

Attitudes towards Plagiarism in Business Administration Students from Two Private Universities in Arequipa

Actitudes hacia el plagio en estudiantes de Administración de Empresas de dos universidades privadas en Arequipa

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Summary

The present study seeks to identify, describe and explain attitudes towards plagiarism of Business Administration students from two private universities in Arequipa. A qualitative methodology was used and the analysis content technique was applied. The data were obtained from information from the application of an individual interview guide and a focus group guide. Twenty individual interviews and two focus groups were conducted, totaling 20 newly-admitted students (10 women and 10 men). The categories arising from the answers expressed by the participants were: (a) knowledge of the issue, (b) permissive attitude towards plagiarism, (c) plagiarism as a social facilitator, (d) consequences and (e) preventive attitude. The results show that, for those interviewed, plagiarism is defined as the act of “copying the work of others”, “cheating” or “stealing”. They also concluded that plagiarizing is a common and even institutionalized practice that begins at school and is perfected in the University. Getting good grades is the reason why there are no accusations or discrepancy between students who commit plagiarism and those who do not, since they maintain that plagiarism is not a crime. Finally, the ignorance that you are committing plagiarism, the easy way to do something and fear of failing a course are some of the causes of this cheating action. Among the proposals that the interviewees make to solve this problem is that fact that universities disclose and implement their disciplinary regulations.

Keywords: Academic Plagiarism; Writing Practices, Higher Education, Academic Works.

Resumen

El presente estudio tiene por objetivo identificar, describir y explicar las actitudes hacia el plagio de los estudiantes de la carrera de Administración de Empresas de dos universidades privadas en Arequipa. Se emplea una metodología cualitativa y la técnica de análisis de contenido. Los datos se han obtenido a partir de la información proveniente de la aplicación de una guía de entrevista individual y una guía de grupo focal. Se han realizaron 20 entrevistas individuales y 2 grupos focales a un total de 20 estudiantes ingresantes (10 mujeres y 10 varones). Las categorías surgidas del discurso expresado por los participantes son: (a) conocimiento del fenómeno; (b) actitud permisiva hacia el plagio; (c) el plagio como facilitador social; (d) consecuencias; y (e) actitud preventiva. Los resultados muestran que, para los entrevistados, el plagio es definido como el acto de “copiar algo que no es de uno”, “hacer trampa” o “robar”. Asimismo, concluyeron que plagiar es una práctica común e incluso institucionalizada que empieza en el colegio y se perfecciona en la universidad. Obtener buenas notas es la razón por la que no existen acusaciones ni discrepancia entre los estudiantes que cometen plagio y los que no lo hacen, ya que para ellos plagiar no es un delito. Finalmente, el desconocimiento de que se está cometiendo plagio, el facilismo y el temor a desaprobación son algunas de las causas de este acto. Entre las propuestas que los entrevistados mencionan para solucionar este problema se encuentra que las universidades divulguen y apliquen sus reglamentos disciplinarios.

Palabras clave: Plagio académico; prácticas de escritura; educación superior; trabajos académicos.

Introduction

Attitudes are predispositions acquired to act selectively and behave in a certain way in the process of social interaction (Vander, 1997). They are also defined as a mental and neutral state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a direct influence upon an individual's response to all the objects or situations with which it is related (Allport, 1977). In recent years, dishonest practices have been perpetuated in academic and scientific work. Taking the ideas of others without citing their origin seems to be a common habit among students in both secondary and higher education. And while concern about the ethical and legal implications of this act seems to

be growing, very few are aware of its seriousness. There are many beliefs or feelings that a student has of the consequences of committing a dishonest act, especially when it entails a social sanction.

The advance in information technology has allowed millions of users in the world to share information in real time. That is added to the ease with which a person can make their publications visible, although with the risk that their contributions will be taken by others without giving them the respective credit. This is the greatest risk when surfing the Internet. This is why universities and other higher education institutions have been implementing control systems that help to reduce cases of plagiarism between students and faculty. In 2016, the company Turnitin published a study on the global rate of plagiarism in secondary and higher education. In the case of Latin America, out of a total of 196,691 works analyzed, the percentage of non-original content found was 12%, a percentage only surpassed by East Asia (14%). These percentages indicate that plagiarism is not a regional or local problem, but a global one.

Several studies have revealed how serious this practice is. In 2011, Molina, Velásquez, Ríos, Calfucoy, and Cociña determined that more than 50% of Chilean high school students and 40% of Chilean higher education students had admitted to having taken information from the Internet without citing the source. Other results that confirm this problem are those of Sureda et al. who in 2009 conducted a study at a Mexican university with students 15 years and older. This study found that more than 44% of students had committed "cyber-plagiarism" (information taken from the Internet without citing), while 30% admitted to having "copied and pasted" information from the Internet in their academic work. Both studies coincide in affirming that among the causes that lead a student to commit plagiarism are "saving time", "personal confidence", "the ease offered by the Internet to do it", "the habit of doing things at the last moment", "getting better grades", "imitation by doing what others do without having repercussions", "lack of institutional policies and instruments to detect and address this dishonest act", among others (Ercegovac & Richardson, 2004; Lai & Weeks, 2009; Ma, et al.2008; Pupovac, et al, 2008; Batane, 2010). However, it is necessary to point out that, among all these causes, the one related to laziness stands out, as mentioned in a study conducted by Egaña (2012), where both teachers and students consider as a cause of plagiarism the law of minimum effort in which "copying and pasting" or inappropriately summarizing and paraphrasing is preferred instead of devoting sufficient time to read and analyze different sources to do their papers and research (Soto, 2012; Molina et al., 2011). To these causes should be added the role of teachers as co-responsible for this issue by giving students assignments on general topics of their course and to the institutions that permit this act, leading the community to consider it as a "normal" and even natural activity.

The above studies are complemented by those related to dishonest writing (Ochoa & Cueva, 2014; Espinosa, Castellarin, & Biagioni, 2013), which address the issue of perception of academic plagiarism in university students (Castro, Yoplac-López, Carpio-Tello, Sihuay-Torres & Cósar-Quiroz, 2017); Cebrián-Robles, Raposo-Rivas, Cebrián de la Serna & Sarmiento-Campos, 2018), and the studies on causal attributions in academic plagiarism by university students (Rebollo-Quintela, Espiñeira-Bellón & Muñoz-Cantero, 2017), and the studies focusing on designing instruments to measure academic plagiarism among university students (Cayuela, Tauste, Seguí, Esteve & Ronda, 2015).

Plagiarism, considered as a dishonest act, has been reported by both academic and non-academic institutions. Given the seriousness and repercussions of the act, its current implications go beyond regulatory sanctions, and its scope reaches both legal and criminal spheres. In this regard, Article 219 of the Peruvian Criminal Code textually says about plagiarism:

Any person who disseminates a work as his/her own, in whole or in part, by copying it or reproducing it textually, or by trying to conceal the copy by means of certain alterations, attributing himself/herself, or to others, the other's authorship or ownership, shall be punished with a custodial sentence of not less than four nor more than eight years and ninety to one hundred day-fine units (Law 28289, 2004).

The Peruvian academic sphere has not remained unconnected to this problem, and universities have adopted a position on the matter. However, this reaction is recent and has arisen as a result of a series of cases that, for the most part, have occurred in the political sphere. Many institutions have revoked degrees and academic titles from certain personalities after having identified, thanks to the press, instances of plagiarism in theses/dissertations and scientific articles (the most notable case was the dismissal of the head of the National Superintendence for University Education – SUNEDU for a case of plagiarism). This concern is manifested by the increasing demand for software to prevent plagiarism by Peruvian higher education institutions. The transition from an analog to digital society and the amount of information a student can access seem to indicate that the problem of plagiarism will increase in many ways.

Alongside this problem is the need for specialization, which is forcing the demand to study masters and doctorates to increase and get the degree at any cost. In this regard, SUNEDU, in a statement published in April 2018, indicates that universities are responsible for implementing the intellectual property protection policies and mechanisms set out in their own regulations, such as Statutes, Regulations of Degrees and Academic Titles and Code of Ethics for research. Likewise, the Superintendency encourages universities to resolve complaints and claims about alleged cases of plagiarism in theses in order to assess the degree of certainty and responsibility of those involved.

Although institutional progress has been made to fight against this evil, it has yet to be made at school level, since schools represent the basis of education and their presence is notorious among children and young people from basic education to university (Díaz, 2015). Newly-admitted university students transfer their school experience to university work. They are still not aware that plagiarizing in an exam or taking their classmates' notes without giving the corresponding credit represents a serious offense. And they are also unaware of the forms of plagiarism, its ethical-moral effect, and how they should prevent it. These situations form the basis of a permissive attitude towards plagiarism, an attitude that will be reflected in higher years and even outside the university.

Method

This research adopts a qualitative approach. The data were obtained from information from the application of an individual interview guide and a focus group guide. Twenty individual interviews and two focus groups were conducted with a total of 20 newly-admitted students (10 women and 10 men) from the Business Administration specialty of two private universities in Arequipa. They were selected according to non-probability criteria, using intentional sampling. The students' age ranges from 17 to 22, from different socioeconomic levels.

Regarding the validity of the techniques used in this study, the aim of the qualitative interview is to understand the meaning of the central themes in the lived world of the subjects (Kvale, 2011). In this process, the interviewer is responsible for recording and interpreting the meanings constructed by the participants in their discourse, as well as evaluating how they say it. To do this, it is necessary that the interviewer knows the addressed theme, as well as the fundamental principles of the process: observation and interpretation. For practical purposes, the information collected for the study was obtained in the real environments of the participants, such as their university, allowing the issue to be better contextualized.

Procedure

The data was collected during August and September in 2018. Among the first activities carried out by the research team was the preparation of the interview guides. In order to meet the objectives of this first stage, there were four additional collaborators (two for each university) who played the roles of interviewer and observer, respectively, in addition to being responsible for arranging the environments for the research. They both were trained by a member of the

research team in the use of the recording equipment and support in the interview process. Both universities were asked for a quiet environment with adequate lighting and furniture to conduct the focus groups.

The personal interview was part of the second stage of the study, and lasted twelve days. To do this, the same classrooms provided by the university were used, after coordination with the person in charge assigned by the institution. Care was taken to ensure that each interview was conducted under the same conditions, with the same equipment and following the protocols drawn up so that the answers were as sincere as possible.

The implementation of the focus group was part of the second stage, following the protocols established for the individual interview in terms of environment setting and management of teams. Each focus group lasted 30 minutes. Once the information was obtained from the participants, it was transcribed into Word format. It was edited considering to the syntactic and lexical constructions of oral discourse. Finally, the information was processed.

It is important to point out that the processing of qualitative data is based on analytical inductive logical processes and operations (Gibbs, 2012). Thus, the information was analyzed using the Content Analysis methodology, which is a research technique "aimed at formulating, from certain data, reproducible and valid inferences that can be applied to their context" (Krippendorff, 2002, p. 28). To give reliability to the analysis of the information collected, each researcher analyzed each of the interviews, and established categories that were emerging from the data. The categories were formed from the discourse expressed by the participants through the constant comparison of the units of analysis. For this purpose, codes were assigned, and primary or descriptive categories and analytical categories were established. The former emerged from the participants' verbalizations, while the latter from processing the former. This second level of categorization was based on the constant comparison of the primary categories, so that some of them were integrated into more abstract and explanatory concepts. Then, the final categories were related to each other to obtain thematic patterns (main categories that have cause-effect relations, implication, co-occurrence, etc., with each other).

Once the categories were established, the material was coded. The final decision was made with the agreement of the researchers, taking into account the points of agreement, e.g. if the same category was given to the portion of content analyzed. The following categories and subcategories emerged from this analysis: knowledge of the issue (definition and examples), permissive attitude towards plagiarism (in relation to certain academic activities), plagiarism as a social facilitator (in relation to the possibility of obtaining advantages from plagiarism), consequences (related to the sanctions that plagiarists should receive), and preventive attitude (causes and advice to prevent plagiarism).

The quality of a research depends on the rigor with which it is done since the procedures chosen to do the research will condition its credibility. However, the criteria used in quantitative research differ from studies with a qualitative approach. Among the criteria that any qualitative study must follow are credibility and confirmability (Guba, 1981), which are achieved by ensuring that there is real evidence of the issues studied and the access to such evidence. In this sense, this study recorded audio and video of each interview conducted, and transcribed what was said by the participants, including the typical characteristics of the oral discourse.

Likewise, the triangulation of data collection techniques, such as individual qualitative interview and focal group, was used. This can be verified in recovering the analysis units where there are examples of individual discourses and the focal group. As mentioned above, the analysis carried out by the researchers and collaborators was also triangulated in order to make decisions to standardize their results. It should be pointed out that during these sessions, differences arose, especially perception differences, in developing the primary categories, since they require that all the information be filtered meticulously.

The interview guidelines were applied without distinction in form or process to each participant, contributing to achieving the reliance on the study. Likewise, each stage of the study was systematically supervised, both in the organization and in the performance of the collaborators.

Qualitative research accepts that the subject of study is an interactive, motivated and intentional subject, who assumes an attitude towards its assignments (Parra and Briceño, 2013). Therefore, this research ensures the voluntary participation of the participants and care of their dignity and well-being during the process, and for this purpose, written informed consent was obtained highlighting the confidentiality of the data and the anonymity of the participants.

Results

Definition of the Issue

Plagiarism has traditionally been defined as the act of taking others' ideas and passing them off as ours. This definition highlights the fact that plagiarism implies deceit and usurpation of other's work. During the university period, this act occurs in activities such as exams, work exposition and writing of monographs and theses. These definitions coincide with what was stated by the interviewees, who defined plagiarism as an act of "copying something that is not yours" and "cheating" or "stealing", the latter used as aggravating expressions of the fact. It should be noted that these categories were found in both the individual interviews and the two focus groups.

It is a copy. Copying something from others. For example, you look at your classmate's test paper to copy it during an exam. Copying things from theses and books. Copying and pasting without changing anything (S1).

In short, it is cheating, not being honest with oneself in an exam (S9).

Looking at a classmate's test paper, taking notes or looking at your notes during the exam (S12).

It is using aid in an exam, formulas, and notes hidden from the teacher, so that we do not fail. Plagiarizing is stealing what others produced (S10).

Copying, cheating, and copying in a thesis without citing the sources. When you copy the answers during an exam (Focal group 1).

However, when they were asked for an example of plagiarism, most of the interviewees mentioned cases in which information is extracted and altered in order to pass it off as one's own. Although plagiarism is conceived as a dishonest activity, its execution is framed within the scope of information management, leaving aside other much more complex situations. The answers reinforce the idea that plagiarism is an act of taking what is not one's own without giving the author credit, in situations such as

Obtaining information from the Internet without citing it.

Not using quotation marks (S4).

Copying/pasting information from a work that it is not one's own (S17).

The information is cited literally and its source is not indicated (S10).

When you write using or changing some ideas from a written source and you do not give the source of the information credit (Focus group 2).

Permissive Attitude towards Plagiarism

This category is related to certain academic activities justifying the action of plagiarism. Tolerance is not unidirectional, that is, "I tolerate others to plagiarize regardless of whether they are tolerant of me," but "I tolerate others to plagiarize because I do it or I can do it. There is a clear position among the students. They do not justify this act since they consider it to be "a bad thing", but when they were asked if "plagiarism is normal", the interviewees accepted that it is a

common and even institutionalized practice that starts at school and becomes a necessity at university. This apparent "need to plagiarize" is evident in the following answers:

It is a normal thing for newly-admitted students. I have seen it. My classmates do it because it helps them. It give them advantages (S19).

It is not justified. But it is a normal thing among newly-admitted students. Perhaps the fear of being less than others (S12).

I don't think so because you work hard to do your work. Although many people see an easy way to pass. Students are afraid of failing (S9)

At first, there is a fear of being discovered, but later they gain experience and learn to copy better (Focal Group 1).

Permissiveness is a macro-social factor, that is, it is justified because it is a tacit condition for belonging to a group: there is a tacit agreement among students that they would not report their classmates. This permissibility does not necessarily lead to direct acceptance. One strategy is indifference as it can be seen in the following answers:

This act is normal not only in newly-admitted students but also in all students (S14).

I couldn't care less about it. If I see others plagiarizing, it is not my problem (S12).

I have not seen anyone plagiarizing. And if I see it, I couldn't care less about it (S11)

Yes, I have seen people plagiarizing, but it didn't matter to me (S20)

I have seen it. My classmates do it because it helps them. It gives them advantages. I think they do it because they are unaware of it. This didn't matter to me (S3).

Social Facilitator

This category is linked to the possibility of obtaining advantages, either social or group, from plagiarism. There are some points on which interviewees agree, e.g. there are no differences in the treatment of plagiarists. To a certain extent, the act of cheating in exams and papers is not a problem. This is evidenced by the fact that there are no differentiated treatments between plagiarists and non-plagiarists. Furthermore, complicity rises as a common behavior among the group. Everyone points to one objective: to get good grades, which is why this and other acts are overlooked when working in teams.

The members do not act differently because they see it as normal, because as everyone does it, it is normal. Yes, there is complicity because we know that everyone plagiarizes (S12).

There are no differences. There is complicity to commit plagiarism. They are witnesses, but they don't say anything. Perhaps because everyone intend to plagiarize at some point. This happens especially in group assignments (S16).

They do not act differently because they see it as normal, because as everyone does it, it is normal. Yes, there is complicity because we know that everyone plagiarizes. You could achieve good results, but they would not be true (S2).

Sometimes there is anger when we see someone plagiarizing because they "have it too easy". But there is no longer anger when it aids and helps everyone (Focal Group 1).

From the answers, we can infer that this "normal" act carries implicitly the concept of "social acceptance" or "being part of" as a result of the group's social assessments of different situations and contexts experienced in the university. It should be emphasized that the activities that are most related to the act of plagiarizing are resolution of exams and development of work, either individual or group. The immediate achievement obtained by copying in an exam is to have good grades. Therefore, any act aimed at achieving this achievement will be permitted by the student and the group.

Plagiarism brings advantages. For example, if you get good grades, you will have scholarships. That makes people want to plagiarize (S18).

Interviewees agree that the consequences will be seen in the long term, i.e. in their professional life.

Plagiarism does not bring good things. It gives you a bad reputation. You can get good grades, but you would have problems in your professional life (S9).

Consequences

This category is associated with the sanctions received by the plagiarist. To the question of whether plagiarism was considered a crime, the answers were unanimous: "plagiarism is not a crime", at least not in the university since this act is normal and necessary.

[Plagiarism] It is not a crime, but it is an act that is wrong. Academically, I don't think it's a crime (S7).

Plagiarism is not a crime. Some people plagiarize out of necessity (S8).

Plagiarism is not a crime. Among students, it is not a crime to plagiarize because it is common (Focal Group 1).

Meanwhile, there are also positions upholding that plagiarism is a crime, or that it is not, depending on the situation. For the interviewees, the academic papers produced in the courses are not considered important, which is why plagiarizing while producing them is not so serious. The thesis arises here as a product with high standards in which plagiarism cannot be allowed.

It depends. Plagiarism is a crime when you copy in an exam. But plagiarizing in a thesis is a felony (S10)

Plagiarism is a crime only for complex work such as a thesis, i.e. if your work is going to be published, it should not be copied (Focal Group 2).

Now, when they were asked if plagiarism is detrimental, the great majority said yes, that the plagiarism is a problem that reaches its maximum expression in academic life. This answer leads to the assumption that if there is to be a sanction for the plagiarizer, this will be once the offender is out of the university. This answer is supported by the students when they state that they are unaware of the existence of a university regulation to punish plagiarists.

Plagiarism is more detrimental because it shows that a person neither knows nor is aware of the topics (S3).

Plagiarism causes harm, but only in certain things because it could get you things in life (S19).

Plagiarism causes harm because the student sees it as a habit and will continue to do so in his/her profession (S2).

I don't know if the university has a regulation. I'm unaware that there are regulations.

I don't know if there is a regulation (S18).

Preventive Attitude

This category is connected to the causes and measures proposed by interviewees to prevent plagiarism. Plagiarism is seen by the interviewees as a form of "shortcut" to achieve academic success and a demonstration of the astuteness of the plagiarist. To this should be added the students' idea that plagiarism is not a bad thing as long as it is justified, for example, when a teacher is not understood or when the courses are, in their opinion, complex. If a balance had to be made between the advantages and disadvantages of plagiarism, interviewees are inclined towards the former. When they were asked what the main causes of plagiarism would be, they proposed three specific causes: unawareness that plagiarism is being committed, easiness, and fear of failing:

The causes are unawareness because they do not know that plagiarism is a bad thing (S14).

Unawareness is the biggest cause (S2).

Easiness. It is easier to plagiarize than to study (S18).

Students know that they shouldn't plagiarize, but they do it to get good grades (S20)

The main cause is due to not studying. Being unaware that plagiarizing is a bad thing.

The cause is due to not having studied (S19).

The cause leading to plagiarism is the pressure of wanting to pass and laziness. They look for the easy way to pass the exams (Focal Group 2).

With respect to the actions to prevent plagiarism, there are opposite positions since, on the one hand, there are some students who think that it should not be punished because they consider it to be a "normal" act. And, on the other hand, there are those students who propose a punishment, which does not result in expulsion or sanction, but it represents a new opportunity to take the exam or present the paper. These answers reinforce the complicity that exists among students. Likewise, universities also have regulations specifying sanctions for plagiarist students. Although these documents are of mandatory consultation for students, all the interviewees stated that they had never received such regulations. It is precisely these documents that the interviewees state would help reduce the occurrence of this problem.

If there is a document stating that plagiarism brings punishment, few people would commit it (S17).

I don't know if the university has a regulation. I think I haven't received it. But, it needs to be known so that we can read it to be aware and prevent (S 19).

Discussion

Currently, searching for information is not only limited to books. This is well known to young people who use the web for various purposes, including downloading material to produce academic papers. It is not difficult for a teacher to realize that a paper contains dubious information. Inconsistency among paragraphs, loss of semantic linearity of the text, abrupt jumps, and grammatical errors are indications that the material is not original, or sometimes an excellent writing as compared to the student's usual way of writing. Although there is legislation currently in force that penalizes plagiarism, there seems to be a certain permissiveness in schools and even in universities. Committing plagiarism not only affects the public interest but also the author's moral rights over his/her work (Soto, 2012).

The search for irregular shortcuts is often justified by young people who see examinations, papers, and teachers as their enemies. However, this misconception only fosters the belief of academic success sustained in the law of minimum effort. Plagiarizing or not is a personal decision. They emphasize the intrinsic motivation and appreciation for studying, as opposed to the position of those students who see studying as a means to an end. There is a close relationship between the context variables and the students' willingness to plagiarize, for example, evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of the act, knowing its legal consequences and the probability of being discovered (Molina, et al., 2011). Several authors have focused their interest on identifying the conditions that lead a student to plagiarize, such as pressure and haste in the production of papers, lack of knowledge about the contents of the course, and the fear of failing.

Plagiarism has become a constant in the society because it does not only occur in the academic field, but also it has spread to spaces such as music, literature, arts, politics, cinema, television, etc. Terms such as "theft", "deception", "fraud" and "copy" are linked to this action. Plagiarism involves taking what is not one's own in order to use it for one's own benefit. Plagiarism also means copying an idea without giving its author the respective credit. Although its scope is broad, it is the academic and scientific spheres that have felt its impact the most.

Plagiarism is an issue of great complexity not only because of the damage it causes to intellectual property but also because of the difficulty to fight it. The definition of this prohibited action does not imply a change in the direct or indirect plagiarist, evidencing flexibility in the values. The interviewees of this study assume plagiarism with the above-mentioned terms, thus evidencing that they are aware of the seriousness of the act. However, as discussed below, they minimize its impact by providing justifications.

Although there are behaviors typical of this dishonest practice (McCabe & Treviño, 1993; Jordan, 2001; Moeck, 2002; Lambert, Hogan & Barton, 2003), the interviewees agree that copying information from the Internet is a common and recurrent act among students. Cyberplagiarism, therefore, is one of the forms of plagiarism that has increased in recent years. This is why it should be included in greater detail in university regulations (Cavanillas, 2008).

Academic dishonesty is an issue that disrupts student learning and performance. Unlawful practices to obtain benefits (good grades or recognition) are increasing as they are considered a way of obtaining benefits. Those who commit them are not only those who copy in an exam or present someone else's work as their own but also those who, as witnesses, do not report them.

Complicity is a form of dishonesty. Among students, this tolerance and permissiveness are conditions that facilitate their social acceptance, understood as the personal condition of an individual with respect to a reference group (Zavala, Valadez and Vargas, 2008). There are some points on which the interviewees agree, for example, that there are no differences in the treatment of plagiarists, and that to a certain extent, the act of cheating in exams and papers is not a problem. This is evidenced by the fact that there are no differentiated treatments between plagiarists and non-plagiarists. Furthermore, complicity rises as a common behavior among the group. Everyone points to one objective: to get good grades, which is why this and other acts are overlooked when working in teams. Social acceptance is a result of the social assessments made by the classmates in situations or context, in this case, the performance of academic activities. Leadership, popularity, companionship, joviality, and respect are related to this acceptance.

Just as plagiarism becomes a social facilitator, permissibility is an important feature in those who want to join the group, that is, "I allow others to plagiarize because, in the end, it does not affect me", or "I allow others to plagiarize because everyone in the group plagiarizes". There is a clear position on this among the students. They do not justify this act since they consider it to be "a bad thing", but when they were asked if "plagiarism is normal", the interviewees accepted that it is a common and even institutionalized practice that starts at school and becomes a necessity at university.

Plagiarism, besides determining the degree to which students cheat, makes it possible to evidence the deficiencies in the acquisition of knowledge and skills. These deficiencies affect innovation and economic growth, both objectives of educational institutions. A student who cheats will continue to do so during his/her professional activity, or will be part of a group of professionals who are deficient and incapable of contributing to the development of the country. Academic integrity is sustained in six fundamental values: *honesty*, *trust*, *justice*, *respect*, *responsibility*, and *courage*. It is important for students to know and embrace these values as a tool against plagiarism. If "not lying" and "not deceiving" are part of these values, "copying and pasting" is imposed as a dishonest behavior by nature.

In Peru, the crime of plagiarism, which undermines intellectual property, is defined in Article 219 and others of the Criminal Code, modified and supplemented by Law 28289. When students were asked in this study if plagiarism is considered a crime, the answers were unanimous: "plagiarism is not a crime", at least not at university where this act is, according to that perception, normal and necessary. However, there are also positions upholding that plagiarism will or will not be a crime depending on the situation. For the interviewees, the academic papers produced in

the courses are not considered important. Therefore, plagiarizing during their production is not so serious.

The idea that "copying" is a normal act is rooted in the student culture. Many students are proud of their increasingly improved methods of cheating in exams and deceiving their teachers. "Once the exam ends, the student who 'copies' does not usually hide it from his/her closest classmates. On the contrary, he/she shares it with his/her circle of friends with the certainty that he/she will not be reprimanded, but protected" (Sousa, Conti, Salles and Mussel, 2016, para. 35). When asked if plagiarism harms the plagiarist, most of the interviewees answered affirmatively, that this action is a problem that reaches its maximum expression in the academic life. This answer leads to the assumption that if a sanction is imposed on the plagiarist, it will be happen once the student is out of the university.

Among the mechanisms to fight against dishonest acts, academic institutions implement a series of mechanisms such as academic integrity policies, ethics regulations, codes of conduct, academic manuals, among others. All these mechanisms aim to sanction violations, such as plagiarism, which consequences can range from a failing grade or suspension to the revocation of the degree or academic title obtained. However, a dishonest act is not only remedied by imposing sanctions and punishments, but also through prevention. According to the interviewees' answers, plagiarism is seen as a form of "shortcut" to achieve academic success and a demonstration of the astuteness of the plagiarist. To this should be added the students' idea that plagiarism is not a bad thing as long as it is justified, for example, when a teacher is not understood or when the courses are, in their opinion, complex. If a balance had to be made between the advantages and disadvantages of plagiarism, interviewees are inclined towards the former. When they were asked what the main causes of plagiarism would be, they proposed three specific causes: unawareness that plagiarism is being committed, easiness, and fear of failing. These responses reveal an informative and behavioral background. The former because the answers lead us to understand that we plagiarize because we do not know that we are doing it, that is, we understand that we should not copy other people's ideas, but we do not understand how to apply it when producing papers or taking exams. Authors such as Sureda et al. (2009) agree on the fact that the behavior of teachers and students, the development of ICTs and the predominant social values, among others, constitute a cause of plagiarism, a conclusion that coincides with what was said by the students who participated in the study.

Faced with this situation, there are opposite positions since, on the one hand, there are some students who think that it should not be punished because they consider it to be a "normal" act. And, on the other hand, there are those students who propose a punishment, which does not result in expulsion or sanction, but it represents a new opportunity to take the exam or present the paper. These answers reinforce the complicity that exists among students. Likewise, universities also have regulations specifying sanctions for plagiarist students. Although these documents are of mandatory consultation for students, all the interviewees stated that they had never received such regulations. It is precisely these documents that the interviewees state would help reduce the occurrence of this problem.

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