

## The problem of cheating and plagiarism of students at the Faculty of Economics and Management of SUA in Nitra

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### **Abstract**

*Cheating on different levels of education is not new in our country. Students of primary schools use various illegal aids. Many students have no problem to use cheat sheets even in universities (it's not only a problem of full-time students but external students too). A possible cause may be that some subjects are considered as unnecessary for students, so they try to circumvent them in other ways. Another cause may be the actual value of education itself - students rarely realize that each acquired knowledge or fact can become handy later in their life. However they resort to cheating not only on crediting tests or exams, but also in creating a variety of term projects. The main issue solved in this article is cheating and plagiarism of students at the Faculty of Economics and Management in Nitra, because the results of the questionnaire survey suggest that it is relatively a big problem.*

**Keywords:** cheating, plagiarism, students

**JEL Classification:** I21, I23

### **1. Introduction**

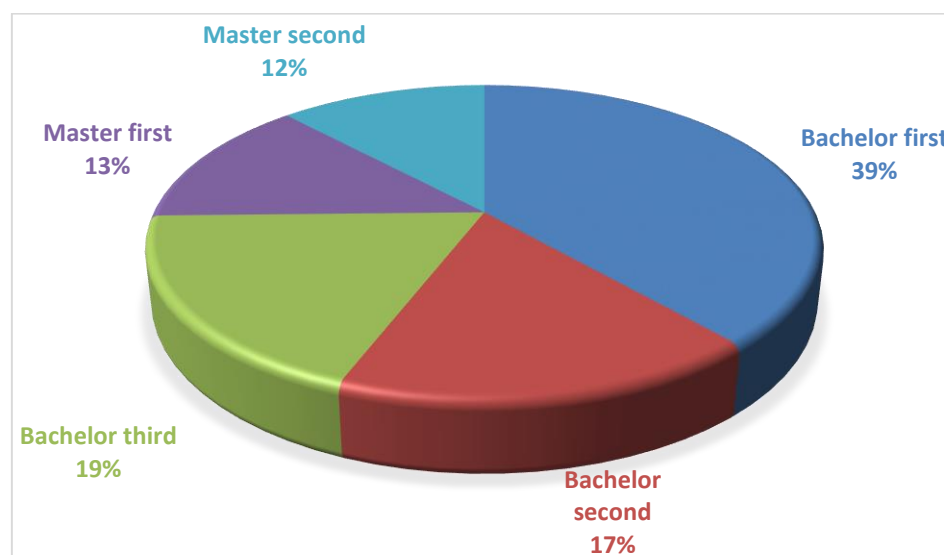
Academic cheating is defined as representing someone else's work as your own. It can take many forms, including sharing another's work, purchasing a term paper or test questions in advance or paying another person to do the work for you. Cheating no longer carries the stigma that it used to. Less social disapproval coupled with increased competition for admission into universities and graduate schools made students more willing to do whatever it takes to get the A grade. According to OpenStudy's (2010) experience, cheating is any work done with others that the professor made clear it should not be worked on jointly. This "unauthorized collaboration" ranges from professor to professor, university to university, and assignment to assignment. Another definition said that cheating is defined as obtaining or attempting to obtain, or aiding another person to obtain credit for work, or any improvement in evaluation of performance, by any dishonest or deceptive means. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: lying; copying from another's test or examination; discussing answers or questions on an examination or test at any given time, unless such discussion is specifically authorized by the instructor; taking or receiving copies of an exam without the permission of the instructor; using or displaying notes, "cheat sheets", or other information devices inappropriate to the prescribed test conditions; allowing someone other than the officially enrolled student to represent the same (Cal Poly, 2016). It is important to understand what motivates students to cheat. Here are the most commonly reasons for student cheating: need to excel at any cost, semester workload too heavy, too many tests on one day, pressure from parents, helping a friend, good grades needed for job etc. (Point Loma Nazarene University, 2012). Cheating affects both the equity of instruction and the learning process, resulting in students who are less prepared to advance in education or apply learned knowledge (Lupton, Chapman & Weiss, 2000).

Plagiarism is defined as the act of using the ideas or work of another person or persons as if they were one's own without giving proper credit to the source. An act is not plagiarism if it is ascertained that the ideas were arrived through independent reasoning or logic or the thought or idea is common knowledge (Cal Poly, 2016). According Boisvert and Irwin (2006) plagiarism is the verbatim copying, near-verbatim copying, or purposely paraphrasing portions of another author's paper. Plagiarism may also be defined as the use of another person's words and/or ideas without acknowledging that the ideas and/or words belong to someone else. It is not a new phenomenon, nor is it something exclusive to the discipline of economics, but there is little doubt that it is a growing problem that lecturers need to address systematically if the underlying causes, rather than the symptoms, are to be addressed (Williams, 2005). In student's case, if a student cannot come up with his or her own ideas, and time is running short before the hand-in date, then cut-and-paste technology allows him or her to lift someone else's sentences or phrases with ease. Indeed students often cannot see anything wrong with this.

## 2. Data and Methods

The collection of data was done through a questionnaire survey at the Faculty of Economics and Management in 2014. The questionnaire contained 19 questions and at the end the respondent has the opportunity to express his or her opinion. The first four questions were identification questions - gender, year of study, study program and form of study. Other questions have already been addressed directly through the survey respondents' opinions on cheating and plagiarism. Some questions focused on the approval or disapproval of respondents, in others it was possible to tick more options and the last category was questions evaluated using the Likert scale (used to measure the opinions and attitudes of people). The questionnaire was anonymous, so it was assumed that respondents are honest. 2409 students were asked through emails, for which 592 responses were received – this means a 24.57% return rate. Structure of the respondents according to the year of study is represented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: The structure of the survey sample according to year of study**



Source: own research

Basic statistical methods were used for the evaluation as well as the Chi-Square test of Independence.

The Chi-Square test of Independence is used to determine if there is a significant relationship between the two nominal (categorical) variables. We are interested in examining if the two categorical variables are related or associated (i.e. dependent). First we have to calculate the expected value of the two nominal variables. After calculating the expected value, we can apply the following formula to calculate the value of the Chi-Square test of Independence:

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^y \sum_{j=1}^c \frac{(O_{ij}-E_{ij})^2}{E_{ij}} \tag{1}$$

where

- $\chi^2$  = Chi-Square test of Independence
- $O_{ij}$  = observed value of two nominal variables
- $E_{ij}$  = expected value of two nominal variables

Hypotheses for testing are:

- H<sub>0</sub>: In the population, the two categorical variables are independent.
- H<sub>1</sub>: In the population, two categorical variables are dependent.

The article presents some selected results about cheating during exams and opinions about plagiarism.

### 3. Results and Discussion

One question in the questionnaire survey was: *Have you ever cheated on an exam?* In this question it was possible to choose only a yes or no answer. If the respondent answered yes, it was attached to a sub-question of how many times it was. The options given were 0-5 times, 6-10 times, 11-15 times and 15 times or more. The results are shown in Table 1, where answers to these questions are compared with given study year. Overall the data in the evaluation of this question in comparison with the study year shows that the largest number of cheats in exams is in the range of 0-5 times in all study years. The positive fact is that with the increasing study year, the number of cheats decreases. Students may start to realize that it is time to rely on their own knowledge, the closer the end of the study is.

**Table 1: Cheating at exams**

Answers	Yes	No
<b>0 - 5</b>	<b>69,93%</b>	<b>22,64%</b>
Bachelor first	24,32%	Bachelor first 13,68%
Bachelor second	12,84%	Bachelor second 3,21%
Bachelor third	13,85%	Bachelor third 3,04%
Master first	9,63%	Master first 1,69%
Master second	9,29%	Master second 1,01%
<b>6 - 10</b>	<b>5,24%</b>	
Bachelor first	0,51%	
Bachelor second	1,01%	
Bachelor third	1,52%	
Master first	1,18%	
Master second	1,01%	
<b>11 - 15</b>	<b>0,51%</b>	
Master first	0,17%	
Master second	0,34%	
<b>15 and more</b>	<b>1,69%</b>	
Bachelor second	0,34%	

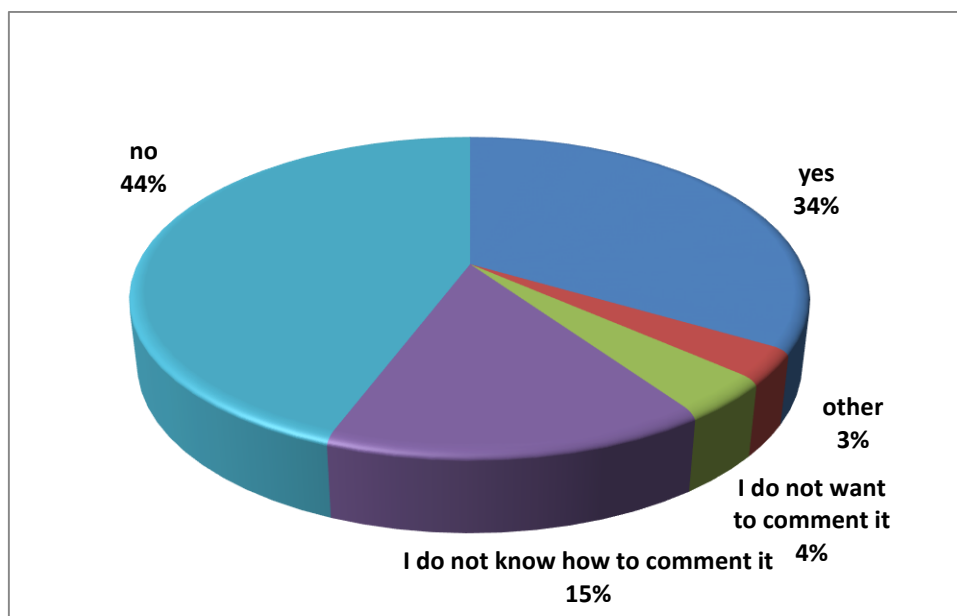
Bachelor third	0,34%
Master first	0,68%
Master second	0,34%

Source: own research

In a question of cheating methods the most highly reported cheating behavior was using cheat sheets (21.79%), using electronic devices (12.50%) and transcription from someone else (11.32%).

Very interesting are the findings for the question: *Do you think it is possible to obtain a university diploma only by cheating on exams?* This question contains five options; yes, no, I do not want to comment it, I do not know how to comment it, and other. Evaluation of this question is shown in Figure 2. In this question, 44% of the respondents believe that it is not possible to obtain a university diploma only by cheating. It is interesting that 34% of the respondents think that it is possible. It is a relatively a high number considering the fact that demonstration of the education is highly desired in today's job market.

**Figure 2: The possibility of obtaining a diploma by cheating**



Source: own research

In a question about plagiarism „*Do you know the term plagiarism?*” the respondents had five options according the Likert evaluation scale. The possibilities were: yes, rather yes, I do not know, rather no and no. In this question, 88% of the respondents said that they know the term plagiarism and only 2% of the respondents said that they do not know this term. Students who mostly knew about this term are students of the first study year of the bachelor degree.

In another question „*Did you mention in your works the literary sources?*” the respondents had only two possibilities – yes and no. As many as 98% of the respondents stated yes. This means that students are aware of the importance of correct placing of literature sources.

Last question was about overall statement of the respondents if it's correct to sign own name to another persons work. The precise wording of the question was: *Do you think it is correct to sign up under someone else's work?* More than three quarters of the respondents (76%) said that it is not correct to sign own name under the some else's work. Only 1% of respondents claim, that it is correct.

The Chi-Square test of Independence shows some dependencies between student identification indicators and selected opinion questions. The results are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Dependence of the student identification indicator on selected opinion question.**

Question	Study year		Study program	
Have you ever cheated on an exam?	**	<.0001	-	0,0973
Do you think it's possible to obtain a university diploma only by cheating on exams?	**	0,003	**	0,0006
Do you know the term plagiarism?	**	<.0001	-	0,2649
Did you mention in your works the literary sources?	-	0,6948	-	0,9544
Do you think, it is correct to sign up under someone else's work?	**	<.0001	-	0,8421

Note: - P-value > 0.05 statistically not significant dependence, \* P-value < 0.05 statistically significant dependence, \*\* P-value < 0.01 statistically highly significant dependence.

According to these results there is a statistically highly significant dependence between all mentioned questions and the study year. Also there is a statistically highly significant dependence between the question about the possibility to obtain university diploma only by cheating and the study program.

#### 4. Conclusion

Cheating has always been, is and probably will be an integral and at the same time undesirable part of the study of university students. Cheating is seen by many students as means to a profitable end. It is evident in the many surveys as well as the opinions of students, who have indicated some form of cheating. The results of the questionnaire survey implemented in the faculty also show that our students use illegal appropriations during exams and 34% of the respondents think that it's possible to obtain a university diploma only by cheating.

Plagiarism is a similar problem. According to the survey results, it can be concluded that 88% of the respondents know this term and 98% of the respondents said that they write literary sources correctly in their works. Overall, in spite of some answers on issues related to cheating and plagiarism, students have sufficient ethical inhibitions and 76% of the respondents said that it is wrong to sign up under someone else's work.

In the end, here are some students' opinions:

*„copying and plagiarism is not fair... many students prepare at home, make every effort to pass the exams, credits, but sometimes even that does not work ... and others, which use this anger tend to have higher level happiness than those who are really trying. I think it is an injustice to the honest students”*

*„Plagiarism is theft. The student would in any work bring his or her own view on the issue and particularly in the diploma thesis should address the topics related to the real requirements of the practice.”*

*„I think it is possible to obtain a diploma only by cheating, but it's not right and not fair to other students who are learning and who don't cheat.”*

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