up question for each scenario, inquiring whether the participants had personally witnessed such academic misconduct in their own experiences, with response options of "Yes" or "No".

To ensure the content validity of the hypothetical academic misconduct scenarios, expert opinions were sought. The raters evaluated the scenarios to establish inter-rater reliability and reach a consensus on their content. Subsequently, a digital version of the questionnaire was created using Google Forms to facilitate data collection. The link to the questionnaire was shared with the target group following the necessary arrangements with the school.

The process of obtaining expert opinions involves two key considerations. First, the selection of the expert panel is crucial and should be based on the expertise of the panel members (Davis, 1992). Second, the number of experts required is another important factor, with various scholars like Grant and Davis (1997) proposing a range of two to twenty experts. Nonetheless, Lynn, (1986) suggests that while the panel size is often determined by the researcher's access to experts, it is advisable to include a minimum of five experts. This is essential to ensure a robust dataset for assessing agreement among the panel members. Accordingly, I have applied to seven experts who hold PhD degree in the field of English Language Teaching and also have research and teaching experience more than 10 years in the subject matters of this dissertation, including writing, academic integrity.

Data Analysis and Results

The data collected through the questionnaire from 234 participants were analyzed with the help of SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 25.0). To find out the participants' identification of the cases in the scenarios, the results were descriptively analyzed and shown pertaining to frequencies and percentages of the number of answers and percentages. Moreover, descriptive statistics of individual items for each construct were computed to explore the second research question. The frequency analysis was computed for the third research question pertaining to witnessing academic misconduct. For the fourth research question, frequency analysis was computed to explore the perception of the participants about the course of academic misconduct during ERT. Moreover, the chi square test was carried out to explore whether there was a significant difference between female and male participants' perception of academic integrity in ERT.

In the assessment of intercoder reliability, 30% of the coded quotations were subject to dual coding by a secondary researcher, and the Cohen's Kappa coefficient was subsequently computed to explore the level of agreement. The outcomes of this analysis attested to an exceptional degree of reliability in the process of coding the interview data ($K = .948, p < .001$).

Limitations

Of the limitations of the study, the primary limitation stems from the gender of the participants who were predominantly female. The participants were also predominantly college freshmen, making it difficult to generalize results to senior students. Finally, the participants also consisted of students from one university, making it difficult to generalize results to students at other universities in a variety of geographical areas.

Research Question 1

One of the purposes of this particular study is to find out whether the participants correctly identify the misconduct cases in the scenarios. In order to analyze the identification of cases in the scenarios, a frequency analysis was conducted. Table 1 presents the frequency scores of participants' identification of the cases in the scenarios.

Table 1. The Frequency Scores of Participants' identification of the Cases in the Scenarios ($N=234$)

Scenarios	N_{Yes}	%	N_{No}	%
Plagiarism ¹	215	91.9	19	8.1
Plagiarism ²	219	93.6	15	6.4
Plagiarism ³	211	90.2	23	9.8
Collusion ¹	205	87.6	29	12.4
Collusion ²	182	77.8	52	22.2

Collusion³	192	82.1	42	17.9
Contract Cheating¹	189	80.8	45	19.2
Contract Cheating²	208	88.9	26	11.1
Contract Cheating³	202	86.3	32	13.7
No Cheating¹	118	50.4	116	49.6
No Cheating²	62	26.5	172	73.5
No Cheating³	72	30.8	162	69.2

Note: P¹: Copying the answers from the internet; P²: Copying an article from the internet; P³: Copying a friend's work without permission; C¹: Getting help from a friend for an exam; C²: Colluding for a speech; C³: Working together for an exam; CC¹: Purchasing an article from the internet; CC²: Purchasing the answers of the book; CC³: Getting help from translation agency.

Table 1 indicates that top three percentages of the cases belong to plagiarism scenarios which were rated as 'yes' as academic misconduct while the rates 'no' of contract cheating scenarios were comparatively high. Among the no cheating scenarios, one of the no-cheating scenarios, namely, No Cheating1 (50.4%) was rated as 'yes' more than other two the no-cheating scenarios (30.8% and 26.5%).

Research Question 2

The severity of the case seriousness depicted in the scenarios was under investigation in the pursuit of exploring the answer of the second research question. Table 2 presents the mean values of the scenarios and the frequency scores of the options.

Table 2. Mean Scores of The Hypothetical Scenarios and The Frequency Scores of the Options of the Likert Scale (N=234)

Scenarios	M	SD	Not serious at all		Not serious so		So-so		Serious		Very Serious	
			f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Plagiarism¹	3.87	1.27	20	8.5	12	5.1	48	20.5	53	22.6	101	43.2
Plagiarism²	4.15	1.22	16	6.8	12	5.1	25	10.7	48	20.5	133	56.8
Plagiarism³	3.80	1.22	24	10.3	24	10.3	36	15.4	41	17.5	109	46.6
Collusion¹	3.80	1.38	24	10.3	21	9.0	40	17.1	42	17.9	107	45.7
Collusion²	3.22	1.47	45	19.2	31	13.2	49	20.9	45	19.2	64	27.4
Collusion³	3.51	1.46	40	17.1	26	11.1	34	14.5	42	17.9	92	39.3
Contract Cheating¹	3.56	1.56	33	14.1	30	12.8	35	15.0	46	19.7	90	38.5
Contract Cheating²	3.82	1.39	22	9.4	22	9.4	37	15.8	48	20.5	105	44.9
Contract Cheating³	3.68	1.34	28	12.0	26	11.1	36	15.4	48	20.5	96	41.0

Note: P1: Copying the answers from the internet; P2: Copying an article from the internet; P3: Copying a friend's work without permission; C1: Getting help from a friend for an exam; C2: Colluding for a speech; C3: Working together for an exam; CC1: Purchasing an article from the internet; CC2: Purchasing the answers of the book; CC3: Getting help from translation agency.

As shown in Table 2, all academic integrity transgression forms received high mean values with the implication that the participants considered the cases in the scenarios as academic misconduct. As for the serious severity of academic misconduct forms, more than half students (56.8%) considered the case in Plagiarism2 scenario as "very serious" with the highest frequency ($f=133$) of all, with the second highest frequency ($f=109$), slightly less than half of the participants (46.6 %) regarded Plagiarism2 the second very serious case. Moreover, the case in Collusion1 scenario had the third highest frequency ($f=45.7$) while the other case belonging to the category of collusion, namely, Collusion2 had the lowest frequency ($f=27.4$).

Research Question 3

Research question 3 sought to investigate whether the participants had witnessed instances of contract cheating, collusion, and plagiarism during Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT). The responses to this question were recorded as either "Yes" or "No." Table 3 presents the frequency scores depicting the participants' responses regarding the occurrence of Collusion1 ($f=77$), and Collusion3 ($f= 69$) scenarios most. On the other hand, the case in Contract Cheating1 scenario was the one which has the lowest frequency ($f=5$).

Table 3. The Frequency Scores of Witnessing Academic Misconduct ($N=234$)

Scenarios	Yes	%	No	%
Plagiarism1	21	9.0	213	91.0
Plagiarism2	31	13.2	203	86.8
Plagiarism3	17	7.3	217	92.7
Collusion1	77	32.9	157	67.1
Collusion2	18	7.7	216	92.3
Collusion3	69	29.5	165	70.5
Contract Cheating1	5	2.1	229	97.9
Contract Cheating2	14	6.0	220	94.0
Contract Cheating3	15	6.4	219	93.6

Note: P1: Copying the answers from the internet; P2: Copying an article from the internet; P3: Copying a friend's work without permission; C1: Getting help from a friend for an exam; C2: Colluding for a speech; C3: Working together for an exam; CC1: Purchasing an article from the internet; CC2: Purchasing the answers of the book; CC3: Getting help from translation agency.

Research Question 4

One of the objectives of this study is to examine the participants' perception regarding the changes in academic integrity violations during Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT). Table 4 presents the participants' perception of the status of academic misconduct using a 5-point Likert scale, as well as the variations in responses between genders. According to the findings presented in Table 4, 43.2% of the participants indicated that academic misconduct had somewhat increased during ERT, while 35% believed that it had increased dramatically. Only 1.3% of the participants agreed that academic misconduct had dramatically decreased. Additionally, a chi-square test was conducted to explore the perception differences between female and male participants. Table 4 displays the results, indicating that 46.9% of female participants and 36.8% of male participants reported a somewhat increase in academic misconduct. Furthermore, 36.7% of female participants and 32.2% of male participants perceived a dramatic increase in academic misconduct.

Table 4. The Frequency of Academic Misconduct Acts and Chi Square Test Scores of the Prevalence of Academic Misconduct Acts

The Impact of ERT on Academic Integrity	f	%	Female $n=147$	%	Male $n=87$	%	χ^2	df	Φ
I think cheating has decreased dramatically	3	1.3	1	0.7	2	2.3	11.025	4	.02
I think cheating has decreased somewhat	4	1.7	0	0	4	4.6			

There has been no change	44	18.8	23	15.6	21	24.1
I think cheating has increased somewhat	101	43.2	69	46.9	32	36.8
I think cheating has increased dramatically	82	35.0	54	36.7	28	32.2

The results of the study indicate a significant difference in the perception of the prevalence of academic misconduct acts between genders. Females exhibited a higher inclination to believe that academic misconduct, specifically cheating, has increased during the period of study ($p < .05$). This finding suggests that female participants were more likely to perceive a rise in academic integrity transgressions compared to their male counterparts.

Discussion

This study aims to investigate the perception of freshman students towards cheating scenarios and the severity of academic misconduct. The findings revealed that a majority of the respondents considered plagiarism to be a form of academic misconduct compared to other depicted acts. This finding is consistent with previous studies by Lim and See (2001), Lozier (2012), McCabe et al. (2001), and Peled et al. (2013). Interestingly, students did not perceive certain actions, such as looking up a word during an exam or collaborating on a test, as academic misconduct. This finding aligns with the study conducted by Rabi et al. (2006) who conducted a study with 296 pharmacy students to explore their perceptions of academic dishonesty. They found out that over 50 percent of respondents did not consider certain actions as academic misconduct cases. Furthermore, a noteworthy finding of this study is that collusion depicted in the scenarios was not perceived as a serious form of academic misconduct compared to plagiarism and contract cheating. This finding is in line with the research by O'Neill and Pfeiffer (2012), where collusion was considered a trivial form of cheating. Another study by Rowe (2004) highlighted collusion as a major problem in online education due to students' perception of these academic transgressions. Participants in the study reported viewing collaboration during in-class activities and collusion during exams as nearly the same, leading to a lack of recognition of collusion as academic misconduct.

The study also revealed the frequency of witnessing academic misconduct forms, with collusion being prominent in this regard. The perception of collusion as a less serious form of misconduct may contribute to the increased likelihood of witnessing such behavior. These findings shed light on the perceptions and tendencies of students regarding academic misconduct, particularly collusion, and highlight the need for further education and awareness on the seriousness of such behaviors.

Collusion stands out as the most frequently observed form of academic misconduct among both female and male respondents. Curiously, many students seem to take a certain degree of "pride" in recognizing the widespread nature of cheating. Nevertheless, when it comes to their own involvement in such dishonest practices, they experience discomfort and unease at the prospect of being observed.

The unforeseen shift to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic caught educational institutions at all levels off guard, leaving them ill-prepared to implement adequate measures to safeguard academic integrity. It is evident that the sudden transition to ERT has exposed deficiencies in the practices and implementation that fail to uphold its intended purpose effectively. The participants in the study exhibited a tendency to perceive a certain degree of quantitative increase in academic misconduct incidents. This finding aligns with previous research conducted by Calluzzon and Cante (2004), Dietz-Uhler (2011), Etter et al. (2006), Faucher and Caves (2009), Frost et al. (2007), Granitz and Loewhancocy (2007), Hancock (2011), and Watson and Sottile (2010).

Conclusion and Implications

Notwithstanding the limitations, as per students' observations, this study justifies once more that the attempts and incidences of academic integrity transgression remains as an epidemic issue at higher education. Academic misconduct acts in online education are more rampant than face-to face education. Though female participants' awareness of academic misconduct regarding their responses is higher than the male participants, it is obvious that collusion takes its strength from being common, students do not perceive collusion and other many behaviours as a form of academic integrity transgression. In this regard, it can be said that at the beginning of the term initial collaboration between students evolve and this collaboration gives birth to academic integrity transgression within time under full-of-system gaps circumstances and their classmate; namely their scaffolder can be their cheat-mate.

As one of the pedagogical implications of the study, lecturers should pay attention to these collaborations and raise students' awareness regarding the restriction of the pair works and group works which should only take place as an in-class activity. Another pedagogical implication of the study is that online education requires specific applications of both technical and pedagogical. This study may stand as a good example about how students perceive academic

misconduct and behave in accordance with the system gaps. Effective and well-designed assignment into which call students creativity can pave the way of a well-designed assessment. Otherwise, students may plagiarize the assignment from one-click away internet in online education.

In terms of methodological implications, it is noteworthy that the data collection procedure was implemented towards the conclusion of the academic term. Notably, this temporal arrangement revealed a higher inclination among students to candidly disclose their involvement in various academic misconduct practices. Evidently, conducting data collection at the conclusion of the term may yield advantages in terms of mitigating any perceived pressures associated with potential detection.

Finally, it is obvious that without proper actions and implementations taken by academic institution, fulfilling academic integrity goals can be trapped within an academic institution. Well-designed assignments for effective assessments can be initial step of preserving academic integrity within an academic institution.

This study is subject to certain limitations, primarily due to its exclusive focus on a single university within Türkiye. Therefore, future investigations should aim to broaden the scope by encompassing multiple academic institutions, thus involving a larger and more diverse participant pool. Conducting research across various academic settings would facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, and potentially provide insights that are transferable to a broader context.

Contribution Rate of the Researchers

The study was jointly designed by the first and second authors, and data collection tools were prepared together. The first author conducted the data collection process. Data analysis was conducted jointly. The manuscript was written by the first author and revised by the second author before its final version was submitted.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in this study.

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