

**CULTURE OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN
UKRAINE: PECULIARITIES OF DEVELOPMENT AND FORMATION**

***CULTURA DE INTEGRIDADE ACADÊMICA DOS ESTUDANTES DE PÓS-
GRADUAÇÃO NA UCRÂNIA: PECULIARIDADES DE DESENVOLVIMENTO E
FORMAÇÃO***

***CULTURA DE INTEGRIDAD ACADÉMICA DE LOS ESTUDIANTES DE POSTGRADO
EN UCRANIA: PECULIARIDADES DE DESARROLLO Y FORMACIÓN***



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ABSTRACT: The article aims to study the diachronicity of the development of academic integrity in Ukrainian higher education institutions from the origin of this phenomenon to its modern development. The scientific methods of descriptive analysis, content analysis, and a survey based on a pre-designed questionnaire were used. The results show that active discussion of academic integrity in the Ukrainian scientific and pedagogical environment began after the events of the Revolution in 2014. Under current conditions, postgraduate students in Ukraine are gaining a general understanding of academic integrity, which primarily involves avoiding plagiarism and reflecting truthful results in their research. However, a significant problem is that most postgraduate students have little or no access to specific academic integrity codes at their universities. The conclusions summarise that this trend indicates the importance of introducing academic standards and instructions on academic integrity into the educational process.

KEYWORDS: Postgraduate students. Academic integrity. Higher education institutions. Ukraine.

RESUMO: O propósito do presente artigo consiste em examinar a diacronicidade do desenvolvimento da integridade acadêmica nas instituições de ensino superior da Ucrânia, desde a sua concepção até a sua configuração contemporânea. Para atingir esse objetivo, foram empregados métodos científicos, incluindo análise descritiva, análise de conteúdo e uma pesquisa baseada em um questionário predefinido. Os resultados evidenciam que a discussão ativa sobre a integridade acadêmica no meio científico e pedagógico ucraniano teve início após os eventos da Revolução em 2014. Na conjuntura atual, os estudantes de pós-graduação na Ucrânia estão desenvolvendo uma compreensão abrangente da integridade acadêmica, centrada principalmente na prevenção do plágio e na apresentação fiel dos resultados de suas pesquisas. Entretanto, um desafio substancial reside no fato de que a maioria dos estudantes de pós-graduação possui acesso limitado ou inexistente aos códigos específicos de integridade acadêmica em suas respectivas instituições de ensino superior. As conclusões destacam que essa tendência sublinha a importância da implementação de padrões acadêmicos e diretrizes relacionadas à integridade acadêmica no contexto do processo educacional.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Estudantes de pós-graduação. Integridade acadêmica. Instituições de ensino superior. Ucrânia.

RESUMEN: El propósito del artículo es estudiar la diacronicidad del desarrollo de la integridad académica en las instituciones de educación superior ucranianas desde el origen de este fenómeno hasta su desarrollo moderno. Se utilizarán métodos científicos de análisis descriptivo, análisis de contenido y una encuesta basada en un cuestionario prediseñado. Los resultados muestran que el debate activo sobre la integridad académica en el entorno científico y pedagógico ucraniano comenzó después de los acontecimientos de la Revolución de 2014. En las condiciones actuales, los estudiantes de posgrado en Ucrania están adquiriendo una comprensión general de la integridad académica, que implica principalmente evitar el plagio y reflexionar resultados verdaderos en sus investigaciones. Sin embargo, un problema importante es que la mayoría de los estudiantes de posgrado tienen poco o ningún acceso a códigos específicos de integridad académica en sus universidades. Las conclusiones resumen que esta tendencia indica la importancia de introducir estándares académicos e instrucciones sobre integridad académica en el proceso educativo.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Estudiantes de posgrado. Integridad académica. Instituciones de enseñanza superior. Ucrania.

Introduction

The culture of academic integrity represents one of the fundamental elements in higher education and research, playing a crucial role in shaping individuals' intellectual development and consolidating the scientific community. Graduate students, when choosing to pursue research careers, not only benefit from this culture but also become essential agents. As young researchers, they seek to reach new heights in their fields of study while committing to preserving and promoting the principles and values that characterize scientific integrity.

The analysis of the culture of academic integrity among graduate students in Ukraine is of singular importance, as it directly influences the quality of research and the trust placed in Ukrainian education and significantly impacts the formation of future generations of scientists and professionals. Studies in this area can contribute to the educational system's development by enhancing academic integrity standards in Ukraine. An identified gap lies in the fact that many graduate students may not possess a comprehensive understanding of academic integrity, including its standards and regulations. Thus, it becomes pertinent to investigate the historical evolution of the concept of academic integrity in Ukraine and its contemporary understanding.

Academic integrity encompasses ethical conduct in all phases of research, from data collection and analysis to the publication of scientific results. This principle aims to ensure the integrity of the scientific process, reassure the public about the reliability of scientific findings, and maintain a crucial element of trust in the academic community as a whole. In a context of increasing competition and rapid technological development, academic integrity assumes particular relevance as it safeguards the preservation and enhancement of scientific standards and norms. This article will focus on an in-depth analysis of the culture of academic integrity among graduate students, identifying its key elements and stages of development. In particular, the impact of this phenomenon on the educational and scientific growth of future scientists and the development of the scientific community as a whole will be examined. Additionally, recommendations and practical advice will be presented to foster the development of this crucial culture among young researchers.

Objective and Research Questions

This article aims to analyze the diachronic development of academic integrity in Ukrainian higher education institutions from its origins to the present day. To achieve this objective, the following tasks will be addressed: determining the evolution of academic integrity in Ukraine and outlining the current state of understanding of this concept based on research.

Theoretical Framework

The Declaration on Ethical Values and Principles in Europe was adopted in September 2004 in collaboration with the European Centre of UNESCO for Higher Education. This document highlights the crucial elements of academic integrity. The impetus for the reorganization of higher education and the adoption of a new perspective was provided by the fundamental provisions of the Lisbon Treaty (2007), outlining the principles of education in the European Union (RANSOME; NEWTON, 2017). This agreement sought to establish a single European Research Area.

Furthermore, the Belgian Communiqué (2009), released by the ministers of education of the European Union in the context of the “Bologna Process 2020 - A European Higher Education Area for the New Decade”, emphasized the importance of promoting competence in research and the ability to produce innovative and cutting-edge research. Another relevant milestone was the adoption of the Code of Ethics for Researchers in Ukraine in April 2009 (ARTYUKHOV, 2017).

This code emphasized scientists' moral responsibility for the consequences of their activities. Simultaneously, some mechanisms to ensure academic integrity were established in the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education” (2023) (VERKHOVNA RADA OF UKRAINE, 2023). This legislation contemplated the creation of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. In 2018, the government approved the composition of the commission responsible for selecting the members of the Agency, which includes nine individuals, including representatives from European organizations.

Recently, in Ukraine, society has begun to perceive the phenomenon of academic integrity as a kind of educational norm that does not contradict the Law on Scientific and Scientific-Technical Activities (2016) (KUZMENKO, 2021a). Thus, scientific literature corroborates that academic integrity is a set of principles, values, and norms that determine ethical behavior in the academic environment. This concept encompasses various principles regulating the activities of students, teachers, researchers, and all those involved in academic work (see Table 1).

Table 1 – Key aspects of academic integrity

Truthfulness and honesty	Students, teachers, and researchers should provide accurate and honest information and not present their work or research results as their own if they are not.
Prohibition of plagiarism	Plagiarism, i.e., the use of someone else's intellectual property without proper citation of the source, is a serious violation of academic integrity.
Fairness	All students, including postgraduate students, should have equal opportunities to learn, and teachers and organizations should set fair assessments and treat all students equally.
Compliance with rules and standards	Participants in the academic environment must adhere to the rules and standards for citing sources, preparing research papers, and conducting research.
Responsibilities and obligations	All participants in the academic process must take responsibility for their actions and do everything possible to ensure the integrity of intellectual work.

Source: Compiled by the authors based on the analysis: Poliezhaiiev (2021), Sotiriadou (2019), Garwe (2019), Bane (2019), and Kuzmenko (2021b)

In this context, academic integrity plays a crucial role in maintaining the credibility and quality of education and research and is also essential for preserving cohesion in the academic environment. Violation of academic integrity by postgraduate students can lead to severe consequences, such as expulsion from the institution or loss of professional reputation.

Methodology

Participants

The participants in this study consist of 112 postgraduate students from various universities and institutions in Ukraine. The selection was done through the stratified random sampling method, aiming to ensure representativeness in different regions and disciplines. The theoretical framework of this research is based on the works of scientists such as Rak-Młynarska (2022); Rakhimov and Mukhamediev (2022), Bane (2019).

Sample procedure

The study employs a stratified sample of postgraduate students by region (West, Central, East, and South of Ukraine) and academic discipline (social sciences, humanities, basic sciences, exact and natural sciences). Random selection was also applied, with students from

each stratum being chosen randomly, using a random number generator or equivalent method, to ensure a representative sample. Participants were invited to participate in the experiment via email. A cross-sectional research design was employed, collecting data at a single point in time to assess the current state of the culture of academic integrity among postgraduate students in Ukraine.

Instruments and data collections

The main tool for data collection was a questionnaire designed to gather information on various aspects of the culture of academic integrity. The questionnaire covered demographic information (age, gender, university, academic discipline), knowledge and awareness of academic integrity, attitudes and perceptions, personal experience, and observations about academic integrity. Distributed through social networks and created using Google Forms, the questionnaire was complemented by a group discussion with some participants to gain a qualitative understanding of their experiences and perceptions of academic integrity.

Data analysis

Descriptive analysis was employed to summarize demographic information and the main findings from the questionnaire. Simultaneously, qualitative analysis was conducted, using thematic analysis to examine qualitative data from group discussions, following similar methods to Bane's (2019). An integrative approach was subsequently adopted to combine quantitative and qualitative findings (RAK-MŁYNARSKA, 2022).

Research ethics

Informed consent of participants was obtained correctly, ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of data. Additionally, cultural and contextual nuances of the academic environment in Ukraine were carefully considered during the planning and interpretation of the study.

Results

Preserving academic integrity represents an essential foundation in higher education and research (WAGHID; DAVIDS, 2019). This concept encompasses a wide range of ethical and moral standards applicable to students and scholars. The core of academic integrity lies in honesty, meaning that all work, whether by students or researchers, should be conducted with honesty and integrity. Plagiarism, characterized by the unauthorized reproduction of ideas,

texts, or research results without proper citation, constitutes a serious violation of academic integrity (DENISOVA-SCHMIDT, 2018).

Academic integrity also encompasses honesty in the execution of tasks and tests. Researchers must adhere to ethical standards in data collection and research conduct (RAKHIMOV; MUKHAMEDIEV, 2022), including avoiding result manipulation and preserving data confidentiality when necessary. Scientific publications must be honest and objective, faithfully reflecting the research results. Additionally, academic integrity incorporates honesty in collaboration and cooperation (SBAFFI; ZHAO, 2022).

The phenomenon of "academic integrity" was introduced to Ukraine from the Western world and received recognition from the Ukrainian educational and scientific community, backed at the legislative level and enshrined in the Law of Ukraine "On Education" (VERKHOVNA RADA OF UKRAINE, 2023). This concept encompasses integrity, honesty, trust, impartiality, responsibility, mutual respect, courage, consistent advocacy, legality, science, transparency, professionalism, openness, the rule of law, competence, partnership, mutual assistance, truthfulness, tolerance, self-improvement, and improvement. These values, norms, and rules of academic integrity are derived from foreign experience, considering the peculiarities of national culture, mentality, and character (KUZMENKO, 2021a). It is worth noting that this list is not exhaustive but comprises the most prevalent components of academic integrity adopted in Ukraine.

Simultaneously, these processes have unfolded gradually. Ukrainian society was driven to initiate substantial reforms after the Revolution of Dignity in 2014. Various civil society organizations actively engaged in developing and implementing reforms in multiple sectors of the State, and the education and research sector was not left out of this process. A significant milestone was the decentralization of power, which gave local communities new resources and energies and expanded opportunities for future achievements. During the period from 2014 to 2016, the Renaissance International Foundation, founded by George Soros, played a crucial role by providing substantial support to priority areas, including reducing corruption, especially in higher education institutions, the effective integration of Ukraine into the European Union, creating platforms for dialogue between intellectuals and civic leaders, and improving the quality of teacher training, among others (KUZMENKO, 2021d).

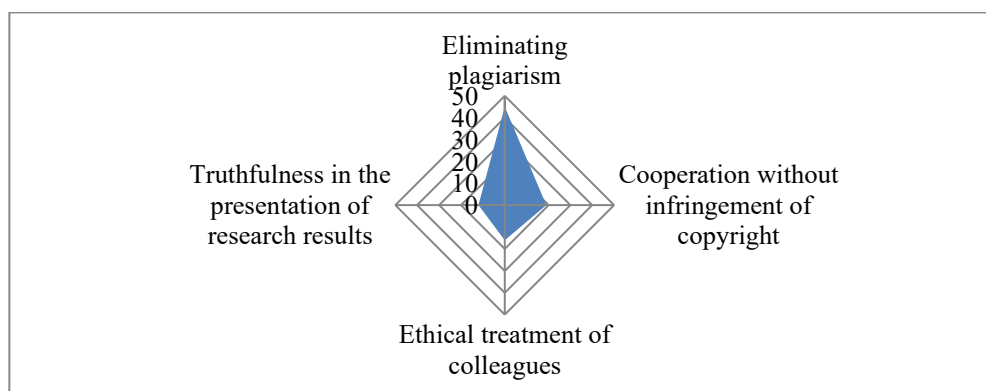
In the realm of government decisions, the Law of Ukraine, "On Higher Education," adopted on July 1, 2014, and in effect from September 6, 2014, established the creation of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. This agency was responsible for

overseeing academic integrity among postgraduate students. In general terms, the starting point for Ukrainian education and science was the situation in February 2016, when the information sector reacted actively to the new concept of "academic integrity," which was innovative for the Ukrainian scientific and pedagogical environment.

This term encompasses evident components such as honesty, autonomy, independence, and professionalism. From the Ukrainian perspective, this concept unites fundamental values and mechanisms to ensure and promote these values (LUNIACHEK *et al.*, 2020). By 2017, the term "academic integrity" had solidified and propelled further reform in Ukraine's educational system.

As evidenced by recent research, most Ukrainian postgraduate students (over 65%) believe they have a general understanding of academic integrity, indicating a basic level of awareness of this concept among postgraduate students. The key components of academic integrity include plagiarism prevention (45 respondents), truthfulness in presenting results (32 respondents), collaboration and idea exchange without copyright violation (19 respondents), and ethical behavior towards peers (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 – The main components of the academic integrity of Ukrainian postgraduate students



Source: authors' development

In this way, most respondents (over 40%) identified plagiarism prevention as the primary component of academic integrity. This finding indicates a high level of awareness regarding the issue of plagiarism among postgraduate students. Truthfulness in presenting results was also recognized as a crucial aspect. The research results demonstrate that Ukrainian postgraduate students were introduced to academic integrity norms at the master's level. However, it was only in the context of postgraduate studies that they gained a deeper understanding of the nature of this concept.

The primary sources of information on academic integrity were methodological recommendations and instructions from professors (38 individuals), internet sources (37 individuals), lectures, and seminars on this topic (30 individuals). However, only a few Ukrainian postgraduate students knew their universities' specific codes of academic integrity (only 7 interviewees mentioned this). Overall, the development and consolidation of academic integrity constitute a process that takes time and involves different stakeholders, such as postgraduate students, professors, and educational and research institutions.

The key elements of developing and consolidating academic integrity among Ukrainian postgraduate students encompass various relevant aspects. In this context, information plays a crucial role, as well as the example provided by more experienced academics, teaching and creating a culture of discussion, among others. These elements, together, drive the development and formation of academic integrity among Ukrainian postgraduate students, ensuring progress in the educational environment as a whole. Simultaneously, various special projects were conceived to promote the development of academic integrity among postgraduate students in Ukraine.

In particular, a partnership between Kyiv-Mohyla Academy University, the Ukrainian organization ELibUkr, and the Renaissance Foundation resulted in the creating of a special course titled "Academic Integrity at the University." In 2020, the project "Academic Integrity and Quality Initiative" was established, a collaboration between institutions such as the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education of Ukraine, together with the American Councils for International Education as international partners.

Additionally, there is a specific course on academic integrity for Ukrainian postgraduate students on the Prometheus platform. Its main purpose is to develop an understanding of the fundamental principles of academic integrity, providing a disciplinary analysis from the integrity perspective. The course presents theoretical foundations and practical tools to strengthen the culture of academic integrity.

However, it is observed that Ukrainian postgraduate students, for the most part, are not aware of the specific codes of academic integrity at their universities (only 7 interviewees mentioned this). Therefore, it is crucial to emphasize the importance of introducing standards and guidelines for academic integrity into the educational process.

Discussion

Researchers emphasize the significance of academic values, considering them as the foundation of the educational environment and society (MARIONO; SABAR, 2022). Among these theoretical values, academic integrity stands out as one of the most important elements in the development of competitive professionals in the global job market. In the educational context, academic integrity has evolved into a distinctive value, and its integration into the corporate culture of the university is a collective effort of the entire academic community. The comprehensive approach required to address the challenge posed by students' lenient attitudes toward unethical practices in education and research is recognized as extraordinary and demands coordinated efforts.

European academics recommend paying attention to the characteristics of higher education institutions that facilitate or hinder academic dishonesty (RAK-MŁYNARSKA, 2022). The prevalence of academic misconduct is considerably lower in higher education institutions that have established a comprehensive legal framework, including guidelines, norms, regulations, statements, and codes (COJOCARIU; MAREȘ, 2021). Higher education institutions must prioritize promoting a culture of academic integrity and motivate students to adhere to these principles for their benefit and personal honesty.

Furthermore, to develop academic integrity, European universities have specially defined "Codes of Ethics" that establish the basic principles of research and education (CHANKOVA, 2019). These codes formulate clear rules and norms of ethical behavior for both postgraduate students and professional teachers and researchers. Many educational institutions also offer a special discipline called "Academic Writing" for postgraduate students. Similar trends are also known in America (KUZMENKO, 2021c). These elements effectively combat manifestations of dishonesty in the academic environment, including in research submitted for a doctoral degree.

Overcoming academic integrity issues in Ukraine requires joint efforts from the government, universities, the scientific community, and the public. The gradual elimination of these problems will help improve the level of education, increase confidence in Ukrainian scientific activity, and contribute to the development of national science and education (EATON; CHRISTENSEN HUGHES, 2022; KUZMENKO, 2021d). Teaching postgraduate students the principles of academic integrity and ethical standards should be an important part of education. At the same time, the study showed that a competitive environment in higher education and research can encourage greater adherence to academic integrity. Competition for

positions and funding can make breaking the rules less attractive (GOTTARDELLO; KARABAG, 2020). The establishment of independent external bodies, such as the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education, and the introduction of modern technologies to detect plagiarism have greatly facilitated the process of monitoring academic integrity.

Underestimated in the Ukrainian context, creating a culture in which honesty and academic integrity are considered high values can be crucial in overcoming the problems (DE MAIO; DIXON, 2022). This may involve the support of university authorities, campaigns, and events to promote integrity values among students and academics. Universities are actively developing academic disciplines related to revealing the essence of this phenomenon to doctoral students (MIRON *et al.*, 2021). At the same time, an additional option is to cooperate with international organizations and universities to implement best practices in the field of academic integrity and research ethics (CHRÁSKOVÁ; CHRÁSKA, 2022).

As the study revealed, some students use Internet resources to learn about the latest trends in developing academic integrity independently. It is also relevant to note the existence of special projects implemented in collaboration with international partners to shape Ukraine's academic integrity framework. However, these initiatives must be further developed to improve the situation in combating dishonesty in future postgraduate research.

Final considerations

It has been established that academic integrity as a phenomenon in the Ukrainian scientific and pedagogical environment began to be actively mentioned after the Revolution of Dignity in 2014. At that time, a new Law of Ukraine, "On Education," was being prepared, although the final definition of the term was only issued in 2017.

In the current stage of development, it has been found that postgraduate students are familiar with the fundamentals of academic integrity from the master's level. Postgraduate students have a general idea of academic integrity, mainly associated with plagiarism prevention and truthfulness in presenting results. At the same time, in the current phase, Ukrainian postgraduate students have little or no access to specific academic integrity codes at their universities.

This is a significant shortcoming, although most postgraduate students have a solid understanding of the concept of academic integrity thanks to the guidance of their professors and online sources. Promising areas for future research include the development of new methods that address the need to combat modern challenges of academic dishonesty,

particularly the misuse of digital tools (artificial intelligence capabilities, etc.) in rapidly evolving digital environments, making it essential to respond to these challenges at practical and legislative levels.

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