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Academic Norms and Plagiarism: Understanding the Role of Enculturation

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Abstract. This study explores the complex dynamics of academic enculturation and its influence on perceptions of plagiarism within higher education. Plagiarism presents an enduring challenge for educators and administrators, manifesting in various forms that often extend beyond simple deceit or theft to include profound misunderstandings shaped by cultural, generational, and educational factors. Prior research has identified multiple layers of misunderstanding associated with plagiarism, emphasizing the need for a nuanced approach to this issue. This paper specifically explores how the dimension of academic enculturation (a process through which individuals are inducted into the norms and values of the academic community) impacts perceptions and handling of plagiarism. By examining the responses of online faculty members, this study highlights the significant role that academic enculturation plays in shaping educators' approaches to plagiarism, revealing that misunderstandings often stem from deeper educational and cultural contexts rather than mere intent to deceive. Through a comprehensive analysis of responses from online faculty members ($n = 333$) across various disciplines, this manuscript offers new insights into the subtleties of plagiarism as influenced by academic enculturation, thereby contributing to more effective strategies for addressing this pervasive issue in higher education.

Plagiarism remains a critical issue that challenges educators and administrators at all educational levels. This study specifically examines the role of academic enculturation—a critical yet often overlooked factor—in shaping faculty perceptions and responses to plagiarism. Academic enculturation refers to the process by which individuals learn and internalize the norms, values, and expectations of the academic community, including ethical writing practices, citation standards, and principles of academic integrity. By focusing on academic enculturation, this research contributes a nuanced understanding of how deeply ingrained cultural and educational practices influence behaviors related to academic integrity. This insight is vital for developing more effective strategies to enhance academic integrity in higher education. Studies suggest that one major cause of student plagiarism is a lack of understanding about what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it (Rozar et al., 2020). Discussions in educational settings often focus more on the penalties associated with plagiarism rather than on educating students about the ethical use of information, especially in the digital age where artificial intelligence (AI) tools can easily generate text-based content (Elali & Rachid, 2023). These discussions rarely prioritize plagiarism education within the curriculum, often overshadowed by the primary focus on course content delivery (Nguyen, 2021). Recent research indicates that incidents of plagiarism in academic institutions are alarmingly persistent, with emerging technologies, including AI, introducing new complexities (Cotton et al., 2024; Gökçearsan et al., 2024; Mishra, 2023). Plagiarism is defined as the act of using someone else's ideas, words, or intellectual property without proper acknowledgment, often to gain some academic or professional advantage (Bretag et al., 2019).

Building on these insights, it is evident that while substantial research has explored the mechanisms and impacts of plagiarism broadly, less attention has been given to how plagiarism is perceived and addressed within the nuanced context of academic enculturation. Academic enculturation, the process through which individuals assimilate the norms and values of their academic environments, critically influences faculty and student interactions with the principles of academic integrity. This

This focus on academic enculturation as a significant factor in understanding plagiarism adds a vital dimension to the discourse, suggesting that strategies to enhance academic integrity must consider the deeply ingrained cultural and educational practices that influence behavior in academic settings.

study aims to fill this gap by examining the specific roles that academic enculturation plays in shaping faculty perceptions and responses to plagiarism. This focus on academic enculturation as a significant factor in understanding plagiarism adds a vital dimension to the discourse, suggesting that strategies to enhance academic integrity must consider the deeply ingrained cultural and educational practices that influence behavior in academic settings. The following sections will detail the methodology employed to explore these dynamics, highlighting how variations in academic enculturation across different faculty impact perceptions and handling of plagiarism, thus offering new insights into effective strategies for promoting academic integrity.

Misunderstanding of Plagiarism

The foundational research on the misunderstanding of plagiarism breaks down into three specific categories: cultural, generational, and academic enculturation (Evering & Moorman, 2012).

Cultural

Cultural factors significantly impact the likelihood of plagiarism among students in online education, particularly for those from diverse backgrounds. Culture shapes how individuals approach learning and writing, with specific challenges arising from language barriers and differing cultural values. For instance, international students, especially for English language learners, often struggle with forming thoughts, translating concepts, and creating proper sentence structures, which can lead to unintentional plagiarism (Sailsman et al., 2018). Moreover, cultural constructs such as collectivism, which prioritizes group over individual interests, can conflict with Western educational norms that emphasize originality and individual intellectual property (Yang & Congzhou, 2018). Such cultural discrepancies can complicate the understanding of plagiarism, with students from collectivist backgrounds possibly not grasping the concept of ownership of words or ideas. Additionally, differences in educational styles, such as the lecture-centered approach common in Eastern cultures versus the interactive, learner-centered style in the US, can further exacerbate these challenges, impacting students' ability to engage with critical thinking and adapt to Western academic expectations (Han & Han, 2019; Lucas, 2019).

Generational

Generational differences significantly influence students' understanding and perceptions of plagiarism, shaped by varying values and exposure to technology. Students from Generation Y and Z, often referred to as digital natives, have been immersed in technology from a young age, granting them unprecedented access to information (Dyer et al., 2022). This constant connectivity, however, has blurred their understanding of plagiarism due to ambiguous definitions and educational expectations that have not adapted as rapidly as technology has evolved. These students struggle with applying traditional concepts of intellectual property to the digital context where sharing and collaboration are commonplace. Additionally, the shift to online education has broadened access across diverse age groups, further complicating the traditional educational model and leading to a mix of digital learners and older generations returning to education. These shifts necessitate a reevaluation of how plagiarism and academic integrity are taught, ensuring that all students, regardless of generational categorization, can successfully navigate the complexities of a digital academic world.

Academic Enculturation

Academic enculturation involves familiarizing new students with the complex values, beliefs, rules, and policies of an academic institution, a process that can be challenging for those unfamiliar with the educational system (Dyer et al., 2022; Gilmore et al., 2010; Hu & Lei, 2015). It is often presumed that students enter higher education with an understanding of how universities function, including the ethical standards and academic expectations inherent to this environment. However, this is not always the case, and the lack of this foundational knowledge can lead to academic integrity issues, including plagiarism. The assumption that plagiarism stems solely from an undeveloped moral responsibility overlooks deeper issues related to academic socialization and the understanding of institutional values (Dyer et al., 2022; Gardner, 2009).

To mitigate these issues, academic stakeholders need to actively support students in becoming well-integrated into the academic community, which includes mastering essential academic skills like paraphrasing. Paraphrasing challenges are often symptomatic of broader issues such as inadequate vocabulary development or insufficient practice within the student's discipline (Walker, 2008). One specific paraphrasing challenge known as patchwriting is defined

by The Citation Project (n.d.) as “restating a phrase, clause, or one or more sentences while staying close to the language or syntax of the source” (para. 2). Jamieson (2016) describes how many of the problems students have with academic literacy are rooted in patchwriting.

The variability in reading and writing requirements across different academic disciplines and levels further complicates students' ability to adapt and succeed. Effective academic enculturation, therefore, must address these diverse educational needs by providing clear guidelines, robust support systems, and tailored feedback to help students navigate academic expectations and develop the necessary skills to avoid plagiarism. This holistic approach is crucial in fostering a deeper understanding and adherence to academic integrity among students.

The current study aims to delve deeper into faculty perceptions of academic enculturational factors influencing student plagiarism arising from misunderstandings. This exploration will involve examining faculty views on how academic enculturation can lead to varying misunderstandings about plagiarism, followed by a discussion on the modalities, including how online educators address academic enculturation misunderstandings.

Vignette Creation

The creation of the vignette is instrumental in exploring faculty perspectives on plagiarism, particularly misunderstandings that may arise due to cultural differences. As online courses continue to attract a younger, more culturally diverse student population, it becomes increasingly important to understand how instructors perceive and address these misunderstandings. The vignette, drawing from the theme of academic enculturation identified in prior research by Greenberger et al. (2016), serves to probe deeper into the complex issues surrounding plagiarism misconceptions.

The objective of using a fictional vignette is to create a realistic and educational online classroom scenario that facilitates critical reflection, a technique supported by Lowenthal (2008), who emphasized the value of storytelling in educational settings. This approach not only enhances the relatability of the scenario but also provides a dynamic framework for applying various research methods such as surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

The process of creating the vignette was guided by methodologies established by Simon and Tierney (2011), who utilized vignettes effectively to explore teachers' beliefs, conceptions, and reasoning processes. This methodological approach was also employed in a previous study by Greenberger et al. (2016), which initially crafted a vignette to explore cultural misunderstandings in plagiarism. In this current study, the vignette is employed on a larger scale with a more diverse faculty sample, aimed at eliciting detailed and focused responses that would further illuminate the faculty's thought processes and approaches to addressing plagiarism misunderstandings in the educational context.

Table 1

Cultural Misunderstanding Vignette Creation

Vignette Criteria	Description	Steps Taken to Create Vignette
Framed as a Story	Story has limited dialogue; it is primarily narrated	Created a story with dialogue illustrating Jennifer's struggle with academic norms, as she returns to school to earn a bachelor's degree in special education.
Short Story	Typically, less than 200 words	The vignette, totaling 271 words, presents a real-life scenario where Jennifer interacts with her professor and expresses confusion over academic expectations.
Relevant Story	Involves a simplified real-life scenario focused on a topic of interest	Included a relevant scenario of a mature student adjusting to academic requirements in an online course, highlighting her interactions with academic staff and her reaction to feedback.
Encourage Critical Thinking	The story allows for multiple answers or unique responses	The vignette leads to multiple possible faculty responses, including empathetic coaching, direct instruction on plagiarism, or referral to academic support services.
Incomplete	Purposely incomplete story; allows for multiple interpretations	The story ends with Jennifer's frustration and disbelief over the feedback, without providing a clear resolution, prompting discussions on how educators can better support non-traditional students like her.

Note. Adapted from Simon and Tierney (2011).

This vignette offers a detailed view of how academic enculturation can be a significant barrier for non-traditional students like Jennifer, who are returning to education after a long break and may struggle with the academic norms that are unfamiliar to them (see Appendix).

The researchers adhered strictly to the methodologies proposed by Simon and Tierney, which underscore the utility of vignettes as a research tool for probing into teachers' beliefs concerning academic enculturation (Greenberger et al., 2016; Schoenberg & Ravdal, 2000; Simon & Tierney, 2011). Following these established guidelines, the vignette construction for this study utilized a previously developed scenario by Greenberger et al. (2016), aimed at depicting a character undergoing the challenges of academic enculturation as an English language learner.

In developing the vignette, researchers conducted a simple Google search to select a name that resonates across multiple cultural contexts, settling on "Jennifer" due to its commonality. The scenario was crafted to reflect real-life experiences relayed by online instructors and insights drawn from current research. The vignette portrays Jennifer, a 48-year-old paraprofessional from Saginaw, Michigan, who decides to return to school after a decade of working with special needs students. As she navigates her third online course towards a bachelor's degree in special education, Jennifer grapples with adapting to the academic norms and practices—or "college stuff" as she terms it—which are unfamiliar and challenging for her.

The vignette goes on to depict a specific instance from Jennifer's academic journey: receiving a C+ in her Psychology 109 course due to several citation and paraphrasing errors that the professor, Dr. Tyler Smith, flagged as potential plagiarism. His feedback suggests ways for her to improve, including utilizing the university writing center and learning the APA style guide. Jennifer's reaction to this feedback is one of disbelief and frustration, questioning the necessity of stringent citation practices when, in her view, her instructor already knows her sources. Her comments, "Who does he think he is?" and questioning the value of citation, underscore her struggle with academic enculturation and highlight the generational and cultural disconnect between her understanding of academic expectations and the norms enforced by the institution.

This detailed vignette serves as a poignant example of the real-world challenges faced by non-traditional students in understanding and adapting to the academic culture, particularly around issues of academic integrity and writing norms. The survey included six statements that the participants answered on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly Agree). The statements are included below:

1. Jennifer seems to understand the purpose of formatting in academic essays.
2. Jennifer intentionally plagiarized.
3. The instructor should coach Jennifer on correct formatting, so there is no need to file a code of conduct violation report.
4. The instructor should not coach Jennifer on correct formatting, and because there is an organizational policy on plagiarism, the instructor should file a code of conduct violation report in accordance with that policy.
5. The instructor should coach Jennifer on correct formatting, and because there is an organizational policy on plagiarism, the instructor should file a code of conduct violation report in accordance with that policy.
6. With the right coaching, Jennifer will be well prepared to avoid plagiarizing and improve her grade on the next essay.

Methods

There were four research questions outlined in this inquiry into faculty perceptions and responses to plagiarism misunderstanding. The hypotheses used were non-directional.

RQ1: Is there a mean difference in faculty perception of plagiarism due to academic enculturation by faculty level of education?

RQ2: Is there a mean difference in faculty perception of plagiarism due to academic enculturation by faculty teaching level?

RQ3: Is there a mean difference in faculty perception of plagiarism due to academic enculturation by faculty college affiliation?

RQ4: Is there a mean difference in teaching status and their perception of plagiarism due to academic enculturation?

This study further explored the aspect of academic enculturation in the previous study by Greenberger et al. (2016) by delving deeper into academic enculturation. The previous study conducted a small focus group of 10 full-time online faculty members, allowing for extensive dialogue, which helped the researchers shape the design of the questions for the survey. For this study, participants read the fictional vignette about academic enculturation and then were prompted to respond to six statements regarding academic enculturation.

In this study, a 7-point Likert scale was employed to measure faculty perceptions of plagiarism influenced by academic enculturation. Extensive research supports that such scales enhance the reliability and validity of the data, especially in educational research where the diversity of opinion is vast¹. The statements were used to determine the faculty members' perceptions of plagiarism in the vignette (Schoenberg & Ravdal, 2000). The statements used a 7-point Likert scale to harness faculty responses (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5 = Somewhat Agree, 6 = Agree, and 7 = Strongly Agree). Seven-point Likert scales were chosen because they offer an easily quantifiable method for measuring beliefs or opinions without forcing participants to provide a concrete answer (Schoenberg & Ravdal, 2000), thus making the Likert-like scale statements used in the study highly versatile and easily incorporated into vignettes to anchor the participant responses (Schoenberg & Ravdal, 2000).

The first three statements were designed to gauge participants' perceptions of the dimension of misunderstanding, which included "Jennifer understands the role of paraphrasing in academic essays," "Jennifer plagiarized," and "Jennifer intentionally plagiarized." The last three statements focused on the actions of whether the instructor should coach, including "The instructor should coach Jennifer on paraphrasing, but there is no need to file a code of conduct violation report," "The instructor should coach Jennifer on paraphrasing, as well as file a code of conduct violation report," and "The instructor should not coach Jennifer on paraphrasing, but instead should file a code of conduct violation report."

After obtaining a site and Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, a detailed methodology was designed to explore the nuanced perceptions of plagiarism influenced by academic enculturation. By employing a non-parametric analysis, this study accounted for the non-normal distribution of data, ensuring that the findings are robust and reflective of the faculty's varied experiences.

Population and Sample Size

After obtaining site and Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, a survey was distributed using Survey Monkey to a convenience sample of both adjunct and full-time faculty at a university in the Southwest United States. A total of 354 instructors initially responded to the survey. Following data cleaning and error checking, 333 instructors' responses were deemed valid and included in the final analysis. The demographic breakdown of the final sample included 110 males (33%) and 223 females (67%). The participants were classified into three educational categories: master's degrees ($n = 139$), PhDs ($n = 115$), and professional doctorates ($n = 79$), with professional doctorates encompassing all non-PhD doctoral degrees. In terms of race and ethnicity, the majority were White or Caucasian (88.3%), followed by Black or African American (6.9%), Hispanic or Latino (1.5%), with Native American and Asian/Pacific Islanders each making up less than 1% of the sample. The category labeled 'Other' comprised 2.1% of the participants. Age distribution ranged from 26 to 77 years old, with the most common age being 55 years old, represented by 17 instructors. The largest age group was those between 50-59 years, including 101 instructors, while the smallest group, under 30 years, included only four instructors. The average age of the participants was 52.67, with a standard deviation of 11.43.

Procedures

Following data cleaning and error checking, the dataset was assessed for the assumptions of a one-way ANOVA. The evaluation revealed that the data did not meet the assumption of normality. Consequently, a non-parametric alternative, the Kruskal-Wallis H test, was employed to analyze the data (Rovai et al., 2014). Thus, the

¹ In this study, a 7-point Likert scale was employed to measure faculty perceptions of plagiarism influenced by academic enculturation. The decision to use a 7-point scale was informed by its ability to provide a more nuanced range of response options compared to narrower scales. This granularity is particularly advantageous in complex psychological constructs like perceptions and attitudes, where the intensity of agreement or disagreement can provide deeper insights into underlying beliefs. Moreover, the 7-point scale helps in reducing the frustration of respondents who might find fewer options too restrictive, while also avoiding the overwhelm that can come with more choices.

Kruskal Wallis H test was used for the between-groups analysis of the first three research questions about the level of education, college affiliation, and teaching level. For the last research question relating to the between groups of analysis of teaching level (part-time or full-time), the data failed the assumptions for a normal distribution for a t-test. Also, the non-parametric test of the Mann-Whitney U test was used for the analysis since the full-time sample size was too small, not meeting assumptions (Chen & Zhu, 2001).

Results

RQ1: Is there a mean difference in faculty perception of plagiarism due to academic enculturation by faculty level of education (Master's, PhD, Professional Doctorates)?

A Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted to assess differences in faculty perceptions of plagiarism based on their level of education. The results showed no statistically significant differences across the groups (master's, PhD, and professional doctorates) for the evaluated Likert-scale items. These findings indicate that faculty perceptions of plagiarism, as influenced by academic enculturation, do not significantly differ based on the level of education. The lack of statistical significance suggests a shared baseline understanding of plagiarism across these educational groups.

Table 2

Kruskal-Wallis H Test for Differences in Education Level and Perception of Plagiarism

Group	χ^2 (df)	p-value
Master's	5.084	.079
PhD	2.446	.294
Professional Doctorates	2.879	.237

Note. $p < .05$ *denotes significance

RQ2: Is there a mean difference in faculty perception of plagiarism due to academic enculturation by faculty teaching level (Undergraduate, Graduate, Doctoral)?

A Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted to assess differences in faculty perceptions of plagiarism based on their teaching level. The analysis revealed statistically significant differences in faculty perceptions of plagiarism based on their teaching level (Undergraduate, Graduate, Doctoral). Specifically, significant results were found for the statement "Jennifer seems to understand the purpose of formatting in academic essays," with doctoral faculty (mean rank = 193.83) differing significantly from graduate faculty (mean rank = 156.35; $p = 0.028$). These findings suggest that perceptions of Jennifer's understanding of academic formatting vary by teaching level, with doctoral faculty exhibiting stricter evaluations compared to graduate faculty. This highlights potential differences in expectations of academic enculturation at various instructional levels.

Table 3

Kruskal-Wallis H Test for Differences in Teaching Level and Perception of Plagiarism

Statement	χ^2 (df)	p-value
Jennifer understands formatting	8.106	0.017*
Jennifer plagiarized	6.278	0.043*
Jennifer intentionally plagiarized	7.521	0.023*
Instructor should coach but not report	7.063	0.029*
Instructor should coach and report	4.846	0.089
Instructor should not coach but file a report	5.206	0.074

Note. $p < .05$ *denotes statistical significance

Post hoc analysis using Dunn's procedure with Bonferroni correction identified significant differences in faculty perceptions across teaching levels. Doctoral faculty consistently evaluated Jennifer's actions more strictly compared to other groups. For example, doctoral faculty (mean rank = 193.83) differed significantly from graduate faculty (mean rank = 156.35, $p = 0.028$) regarding whether Jennifer understood the purpose of formatting. Similarly, doctoral faculty (mean rank = 193.55 and 189.25) were more likely than undergraduate faculty (mean rank = 154.19 and 155.99, $p = 0.016$ and $p = 0.046$, respectively) to perceive Jennifer as plagiarizing or intentionally plagiarizing. In contrast, undergraduate faculty (mean rank = 175.53) were more supportive than doctoral faculty (mean rank = 137.50, $p = 0.021$)

of coaching Jennifer on formatting without filing a code of conduct report. These findings suggest variability in perceptions based on teaching level, with doctoral faculty demonstrating stricter standards.

Table 4

Pairwise Comparisons for Teaching Level

Statement	Group Comparison	Mean Rank (Group 1)	Mean Rank (Group 2)	<i>p</i> -value
Jennifer understands formatting	Graduate vs. Doctoral	156.35	193.83	0.028*
Jennifer plagiarized	Doctoral vs. Graduate	193.55	154.19	0.016*
Jennifer intentionally plagiarized	Doctoral vs. Undergraduate	189.25	155.99	0.046*
Instructor should coach but not report	Doctoral vs. Undergraduate	137.5	175.53	0.021*

Note. $p < .05$ *denotes statistical significance

RQ3: Is there a mean difference in faculty perception of plagiarism due to academic enculturation by faculty college affiliation?

A Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted to assess differences in faculty perceptions of plagiarism based on their college affiliation. The analysis revealed no statistically significant differences across the six college groups for the evaluated items. The Kruskal-Wallis H test showed $p > 0.05$ for all comparisons, suggesting a shared baseline understanding of plagiarism policies across disciplines. However, the lack of significant differences might obscure subtle variations in disciplinary expectations that could influence faculty perceptions. These findings indicate a general consistency in how plagiarism is perceived institution-wide, regardless of academic field.

Table 5

Kruskal-Wallis H Test for College Affiliation

College	χ^2 (df)	<i>p</i> -value
Business	3.709	0.592
Education	7.922	0.161
Humanities and Social Sciences	6.111	0.296
Nursing	3.554	0.615
Theology	6.469	0.263

Note. $p < .05$ *denotes statistical significance

RQ4: Is there a mean difference in teaching status and their perception of plagiarism due to academic enculturation?

The findings for RQ4 examined differences in faculty perceptions of plagiarism by teaching status (full-time vs. part-time), and revealed no statistically significant differences for any of the evaluated statements. The Mann-Whitney U test results showed that the median Likert scores for full-time and part-time faculty were identical or similar across all items, with $p > 0.05$ in each case. These findings suggest that faculty perceptions of plagiarism, including whether coaching or formal reporting is appropriate, do not vary by employment status. This consistency may indicate that teaching status does not influence how faculty members interpret or respond to issues of academic integrity.

Table 6

Mann-Whitney U Test for Teaching Status

Statement	Group	Median (Full-time)	Median (part-time)	U	<i>p</i> -value
Jennifer understands formatting	Part-time	2.0	2.0	5668	0.526
Jennifer plagiarized	Part-time	4.0	4.0	5164	0.731
Jennifer intentionally plagiarized	Part-time	2.0	3.0	6290	0.344
Instructor should coach but not report	Part-time	6.0	6.0	5288	0.913
Instructor should coach and report	Part-time	3.0	3.0	5557	0.692
Instructor should not coach but file	Part-time	1.0	1.0	4540	0.076

Note. $p < .05$ *denotes statistical significance.

The study was designed to evaluate the perceptions of plagiarism and academic enculturation among faculty at a university in the Southwest United States. A variety of factors were considered, including education level, teaching level, college affiliation, and teaching status. Due to the non-normal distribution of data, non-parametric tests were employed. The findings revealed that there were no significant differences in perceptions of plagiarism across faculty with different educational backgrounds (master's, PhD, and professional doctorates) for most statements. However, distinctions were observed in how faculty perceived Jennifer's understanding of formatting and her plagiarism based on their academic level, suggesting variability influenced by academic enculturation.

The findings of this study not only delineate the differences in perceptions of plagiarism across various educational and teaching levels but also underscore the critical need for tailored faculty training programs. These findings indicate that discrepancies in faculty perceptions might be influenced by factors beyond knowledge gaps about institutional policies and ethical standards surrounding plagiarism, warranting further investigation. Before recommending faculty training, it is essential to examine other variables that may influence these perceptions, such as the presence of institutional plagiarism policies, the availability of standardized reporting procedures, and the frequency of professional development opportunities.

Discussion

The study's findings highlight the complex and nuanced nature of faculty perceptions toward plagiarism, particularly the impact of academic enculturation. Faculty perceptions vary significantly, suggesting that a one-size-fits-all approach to plagiarism training may not be effective. It is crucial to identify specific knowledge gaps that contribute to these perceptions. For instance, do faculty members fully understand institutional policies on plagiarism, and are they aware of the resources available to them? Addressing these gaps through targeted training could enhance faculty competence and confidence in handling plagiarism, fostering a culture of integrity across the academic spectrum. The variations in faculty perceptions of plagiarism, as highlighted in our findings, resonate with trends observed in other academic settings. For instance, studies such as those by Nguyen (2021) and Dyer et al. (2022) have similarly identified distinct differences in how plagiarism is perceived across educational levels. These parallels suggest that our results are not isolated incidents but part of a wider, global pattern that underscores the complexities of academic integrity. By situating our findings within this broader context, it becomes evident that the challenges we observe are reflective of systemic issues within academic cultures worldwide. This comparison not only validates our study but also emphasizes the necessity for international dialogue and collaboration in developing more effective educational strategies against plagiarism.

Moreover, the absence of significant differences in perceptions across different colleges within the university suggests a baseline understanding of plagiarism but possibly also points to a lack of specific training tailored to the disciplinary contexts. This uniformity could obscure subtle differences in how plagiarism is viewed and handled in varied academic fields, which often have distinct conventions and expectations regarding source attribution and research methodologies.

Limitations and Recommendations

This study has several limitations that should be noted. The use of a convenience sample may limit the generalizability of the findings to other academic institutions or geographic locations. The uneven distribution of participants, particularly with more part-time than full-time faculty, could have influenced the study results, especially in analyses involving teaching status. Additionally, the necessity to use non-parametric tests due to non-normal data distribution suggests variability in the data that might affect the robustness of the findings.

To operationalize the recommendations presented, institutions might consider implementing targeted workshops that address both the understanding and practical challenges of plagiarism at different academic levels. For example, creating an annual mandatory training session for new faculty and staff that outlines not only the rules but also the reasoning and ethics behind plagiarism policies could improve understanding and compliance. Additionally, institutions could develop a series of interactive online modules that are tailored to different disciplines, providing examples of plagiarism and correct citation practices specific to each field. Another practical step could be the establishment of a "plagiarism prevention task force" comprised of faculty and students, tasked with reviewing and updating plagiarism policies annually to keep pace with technological and academic cultural shifts in academia.

This study sheds light on the nuanced perceptions of plagiarism among faculty, highlighting the influence of academic enculturation and teaching contexts. The presence of general consistencies alongside significant differences based on educational background and teaching level points to the need for more tailored approaches to address issues of academic integrity. To enhance the generalizability of the findings, future research should aim for more balanced sampling and broader geographic representation. Implementing consistent yet flexible policies on academic integrity could help align faculty perceptions and foster a more cohesive educational environment, ultimately enhancing the academic experience for both faculty and students. Since this is the last paper of the series we wanted to close with some recommendations for institutions around plagiarism policy.

To align faculty perceptions more closely and improve the management of plagiarism, several steps could be beneficial. First, institutions should assess whether faculty are adequately informed about existing plagiarism policies and procedures, including reporting mechanisms and access to support resources. If gaps are identified, tailored training programs should be developed to address these specific needs. Additionally, ongoing professional development opportunities, such as workshops and webinars, could be provided to continuously engage faculty in discussions about plagiarism and academic integrity. Establishing robust support systems that guide academic writing and ethical source usage is crucial. This could include writing centers, online resources, and introductory modules on academic integrity integrated into the core curriculum, especially targeting first-year and international students. Additional training could be included on the ethical use of AI and how to use it as a supplement. Institutions should create mechanisms that allow faculty to provide feedback on their experiences with handling plagiarism. This input can help refine training programs and institutional policies, ensuring they effectively meet faculty needs. By adopting these recommendations, educational institutions can foster a more unified and effective approach to managing plagiarism and academic integrity, ensuring that faculty across disciplines are equipped to guide their students appropriately.

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Appendix

Academic Enculturation Vignette

Jennifer is a 48-year-old paraprofessional working in a school district in Saginaw, Michigan. After 10 years as a paraprofessional working with special needs students in inclusion classrooms in middle school, Jennifer decided to go back to school to earn her bachelor's degree in special education. Now in her third online course, she is struggling with the policies and procedures or what she calls "college stuff." She often discusses her assignment with her elementary classroom teacher. She often says, "Why do I need to learn formatting? Who cares about formatting; doesn't just saying what you mean have any value anymore?" For her Psychology 109 course, she recently received a C+ on a personality essay. In his feedback to Jennifer, Dr. Tyler Smith stated, "Jennifer, this is a good start, but you had several citation and paraphrasing errors that could be considered plagiarism. I encourage you to contact the university writing center. The center staff should be able to assist you with improving your writing skills. Additionally, you should obtain a copy of the APA style manual to ensure correct formatting. You had several formatting and grammatical errors. Best regards, Dr. T. Smith." Jennifer could not believe it. Jennifer stated "Who does he think he is?" She stated to her classroom teacher, "Gosh, I think he is only 30 years old; I'm old enough to be his parent!" She stated, "What is the big deal about citing a source? My instructor knows what I read; why should I have to cite what I read both in my essay and in a list at the end of the paper? Isn't that redundant?"

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