

HOW ONLINE BUSINESS SCHOOL INSTRUCTORS ADDRESS ACADEMIC INTEGRITY VIOLATIONS

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ABSTRACT

While online learning has dramatically increased over the past few years, so have opportunities for students to cheat, plagiarize, or commit other academic integrity violations in the online learning environment. Some online instructors effectively address these issues, while others do not. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how online business school instructors address academic integrity violations. To examine in what manner academic integrity issues were being addressed in the online classroom, 12 teachers at a university located in Florida were interviewed to obtain their perspective and instructional practices regarding academic integrity online. Results indicate all participants believe it is their job to prevent academic integrity violations; however, only two instructors have reported it through school administrators, with many participants deciding to address the issue in their own classroom and not report it outside to school leadership for help addressing the issue. The importance of this study shows that most online instructors are doing what they believe is their best to address integrity violations; however, they may be promoting it by not reporting it outside of the classroom to school administration.

Keywords: instructor responsibilities, cheating and plagiarism prevention, reporting academic integrity violations, classroom management

INTRODUCTION

Teaching online can be challenging, especially when communicating academic integrity violations to students and school administration. When plagiarism, cheating, or other academic integrity circumstances arise, how it is addressed and reported can be just as important as identifying it. Many faculty members keep academic integrity issues within the boundaries of their own course. When this occurs, it does not provide school administrators a firm understanding of the cheating and plagiarism issues within their own schools, because teachers do not share outside of the classroom what is going on inside it (Garza Mitchell & Parnter, 2018). Teachers do not always report cheating, and up to 47% of them ignore it because of the administrative work required and procedures involved in pursuing cheating and plagiarism issues (Madara & Namango, 2016). This simply means

the time to fill out the paperwork and pursue the issue with school administration may not be worth the teacher's time from their perspective.

The course of action taken by instructors and the school administration to address cheating and plagiarism violations and to what degree to pursue them can set the tone for future academic integrity violations committed by a student. Sometimes just being caught and the teacher or school administration letting the student know an academic integrity issue has been found can have a positive an impact on a student's future decisions. In some cases it is enough to discourage them from ever doing it again, while sometimes a punishment administered by the instructor or school administration is required to stop it. Acknowledgment of the violation or being caught and punished for it, if needed, can both impact a students' future decision to knowingly

commit academic integrity violations (Wang & Murnighan, 2017).

Individuals who raise concerns about misconduct can make a valuable contribution to their respective fields and society (Satalker & Shaw, 2018). Actively looking for, addressing with students, and reporting academic integrity issues is time consuming, administratively challenging, and can be confrontational; however, it is still an important element in the realm of teaching online business classes.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how online business school instructors address academic integrity violations. To effectively research the problem, interviews were conducted on 12 active online business school faculty members teaching at an accredited university in Florida that offers bachelor's and master's degree programs online.

A qualitative case study design was used to understand how instructor teaching practices, traits, and behavior impacts student academic integrity actions in the online classroom. Structured interview questions were designed to gather data on 12 instructors currently teaching online business courses. The inquiries focused on identifying and understanding the different methods, or lack of methods, used by instructors to comprehend the influence online teacher's actions have on preventing or promoting academic dishonesty. The results from this study may serve as the foundation for assisting online instructors to utilize effective strategies and motivational tools to address the prevention of plagiarism and cheating in the online classroom.

For this study cheating is defined as academic misconduct in order to obtain fraudulent academic benefits (Bretag, 2016), and plagiarism is defined as presenting words, ideas, or images of another as one's own without giving credit to the original author (American Psychological Association, 2020). Both of these words will be used interchangeably in this paper to describe academic integrity violations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

How academic integrity violations are handled after they are discovered can be an essential part of the academic experience for the student and instructor. It can determine both academic and professional futures for the pupil and teacher (DiVall

& Schlesselman, 2016). The course of action taken by the school administration to address cheating and plagiarism violations and to what degree they pursue it can set the tone for future academic integrity violations. When more stern penalties are applied to academic integrity infractions, the students will generally refrain from violating school policies and procedures. The lighter the consequences or nonenforcement of the rules will usually result in a higher rate of integrity violations (Forsha, 2017).

Punishment gets significant attention from organizations and can impact future decisions by people associated with academic integrity issues. A strict reprimand for rules violations not only impacts those punished but can also create passionate and negative actions from associated stakeholders inside and outside of the school (Wang & Murnighan, 2017). The methods to address cheating and plagiarism that are frequently used include identifying the problem, prosecuting violators, awarding penalties, giving warnings, placing sanctions, expelling from the university or college, writing reflection assignments, or doing nothing at all (McGrail & McGrail, 2015).

Some schools turn academic integrity violations over to student appointed disciplinary (judicial) boards in which the students on the disciplinary board set the punishment for other students. The board reviews the incident, allows the defendant to state their case, and then the board makes a decision based on the degree of the violation and school policies (Student Rights & Responsibilities, 2021). These types of actions hold students accountable to other students. Student disciplinary boards also gain a profound amount of respect and personal accountability on behalf of the school's student body (Schwartz, 2015).

Donathan et al. (2017) explained that minimizing inappropriate behavior in the online environment starts with the teacher's explanation of their expectations and what is in the syllabus and posting announcements, graded feedback, and general comments within the content of the online course. More importantly, how these expectations are carried out and enforced impacts the classroom environment as much as anything else. Hearn et al. (2017) argued that when academic material is compromised and used unethically, and nothing is done to rectify the problem, then academic assessment tools are damaged.

Some instructors do not believe it is their responsibility to watch students and prevent them from doing something wrong, but only to punish them when they do it. Not all teachers agree or care about how to prevent academic dishonesty, as individual characteristics or organizational culture can drive this mindset (Tierney & Sabharwal, 2017). Stowe (2017) reasoned that the intention to report student plagiarism remains an individual decision made by the instructor and does not appear to be influenced by the learning institution. A study by Madara and Namango (2016) found some faculty seldom discuss rules or consequences of academic integrity violations with their students, with 10% reporting that they do not believe any prevention methods should be practiced in a university level course.

No penalties for academic integrity violations also factors into its occurrence. Dishonesty is sometimes factored on cost benefits, and when the benefits of cheating and plagiarism outweigh the punishment, academic dishonesty increases (Yaniv & Siniver, 2016). Research results on academic dishonesty reveal some learning institutions are having difficulty dealing with the issue of cheating and plagiarism, and so they ignore the problem rather than address it (Brimble, 2016).

The instructor's role in preventing academic integrity violations is essential and represents the methods teachers use to create a quality online atmosphere that supports and sustains productive classroom environments (Richardson et al. & Mueller, 2015). The environment or setting created by the instructor also impacts a student's decisions to cheat or plagiarize. A study by Isakov and Tripathy (2017) found that when the conditions to cheat were available more students did so. When the instructor eliminated the conditions, such as using plagiarism checkers or new test questions each term, it limited the temptation and opportunity, and then cheating declined or was eliminated.

Upholding academic integrity online is the ultimate means of protecting students while building ethical core values that can be carried with them throughout a lifetime (Cifuentes & Janney, 2016). However, creating a moral culture is complex and involves many elements to shape student behavior, ethical reasoning, and honorable desires. This means the best way to build a culture of academic integrity is to lead by example (Robinson & Glanzer, 2017).

There are always consequences for integrity violations or falsifying something. If one falsifies a résumé they can get fired, if medical research results are falsified on purpose it can impact a patient's health, if there is falsification on a grant application then future funding may be jeopardized, and falsification in business, depending on its severity, may be punishable by a prison term (Kiviniemi, 2015). When a student cheats or plagiarizes in an online classroom, they are missing out on an opportunity to learn and grow by working through an academic problem themselves instead of relying on other people's work to be successful (DiVall & Schlesselman, 2016). Academic integrity can be a good forecaster for later dishonest decisions in professional practice (Hermkens & Luca, 2016).

Academic integrity can be a double-sided argument, as those who are appointed to promote it, such as teachers, administrators, and researchers, can be committing it themselves by failing to prevent it (Simola, 2017). When an instructor is absent from the classroom, they miss the opportunity to protect students' integrity, as by not averting cheating and plagiarism on the teacher's part is ultimately promoting it to the students (Cifuentes & Janney, 2016).

A study by Greenberger et al. (2016) found that 75% of plagiarism occurred in an online environment due to unintentionally poor paraphrasing and incorrectly citing sources. In many cases, instructors took less time looking into the cause of plagiarism (accidental or intentional) and more time prosecuting the student. Holbeck et al. (2015) observed that some online instructors follow institutional policies on plagiarism exactly to the letter of the law, while others use plagiarism incidents as a teaching moment rather than a chance to punish the student.

College instructors know their institutions have formal policies on cheating and plagiarism, but few read them, try to understand them, or enforce them because there is a dispute among scholars on who should enforce the policies and what the consequences should be for violating them (Eaton, 2017). Teaching values to students is a struggle in the classroom, but any wrongdoing or misstep by a student must be addressed and used as an educational opportunity regardless of the justification, culture, or attitude of the student (Kaptein, 2017).

METHOD

To examine instructor practices in the online classroom, 12 teachers at a university in Florida with a large eLearning component were interviewed to obtain their perspective and instructional practices regarding the issue of preventing and reporting online academic integrity violations. A qualitative research design was best suited for this type of study because the purpose of the study was to examine a teacher's effectiveness and the results of actions that contribute to or prevent plagiarism and/or cheating in the online business classroom. A qualitative study design enabled me to describe a complex personal and interpersonal occurrence that could not be portrayed with quantitative research's single-dimensional scales (Kratwohl, 2009).

Another reason I selected a qualitative approach is because it uses in-depth interviewing with structured questions, which produces a variety of unscripted answers, versus the measurements and calculations of answers used in quantitative studies (Patterson & Malpass, 2015). Interviews for the proposed 12 subjects enabled me to retrieve an instructor's perspective and insight from their own thoughts on academic integrity, how they prevent it or unintentionally promote it, and how they address cheating and plagiarism after it is discovered. The different answers were best explained in the written word rather than numerical values (Leppink, 2017).

The framework used for this study was grounded theory. This consists of collecting data from questions asked during an interview, compiling the data, and identifying reoccurring themes, concepts, and topics that emerge from the answers. After this is done, the information collected from the interviews is categorized and coded. Grounded theory differs from other models of research, in which the researcher selects an existing theoretical framework and then collects data with the intention of confirming if the theory does or does not apply to the phenomenon being studied. With grounded theory, coding is a practice of content analysis (the formulation of an idea) to find the underlining issue among all of the data collected. Using the grounded theory during the analysis of the interview answers, I was able to see that the interviewees were using words and phrases that highlight important issues related to the study's purpose (Allan, 2003; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The themes, concepts, and topics

that emerged from the study question answers are presented in the results section of this paper.

Population and Sample

To research professor teaching effectiveness online, it was necessary to select individual instructors who are currently teaching at an accredited university delivering online business courses to a diverse population of students from a variety of cultures and backgrounds. Faculty members from a Florida based accredited university that is centered on students pursuing business and managerial related degree programs were used for this population sample.

The targeted population size was 12 current online faculty members in good standing with the university, from various backgrounds, with diverse education degrees, and having mixed genders. The sample size of 12 teachers reflected previous studies on a similar topic and the sample size used by other researchers (Fish, 2016; Prieto-Rodriguez et al. 2016). Participants were selected based on their direct involvement as university instructors, having taught at least two online courses at the university. Those who fit the criteria were invited by email to participate. IRB approval was gained prior to commencing the study.

I sought to reach data saturation at a sample size when categories or themes were saturated, because new or additional data no longer introduced different insights or properties related to the research study (Creswell, 2014). Guest et al. (2006) found that data saturation is achieved upon the completion of 12 interviews for qualitative studies, and this was also confirmed as an adequate number from a recent dissertation on a similar subject (Errico, 2016). Data saturation was met for this research study at 12 participants and no additional interviews or research were needed or conducted.

Materials/Instrumentation

The interviews were conducted with questions designed to gather information that aligned with the proposed purpose of the study (The interview questions are included in the Appendix). A time window was developed for each interview at approximately 30 minutes to ensure constancy through the data collection process. Interview questions were written in simple language that was easy to comprehend with limited professional terminology to ensure the participant's

comprehension. Participants were encouraged to share their honest opinions, attitudes, teaching styles, and practices in regard to academic integrity and how they address it in their online course rooms and prevent violations of it.

A semistructured interviewing method was used because it enabled those being interviewed to express their teaching viewpoints, beliefs, and perspectives (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The semistructured interview process allows for questions to be prepared ahead of time, with the study outcomes viewed as reliable, and it enables the interviewees to address the questions based on their own experiences (Mojtahed et al. 2014). Semistructured interviews produce reliable and comparable data that can be used with observations to allow the researcher to cultivate a deep understanding of the research topic (Bernard, 1988).

I considered examining each instructor's classroom to gather information on instructor feedback, their interaction with the students, and their academic integrity prevention methods, and then comparing the data with the interview questions but I ultimately dropped the idea. Obtaining permission through the selected university, gaining IRB approval, and possibly violating the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) were all time-consuming issues that would have needed to be addressed with no assurance of compliance or approval from all the parties involved. The data collected from this study were based solely on interview question responses.

A panel of experienced online professors (experts) was used to review and validate the interview questions to make sure they were comprehensible and concise. The members of the panel were provided with a copy of the study's purpose statement, the research questions, and the interview questions. Members of the panel were asked to identify weaknesses in the interview questions or the methods in which data was obtained from each study participant's online course. The panel members were asked to address any weakness in the data collection process to ensure effectiveness and accuracy related to the study's purpose.

Study Procedures

The names and contact information for the participants were obtained by selecting faculty members currently active and in good standing at the chosen school. When responses from the email

invitations were received, another email was sent out to schedule the interview. Once an agreed upon time for the interview was established, an informed consent form was sent for the participant to sign. Consent forms were signed with a wet or official school digital signature before any interviews were conducted.

After data collection, the axial coding method was used to identify major and minor issues and then categories to link the properties and dimensions of the collected data. After initial analysis, the collected data was further analyzed to uncover key elements, motives, and factors about the instructors teaching effectiveness. A word phrase was assigned for each category, with short phrases or sentences used to help analyze the data, along with themes that emerged as the data was read and analyzed (Creswell, 2014).

I considered writing a qualitative codebook that would have contained predetermined codes useful for coding data and emerging themes developing through the study. The codebook may have provided definitions, maximized coherence of the codes, and also identified changes during the study as it evolved (Guest et al., 2006). However, eventually I deemed a codebook was not needed or relevant for the study. Before, during, and after the interviews, all data were stored in a secure location to ensure confidentiality. If during the entire research process discrepancies were found during the interviews, data collection, or review of the collected material, I took immediate action to clarify the issue or eliminate the discrepancy to ensure the study's precision.

Data Collection and Analysis

Twelve interviews were conducted in the same manner with a targeted window of 30 minutes each to ensure constancy through the data collection process. The interviews were conducted by phone or Skype (video communication from a personal computer) at my private home office to ensure confidentiality and that the conversations were not overheard by anybody. The participants were encouraged to share their honest opinions, attitudes, teaching styles, and practices in regard to academic integrity and how they address it and prevent violations in their online course rooms. I asked structured follow up questions as needed to ensure all the required and desired information was collected.

Each interview was recorded as an audio file and then transcribed by me into a word document and saved in an encrypted, password-protected flash drive with a different code used to identify each participant/interviewee. Specific information categorizing each participant, including education, experience, gender, and age, was included. This was done to ensure that names or any other information that may connect the participants with their answers was eliminated once the data were sorted and analyzed.

After collection, all the raw data were sorted and then coded to organize and identify the primary points of the interviews. The data were then categorized according to major and minor categories and themes for the purpose of answering the research questions (Campbell et al., 2013). The data were identified by using words, tables, and figures to display the different categories and then labeled with a written term related to the participant's response during the information collection process. The categorized code words were based on topics related to academic integrity issues, recently published literature on the topic, and common sense (Creswell, 2014). The coding system utilized for semistructured interviews was the axial coding method (Corbin & Strauss, 1998).

I used caution to reduce or eliminate the omission of relevant research findings or newly uncovered information discovered during analysis of the collected data that may have not been initially targeted or part of the original research question themes (Schmidt, 2017). To reduce this possibility after the initial analysis, the collected data were reexamined to uncover key elements, motives, and factors about the online business school instructors teaching effectiveness. Once the data were coded, potential trends, patterns, and themes were targeted for identification. Additionally, any relationships or traits between instructors who prevent academic integrity and those who do not was further analyzed to uncover the reasons and potential trends.

Limitations

The limitations of this study included the selection of instructors based on availability and their willingness to participate rather than using ones from a chosen diverse pool of participants. This may have eliminated a balance of male-to-female teachers, those with equal experience and education, or participants from different ethnic

backgrounds. The list of potential participants was obtained from the selected university used in this research. The ability to preselect participants based on multiple factors was not possible because only limited personal information about each possible participant was made available to me until after the participants agreed to be interviewed. Another limitation was the presence of social desirability bias where participants provide answers based on what they perceive the researcher wants to hear to appear socially desirable to them (Mcfarlane, 2012). With the research topic being based on academic dishonesty and whether the instructor's actions prevent or promote it, the participants may have been hesitant to provide truthful answers. This was minimized by ensuring all the responses were held in complete discretion and the interviewees remained anonymous.

FINDINGS

The same ten structured questions were addressed to each individual participant (see Appendix), and once the answers were gathered and coded, five major themes emerged. These themes, along with some responses and additional content, are presented below.

The first theme was the difference between cheating and plagiarism in the online environment and a traditional classroom. Half of the participants ($n = 6$) expressed their thoughts on the difference between academic dishonesty in the online classroom versus the traditional classroom, with four participants specifically stating it was more prevalent online than in a traditional classroom environment.

Participant 1 elaborated on this theme by stating, "Online seems to favor the environment where plagiarism can occur over the traditional classroom." With Participant 6 asserting, "In an online classroom, students feel free to test you first to see how much you will tolerate in regards to cheating and plagiarism." While Participant 7 explained "Cheating and plagiarism is higher online than on the campus. Students have the opportunity to download and share material with other students online."

The second theme was poor time management skills, with seven participants stating this as a reason students cheat and plagiarize. The responses indicated that students felt rushed to complete

assignments as the results of poor time management skills, which prompted students to copy and paste material from an online source and pass it off as their own before the due date to avoid having points deducted for a late assignment. This is further explained by Participant 2's answer, "Students feel rushed because they lack time management skills. Students just want to get through the work without absorbing the information. It takes longer to find, copy, and paste an assignment than to complete it honestly." Participant 6 further elaborated on this topic of how poor time management pressures students to cheat and plagiarize, "Characteristics of the online students are not like the traditional students. They are working and studying at the same time and struggling to meet the deadline. Pressure and time constraints may push them toward cheating and plagiarism."

The third theme was that students do not fully understand all the elements of correctly citing and referencing sources in APA format and most plagiarism is unintentional because the students do not understand what they are doing wrong. This was evident by six of the participants stating this as the main reason students plagiarize in the online classroom.

Participant 1 stated, "Plagiarism is unintentional; which happens the most because students don't know better." Participant 5 explained, "Students do not realize they are cheating or plagiarizing. They quote material without correctly citing and referencing their sources because they do not know what they are doing wrong." Participant 9 stated, "Plagiarism is not always malicious. Nine times out of ten, it is done accidentally and a result of ignorance because the student did not know it was plagiarism." Participant 10 thought, "Students don't fully understand plagiarism because of lack of knowledge."

When asked, what is the school you teach (online courses) for the perspective of cheating and plagiarism?, the responses include those from Participant 1, "No, not acceptable. The school requires teachers to enforce it." Participant 2 stated, "The policy is in the course modules with information on who to reach out to." Participant 5 answered with, "They want it reported. The school has policies in the course rooms to prevent it." Participant 6 is quoted as, "The school provides all the rules and mechanisms to mitigate the

problem. All policies are posted in the classroom." Participant 9 explained, "The school has a great process, and it is spelled out and organized."

The fourth theme was instructor responsibility to ensure cheating and plagiarism do not happen, and how the school strongly supports the promotion of academic integrity in their online classrooms. All the participants (n = 12) expressed that instructors are responsible for ensuring academic integrity is upheld to high standards by the students, and the school has a no tolerance policy, with procedures in place to prevent and address the occurrence of violations. All the participants (n = 12) stated the Turnitin plagiarism checker tool was the most important instrument used by them to check students submitted assignments for plagiarism or cheating. Four of the participants stated they used additional sources to check for plagiarism such as the Google website or the Grammarly writing help website.

Three of the participants explained they had never witnessed cheating or intentional plagiarism while teaching at the school. It is noted that all three of these teachers have taught twenty classes or fewer. The ones who answered no were Participant 2 (10 classes), Participant 5 (6 classes), and Participant 12 (20 classes). Only one other participant had taught fewer than 20 classes (6 classes) and answered yes to the question of witnessing cheating or intentional plagiarism. The results indicate that more experienced and seasoned instructors teaching online classes at the school had witnessed cheating and plagiarism.

The fifth theme evident in the responses was the idea of using teaching moments. This was stated to apply explicitly to students who have been caught cheating and plagiarizing. Participant 2 stated, "The instructor can give a zero, or can work with the student and make it a teaching moment." Participant 5 explained, "If instructors do not let students know, then there is a missed opportunity to teach them to change." Participant 7 expounded, "If the student owns up to cheating and plagiarism, the instructor lets them redo the assignment and use the incident as a teaching moment." Participant 9 reasoned, "The process is an unpleasant event, but the experience can be pleasant. There is latitude for the instructor to work with the students to turn the issue into a learning experience." Participant 11 concluded with, "Plagiarism and teaching should be used as a learning experience to teach students."

An additional topic emerging from the study was addressing the issues of plagiarism and cheating with the students first before routing an academic integrity violation report through school administration. Of the participants indicating they have witnessed cheating and plagiarism in their online classroom, the results varied on how a determination was made to report it or not. Participant 7 stated, "Confront the students first. It depends on their response. If they own up to it, then I let the student redo the assignment, and send them training tools." Participant 8 explained, "Give the students a chance to explain why they have a high Turnitin score before penalizing the student." Participant 1 was quoted as, "First time the instructor has a one-on-one meeting and ask for an explanation." Participant 11 stated, "I work with the students first to ensure they understand citing and referencing sources."

Participants were asked if they have ever submitted an academic integrity violation report and if they knew where the academic integrity violation reports are found. The results show only two of the participants had submitted an academic integrity violation report through school administration, with only four knowing that the forms and instructions are located in every online course in the Information for Instructors/Plagiarism section of the course. The results indicated participants are more likely to address issues of plagiarism and cheating on their own instead of getting school administration involved or exposing student plagiarism or cheating issues outside of the classroom.

Evaluation of Findings

Poor time management was discovered to be a primary reason students plagiarize and cheat because they get behind on the coursework, feel pressured to meet deadlines, and end up submitting work that is not their own. Rust et al. (2015) revealed that not all students are self-disciplined, motivated, or persistent enough to be successful online. Moten et al. (2013) found that those who lack these qualities sometimes turn to cheating and plagiarism to compensate for their lack of time management skills.

Online academic integrity violations versus the traditional classroom was mentioned in half (n = 6) of the responses. Baek and Choi (2002) found different classroom settings have dissimilar

levels of cheating. The reasons for this variation include instructor participation, the culture of the learning environment, student's adherence to rules and guidelines, how assignments are graded, and the attitude exhibited by the instructor toward the students. Robinson and Glanzer (2017) explained that creating a moral climate is a complex procedure involving many elements, with the most important being an active instructor leading by example.

All the participants (n = 12) believe they are preventing academic integrity by addressing it on their own, and they are responsible for ensuring academic integrity is held to high standards. However, there is no indication this is actually happening as only 16% of the study's participants have submitted an academic violation report through school administrations, and only four knew where the reports were located. A study on faculty members at a large state university found only 52% read and or understood the school's policy on plagiarism (Gullifer & Tyson, 2014). Madara and Namango (2016) found faculty seldom discuss the rules or consequences of academic integrity violations with their students.

When a report is not submitted, it is difficult to track how many times a student has cheated or plagiarized in their university career. While some instructors may use a violation as a teaching moment in one class without reporting it, there is no promise the student will not do it in another if academic integrity violations are not systematically tracked. The university where the participants taught did not have a system to monitor and track previous violations so instructors could view student's integrity issues outside of their classroom.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The first recommendation of how the findings can be applied to practice is addressing the results from the study in which half of the participants (n = 6) stated that the atmosphere in the online environment is more susceptible to cheating and plagiarism than the traditional course room. Richardson et al. (2015), stated that the instructor's role in preventing academic integrity violations is essential and represents the methods teachers use to create a quality online atmosphere that supports and sustains productive classroom environments. Isakov and Tripathy (2017) found when the conditions to cheat were available more

students did so. When the instructor eliminated the conditions, it limited the opportunity, and the cheating declined.

The recommended approach for instructors should be to set guidelines, rules, and procedures at the beginning of each course. Teach those students who do not fully understand correct formatted writing procedures and protocol, and discipline those who intentionally cheat and plagiarize. Not all instructors thrive in the elearning environment because they do not understand what is expected of them (Baillie, 2014). Correcting the issue of academic integrity in any learning environment can be done by establishing an atmosphere of honesty, morality, and ethics. Though time consuming, it can be done by monitoring, understanding, and enforcing instructional policies on cheating and plagiarism while being fair and consistent.

The second recommendation from the results of the study is to utilize technology inside and outside of the online classroom to detect and prevent cheating and plagiarism, as only two of the 12 instructors interviewed used methods other than the Turnitin plagiarism detection tool in every online course. Richardson and Alsup (2015) argued that teachers who expand their technical abilities to reach outside of the classroom develop greater value to students and learning institutions. When tools and practices are explored outside the basic requirements for the classroom, then competences are shaped and teaching practices are expanded (Vinagre, 2017). The more tools acquired and mastered in combating the issues of cheating and plagiarism, the easier it can be prevented. More training by institutions, utilizing prevention tools by instructors outside of the classroom, and making available advance technology detection tools by manufacturers to educational professionals (not students) can help detect and prevent violations of academic integrity.

The third recommendation is to ensure all academic integrity violations are reported, as the research findings from this study found only two of 12 participants have ever officially recorded an academic integrity violation through the school administration. Madara and Namango (2016) found some faculty rarely discuss rules or consequences of academic integrity violations with their students. Eaton (2017) stated that instructors know their institutions have formal policies on

cheating and plagiarism, but few read, understand, or enforce them.

There were no follow up questions specifically asking the participants how they might be better incentivized to report academic integrity violations. The results of only two instructors officially reporting integrity violations outside of their classroom to school administration was not discovered until all the interviews were completed and all answers from the participants were reviewed as a whole. The topic of how to incentivize or promote the reporting of academic integrity violations outside of the classroom to school administration would be a relevant topic for future research. Until this research can be conducted, recommendations on how to address the issue now are presented below.

Requiring online instructors to take training on where academic integrity violations forms are located, how to complete them, and the importance of tracking violations should be part of training for all online schools. This training could be held during the hiring process and again annually for each instructor before they can teach another academic year. How an institution or faculty member addresses cheating and plagiarism after it has been discovered is just as important as implementing preventative measures (Burrus et al., 2013).

Keeping track of violations submitted using a universitywide process could promote reporting them because professors could see previous cheating and plagiarism issues conducted by students. Making students' records easily available to the instructor without having to go through school administration or complete lengthy paperwork could also promote compliance (Nkata and Dida, 2019). The goal is to record intentional incidents, so a record can be established and violations can be tracked throughout a student's academic career. When no record is established, a student could be cheating and plagiarizing their way through college to graduation and never have it reported. A record helps establish trends and makes it easier to track what subjects, courses, or instructors have a higher incidence of plagiarism and cheating violations over others. Once a trend is established, it can be easier to address and correct (Jereb et al., 2018).

Reporting plagiarism and other academic integrity violations to school administration helps create a quality online atmosphere that

supports and sustains productive classroom environments (Richardson et al., & Mueller, 2015). The instructor's environment or setting has a big impact on the student's decisions to cheat and/or plagiarize. Upholding academic integrity by reporting violations helps build ethical core values students can carry throughout a lifetime (Cifuentes & Janney, 2016). How academic integrity violations are handled after they are discovered can also be an essential part of the academic experience and can determine both academic and professional futures for the pupil and teachers (McGrail & McGrail, 2015). A reported academic integrity violation to school officials not only tracks a student's moral actions it can also impact their future in a way that changes their behavior from poor to good (Wang & Murnighan, 2017).

Because all intentional academic violations are mandated to be recorded, it does not mean a punishment must accompany the report. The decision whether to penalize should still rest with the instructor through confirmation from a school administrator or a second set of eyes to ensure the decision is justified (Hammersley, 2016). An example of recommendations for sanctions could be a documented warning for a first-time offense, failure of the assignment or course for a second offense, and suspension or expulsion for the third time. Documentation of the academic integrity in these circumstances is just as important as the penalty applied for the offense.

CONCLUSION

The findings from this study show most instructors believe cheating is more prevalent online, students plagiarize more because of misunderstanding than intentionality, and students cheat because their poor time management skills force them to use other people's work in place of their own to meet deadlines. All participants believe it is their duty to prevent cheating and plagiarism, and they are addressing academic integrity issues in the correct manner; however, most instructors are not reporting incidents outside of their own classrooms.

The issue is that instructors believe they are addressing cheating and plagiarism correctly by using the incident as a teaching moment and explaining what the student did wrong and then allowing the student to redo the assignment in

question or by awarded the student a grade of zero without reporting the violation to school administrators. When no documentation is created, then students can repeat the offense in multiple courses and ultimately graduate by means of unethical actions. The importance of this study is that it shows most online instructors are doing what they believe is their best to prevent academic integrity violations, but they may be promoting violations by not reporting them, which ultimately allows some students to graduate without fairly earning their degree.

Based on the findings and themes from this study, further research on online instructors and their teaching effectiveness could explore three different areas, which include reporting academic integrity violations, adapting instructors to the elearning environment, and examining what makes online learning institutions successful.

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APPENDIX B

Interview Questions for Participants

1. What is your perspective on academic integrity (cheating and plagiarism) in the online classroom?
2. What are some of the reasons you think students plagiarize and cheat online?
3. What is the school you teach (online courses) for perspective of cheating and plagiarism?
4. What prevention methods do you use in your own online classroom to prevent cheating and plagiarism?
5. What tools are available to you as part of the course rooms to detect plagiarism and cheating?
6. Have you ever witnessed or caught students cheating and or plagiarism assignments in your classes?
7. How do you make a decision to report it or not?
 - a. Follow up questions:
 1. What issues do you have about reporting cheating and plagiarism issues?
 2. What options are available to you in regards to the penalties?
8. Have you ever submitted an academic integrity violation report?
 - a. Follow up questions:
 1. Where are the integrity violation reports and instructions on how to complete them found?
 2. If you have submitted an academic integrity violation report how was the issue addressed by the school after the report was submitted?
9. There are educators who believe when we do nothing as teachers to prevent plagiarism and cheating, we are actually promoting it. What are your thoughts regarding this statement?
10. Is there any other comments you have in regards to promoting or preventing plagiarism in the online eLearning environment?