Perceptions of Digital Academic Dishonesty in English Writing at Applied Colleges

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Abstract

Since the last decade, English instructors have often found digital academic English writing dishonesty (Tayan, 2017) among Saudi EFL graduating students due to the serious issues of adapting the online ghostwrites and tools, fabricating the English writing practices (Al-Khairy, 2013), plagiarism (Madkhali, 2017; Jenkins, 2018), neglecting proper citation and referencing, a lack of critical thinking and analysis, limited vocabulary and weak language proficiency (Fareed et al., 2016, Alsowat, 2017), and inadequate grammar and syntax, all of which affect their English writing skills ethically. However, such serious issues and digital factors devalue the hard work of honest students and negatively impact the integrity of the educational system. Therefore, this research attempt investigated critically the perceptions of digital academic dishonesty by Saudi EFL students in English writing at the Applied Colleges of King Khalid University. The objective of this study was to examine the awareness and understanding of digital academic dishonesty among diploma students enrolled in applied colleges. A descriptive quantitative analysis of 134 students' questionnaires was conducted, and data was gathered regarding their perceptions of academic dishonesty and such mediums by which students take part in academically dishonest activities. Also, the study explored the prevalent types of digital academic dishonesty that Saudi students engage in and the causes behind such behaviors. The investigation identified such common types of digital academic dishonesty as plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, utilizing essay mills, and falsification of sources, among others. By investigating the motivations behind such behaviors, the study, therefore, aimed to shed light on suggestions to reduce digital academic dishonesty in the context of English writing assignments.

Keywords: digital, academic English writing, integrity, dishonesty, Digital Academic Integrity (DAI), Academic Dishonesty (AD), plagiarism.

1. Introduction

Academic integrity refers to the practice of conducting oneself in a manner that is characterized by honesty, fairness, respect, and responsibility in one's academic pursuits and scholarly endeavors (Aluede et al., 2006; Sabri, 2009; Mattar, 2022). Digital academic integrity (DAI) is a critical aspect of higher education, ensuring honesty and ethical practices in the English writing skill (Gamage et al., 2020; Sotiriadou et al., 2020). But the issue of cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic misconduct in writing has increasingly become a concern among college students nowadays (Ahmed, 2018; Jenkins, 2018; Nuriddin, 2019; AlSmari, 2020). However, DAI for Saudi EFL college students is about maintaining honesty, accountability, and respect in utilizing digital tools and resources for academic purposes while avoiding any form of cheating, plagiarism, or unethical practices. Digital academic honesty is important for college students because it upholds the integrity of their work and the value of their education. Writing academic tasks requires extensive research, critical thinking, creative writing skills, and analytical skills. Plagiarism, or any form of cheating, undermines the effort students put into their studies and devalues the learning experience. In the digital age, it is easier than ever to access and copy information from various sources. Without digital academic honesty (DAH), the credibility of academic institutions and the validity of qualifications would be compromised (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Additionally, DAH promotes fairness and equal opportunities for all students, as it ensures that each student's work is evaluated based on their own knowledge and effort. Furthermore, practicing DAH prepares students for their future careers, as plagiarism and unethical behavior can lead to professional consequences. Employers value integrity and expect employees to produce original work without relying on others' ideas or work in English academic writing without proper attribution.

While, some students may have a clear understanding of what constitutes digital academic dishonesty in English academic writing; but, however,   there are a range of perceptions among Saudi EFL students about dishonesty   which incorporates a range of behaviors including lying, duplicate submission, misrepresentation, plagiarism, copy-paste, cheating, bribery misrepresentation, impersonator, fabrication and falsification (of data, information, or citations in any formal academic exercise), disruptive behavior, sabotage & unauthorized collaboration (submitting the same piece of writing work of someone), other acts of deception ("white lies" and fraud), remix (paraphrasing material into own words), find and replace (replacing words to try to bypass plagiarism detectors, i.e., Turnitin, Grammarly, DupliChecker, PlagScan, Copyleaks Plagiarism Checker, ProWritingAid, WhiteSmoke, etc.), clone (copying material verbatim), improper access(obstruction of materials & systems), improper online (TeleWeb & blended course use), collaborating on an in-class or take-home test without   authorized permission, copying from another student's test or homework, allowing another student to copy from your test or homework, using materials

such as textbooks, notes, or formula lists during a test without the instructor's permission, and write and manipulate the writing tasks through recent emerging GPT AI tools & apps day to day (artificial intelligence GPT apps & tools), are included as DAI sources. These DAI affairs and actions are seen as violating ethical standards and undermining the integrity of their English academic work.

The main cause of DAI perceptions by Saudi EFL students is a more limited understanding of DAI, especially if they are not familiar with the cultural and academic norms of academic writing in their host institutions. Language barriers or a lack of exposure to proper citation practices may contribute to misunderstandings or unintentional violations of academic integrity. Consequently, Saudi Arabia has implemented strict measures to combat academic dishonesty (Albanawi, 2017) in English writing skills, such as adopting plagiarism detection software and enforcing policies against unethical practices. These measures reflect the government's commitment to maintaining academic integrity at colleges and universities. Educational institutions have also implemented technology-driven tools and software to detect and prevent plagiarism on the university BB and e-Learning platforms whenever students follow the misconduct of English academic writing. These tools and software highlight the similarities in the lines of the given English tasks by the instructor. These efforts indicate a general awareness and acknowledgement of the issue. However, the specific attitudes and perceptions of Saudi EFL students regarding digital academic dishonesty are likely aware of the consequences of engaging in digital academic dishonesty and the importance of originality and proper citation in their English writing works.

Therefore, Saudi EFL students should properly attribute any sources they reference, whether it is through direct quotes, paraphrasing, or summarizing (Fazilatfar et al., 2018). Furthermore, it is crucial for students to use digital tools responsibly. This means not using any online programs or services that violate academic honesty policies, such as essay mills or unauthorized online study guides (Sbaffi & Zhao, 2022). It is important to independently develop one's knowledge and skills and seek help from instructors or appropriate English academic writing resources when needed.

Hence, DAI serves as the foundation for upholding ethical standards in English academic writing. DAI refers to maintaining honesty and ethical behavior while using digital resources for educational purposes (Gamage et al., 2020; Holden et al., 2021) in English academic writing. As a result, it encompasses principles like respecting copyright laws, citing sources, avoiding plagiarism, and the principles of honesty, fairness, and academic integrity in digital content (Kier & Ives, 2022). In the age of the internet, it has become even more crucial to be aware of and adhere to principles of academic integrity (AI). AI in the research targeted colleges of King Khalid University refers to the set of ethical values and principles that guide students' behavior in their English academic writing pursuits. DAI encompasses honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility in all aspects of learning, research, and collaboration (Lau, 2021; Sbaffi & Zhao, 2022) in the colleges. It involves being honest, trustworthy, fair, courageous, accountable, and respectful in the use and creation of digital content for English academic writing tasks.

Saudi Arabia has implemented strict measures to combat academic dishonesty, such as adopting plagiarism detection software and enforcing policies against unethical practices. These measures reflect the government's commitment to maintaining academic integrity at colleges and universities. Saudi EFL students, therefore, are likely aware of the consequences of engaging in digital academic dishonesty and the importance of originality and proper citation in their work. AD seems to be an increasing area of concern in education. There is a perception that the problem is becoming worse, with our students' ethics and standards dropping, access to technology increasing cheating, and an influx of culturally diverse students.

2. Literature Review

This synthesis of several related studies has explored the emerging and challenging issues of academic dishonesty and integrity in Saudi Arabian colleges. Academic dishonesty, including cheating and plagiarism, is a global concern and challenge that undermines the integrity and credibility of educational systems (Nuriddin, 2019; Akbar & Picard, 2020). Saudi Arabia, with its rapidly growing higher education sector, is not exempt from such burning issues (Jenkins, 2018; Farahat, 2022). In the context of Saudi Arabia, this problem has received limited attention and has not been much debated yet in academic research. However, recent academic studies have shed light on the prevalence, causes, and consequences of academic dishonesty in the country. Previous studies by Abdulghani et al. (2018), Fazilatfar et al. (2018), Nuriddin (2019), Hersi (2021), Amzalag et al. (2022), Altalhab (2023), Almutairi et al. (2023), Ahmadi & King (2023), and Mukasa et al. (2023) found that academic success is very important in Saudi Arabian culture and is often linked to a person's overall reputation and honor. This intense pressure to achieve academic excellence might lead some students to engage in dishonest behaviors to meet societal expectations (Nuriddin, 2019; Elmasry, 2023).

In addition, these researchers examined it critically and delved into whether the lack of awareness means that many students in Saudi Arabia might not fully understand the concept of academic integrity or the ramifications of engaging in dishonest practices. This lack of awareness can result from insufficient guidance from educational institutions or inconsistent enforcement of academic honesty policies. The competitive education system (Jenkins, 2018; Farahat, 2022) has also created the circumstances to show the best from others, forcing students to indulge in academic dishonest activities. Furthermore, the researchers Alghamdi et al. (2018), Abdulghani et al. (2018), Fazilatfar et al. (2018), Nuriddin (2019), AlSmari (2020), Muhammad et al. (2020), Hussein (2022), Almutairi et al. (2023), Elmasry (2023), and Mukasa et al. (2023) emphasized asking how instructors who do not give enough support and advice on how to teach academic honesty and proper citation techniques can make it more common for students to cheat online. Alhadlaq et al. (2020), Elshafei & Jahangir (2020), and Issrani et al. (2021) emphasized the need for educational institutions to implement preventive measures and promote ethical values among students. Such factors have been investigated and uncovered throughout the studies; they require implementing multi-faceted

approaches, which have not been much discussed and debated as of now.

As evidence, likewise, several studies have explored scientifically the effectiveness of digital tools in promoting academic integrity among students. Mostafa et al. (2021) argued for the use of Turnitin, iThenticate, Copyscape, Grammarly, etc. as plagiarism-detection tools among Saudi Arabian university students. They found that students' familiarity with these plagiarism-detection tools and their understanding of academic integrity policies influenced their use of the tools and their commitment to academic integrity. Moreover, Honsy and Fatima (2014) assessed the use of MOOCs to promote academic integrity among university students. They investigated how MOOCs can be effective tools for promoting academic integrity by providing students with a comprehensive understanding of the ethical principles of academic writing and the negative consequences of academic dishonesty.

In terms of graduate students' perception of academic integrity, Marhoon & Wardman (2018) discussed the factors that influence academic integrity among graduate students who were more familiar with academic integrity policies and who had a higher level of self-efficacy in academic writing and were more likely to comply with academic integrity standards. Moreover, Mansour et al. (2017) explored the relationship between plagiarism and academic writing skills among Saudi Arabian graduate students. However, these researchers found that graduate students who lacked adequate academic writing skills were more likely to engage in plagiarism. In terms of interventions to address academic dishonesty among graduate students, Surahman & Wang (2022) focused on the effectiveness of an ethics training program to promote effectiveness in raising students' awareness of academic integrity policies and in reducing the incidence of plagiarism.

Furthermore, Nabee et al. (2020) inquired about graduate students' attitudes toward using artificial intelligence tools, such as chatbots, chatGPT, and other such AI tools, to promote academic integrity. They explored that most students had positive attitudes toward using such tools and apps to detect and prevent plagiarism, although there are some apprehensions and concerns about the reliability and accuracy of these tools. Other studies also explored the role of faculty and academic institutions in promoting academic integrity. For instance, Almutairi et al. (2023) investigated faculty members' perceptions of academic integrity and found that they were aware of the issue of academic dishonesty but felt that academic institutions should do more to enforce academic integrity policies.

The systematic studies and reviews of Abdulghani et al. (2018), Alrubaish (2019), and Shoaib & Zahran (2021) focused on university students' perspectives on cheating that some students admitted to engaging in cheating practices due to the belief that it was common and socially accepted in their environment. However, their studies also revealed a significant number of students expressed negative attitudes towards cheating, highlighting the importance of fostering a culture of academic integrity in educational institutions. Besides, Alrubaish et al. (2019), Alhadlaq et al. (2020), and Issrani et al. (2021) examined students' perceptions of plagiarism and their awareness of plagiarism policy in Saudi universities. Findings showed that while the majority of students were aware of the existence of plagiarism policies, there was a lack of understanding about the concept and consequences of plagiarism. This highlighted the need for educational institutions to provide clear guidelines and effective educational interventions to enhance students' understanding and adherence to academic integrity standards.

Therefore, the studies reviewed provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence academic dishonesty and the effectiveness of interventions to address this issue. The findings suggested that promoting academic integrity requires a multifaceted approach that considers the role of digital technologies, academic institutions, faculty members, and academic librarians. As a result, understanding these factors can help educators and policymakers develop effective strategies to prevent academic dishonesty and promote a culture of academic integrity in Saudi Arabian educational institutions.

However, as a result, we do not yet have a complete, clear picture of how accurate academic writing and dishonesty can be reduced, improved, and new strategies implemented in the English writing prescribed course. Therefore, the perception of digital academic dishonesty in English writing among enrolled male and female students at the KKU for the evening applied to colleges, which have neither been enough discussed nor debated profoundly yet.

3. Research Gap and Problem

Through the literature review, it has come to the point that academic dishonesty is commonly prevalent in Saudi Arabia. The Applied Colleges (AC) of evening innings affiliated with King Khalid University (KKU) also received many complaints of students' copying and plagiarizing academic tasks in assignments and writing small projects (at different levels) from peers and EFL instructors. Usually, students are assigned English writing tasks via Blackboard (LMS), an e-learning platform of the university. Prior to submitting the writing tasks, students are given enough practice in the classroom regarding writing academic essays and small projects. Even after all practices, students submit copied and pasted works on the blackboard. The students debate confidently that they do not cheat, copy, or get help from paid professionals, whereas teachers and evaluators often complain that many students do academically dishonest things when they are asked to do assignments for academic purposes. Therefore, the study attempts to find out the students' acquaintance with academic integrity in writing tasks, the reasons behind conducting dishonesty, and how it is generally done by KKU AC students. Academic writing delinquency and academic malfeasance among college students have been the subject of numerous studies. However, the primary focus of this study is on the digital academic misconduct committed by students enrolled in the Applied Colleges for the evening classes who utilize technological sources and digital tools. The research emphasizes the significance of academic integrity, association, fairness, and honesty in the completion of academic assignments utilizing digital tools by students. The study endeavors to gain an understanding of the perceptions of EFL students regarding DAI. Additionally, it provides recommendations for mitigating academic dishonesty and producing unbiased work. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this was also the first time a study on cheating and plagiarism was conducted at the KKU

AC for the evening classes.

4. Research Design

A descriptive quantitative research methodology is applied to conduct this research. The researcher acknowledged the issue and identified a gap in existing research through a thorough examination of the available literature. The researcher designed and constructed the questionnaire from scratch in order to ensure that the study could achieve its purpose. It finds out three research questions: first, *what and how do students respond to assignments and projects that demand they violate their academic integrity?* Second, *what elements (or causes) contribute to the disregard for academic integrity among EFL students?* And third, *what are the suggestions of applied college students to maintain the fundamental values of academic integrity in their English writings?* A five-point Likert scale questionnaire (Likert, 1932) is prepared to inquire about students' perceptions and the causes behind the conduct of dishonesty in writing. Also, the study ends up with a lot of suggestions for reducing dishonesty in academic writing tasks. The study was started in September 2023 during the first semester at an applied college for the evening classes affiliated with KKU. The questionnaire was distributed to all the colleges under the umbrella of the English unit. Out of this, 140 students finally responded, but only 134 responses were considered for analysis due to their comprehensiveness.

5. Data Analysis and Results

For this study, the researchers used SPSS to compile and evaluate their data. This section initially analyzes the demographic data, the levels of the students, and the three study topics. The frequency and percentages of each item have been provided in the tables using SPSS. The previous study is used to inform the discussion, which is based on the percentage and frequency of the students' responses.

The study starts with some general information about the participants. The general demographic information (table 1) and levels of the applied college students (table 2) are laid out here. Out of 134 total respondents, 28.4% (38 students) were male and 71.6% (96 students) were female. Female students showed more interest and participation in answering the questionnaire. More than half (51.5%) of the students responded from level 1, and the rest are from the second (16.4%), third (12.7%), and fourth (23.1%) levels. It shows that first-year freshmen showed more interest in filling out the questionnaire. Responding to an exploration question on the topic of students' acknowledgement of academic dishonesty (table 3), 26.1% said that using someone else's work as yours is academic dishonesty. While 23.9% and 16.4% said that representing someone else's views or theories without attribution and unauthorized cooperation on homework, assignments, or exams is academic dishonesty, fabricating assignment data (all or in part) (13.4%), using others' work without asking them (11.2%), or submitting tasks or projects for another student (7.5%) is also academic dishonesty. 38.8% didn't say anything regarding dishonesty due to their lack of knowledge and unawareness of the subject.

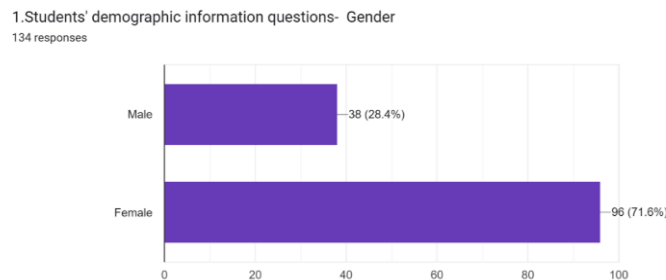Table 1. Demographic information

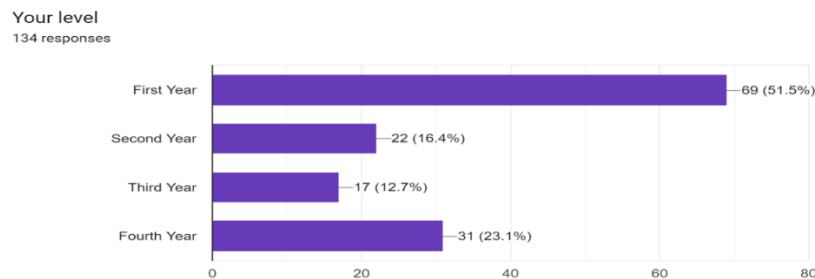Table 2. Different levels of students
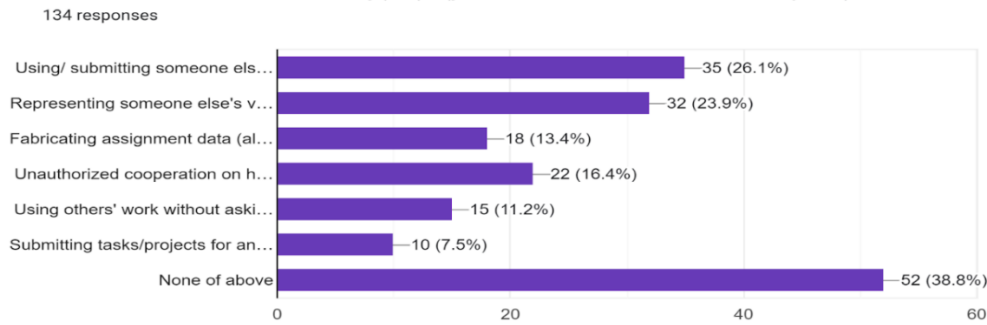
Table 3. What is academic dishonesty?

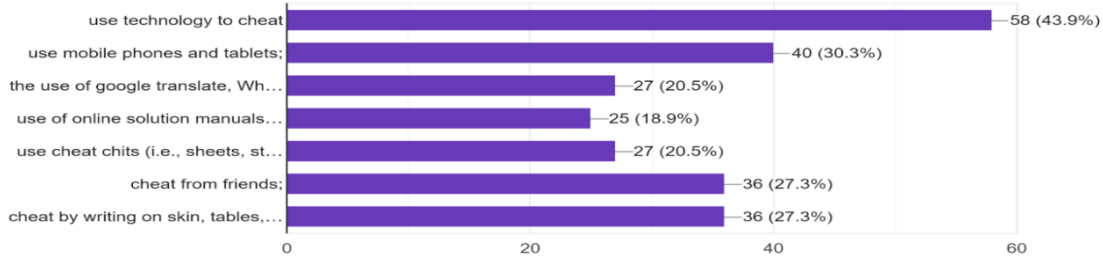Table 4. Mediums by which students take part in academically dishonest activities

Table 4 gives a statistical analysis of the common digital tools and ways that students use to take part in academic misconduct on English writing assignments. Out of 134 students, 58 (43.9%) said that they use different technology to cheat. 40 students (30.3%) generally use phones and tablets, especially, and 27 (20.5%) use Google Translate, WhatsApp, Facebook, and other texting apps. 18.9% use online solution manuals (provided by book publishers, teachers, and experts). 20.5% use cheat chits, and 27.3% cheat from friends. And the rest of them (27.3%) use other ways to deceive when writing essays.

Research question 1: question *what and how do students respond to assignments and projects that demand they violate their academic integrity?*

Table 5. The mean frequency scores and SD

Items	Valid number	Missing	Mean	Std. Deviation
Fabricated statements and data	134	0	1.69	.958
Included content from the internet without citing	134	0	1.97	1.178
Included content from the internet without citing	134	0	2.03	1.133
Tried to copy from a mobile and a smartwatch	134	0	1.66	1.186
Submitted the assignment prepared by another student	134	0	1.73	1.155
Ask social platform to solve an assignment	134	0	1.91	1.003
Sent your assignment to another students Table-5: The mean frequency scores and SD	134	0	1.81	1.114
Give printed written assignments to another student	134	0	1.97	1.209
Included content from a book	134	0	2.04	1.190
Included content from a book	134	0	1.84	1.173
Asks for help from a professional to write an assignment	134	0	2.04	1.171
Gave printed assignment paper to another student	134	0	1.97	1.106

In addressing the first research question, Table 5 presents the average frequency scores for twelve distinct methods employed to engage in dishonest practices during writing assignments and projects. The mean deviates from 1.66 to 2.04 in different categories. The standard deviation also shows the deviation from.95 to 1.19 for different items in the categories. The different ways that were reported at high frequency were "asking another student to help you solve an assignment" (M = 2.03 - SD =1.13), "including content from a book" (M = 2.04 - SD = 1.19), and asking for help from a professional to write an assignment (M = 2.04 - SD =1.17). These are the most commonly used ways of violating academic integrity.

Table 6. Different ways of violating academic integrity

Different ways of violating academic integrity	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
Gave his/her printed assignment paper to another student	48.1%	18.5%	23.7%	7.4%	2.2%
Asks for help from a professional to write an assignment paper	47.4%	16.3%	23.7%	9.6%	3.0%
Included content from another student's academic work without citing	60.0%	11.1%	17.0%	8.9%	3.0%
Included content from a book s/he borrowed from the library without citing	47.4%	17.8%	21.5%	9.6%	3.7%

Give your printed written assignments to another student	53.3%	13.3%	20.0%	9.6%	3.7%
Sent your assignment by email/WhatsApp/Snapchat to another students	57.8%	16.3%	14.1%	10.4%	1.5%
Ask social platform to solve an assignment	50.4%	12.6%	32.6%	4.4%	0.0%
Submitted the assignment that was prepared by another students	65.2%	11.1%	14.1%	5.2%	4.4%
Tried to copy from a mobile and a smartwatch	71.9%	6.7%	9.6%	7.4%	4.4%
Asked another student to help you solve an assignment	46.7%	16.3%	27.4%	6.7%	3.0%
Included content from the internet without citing	49.6%	19.3%	20.7%	5.2%	5.2%
Fabricated statements and data on an assignment	59.3%	17.0%	21.5%	0.0%	2.2%

Table 6 presents the analysis of all the items related to different ways of violating academic integrity in their writing assignments and projects. The overall analysis of the table shows that when responding to different questions, students differed with the statements and conveyed their disengagement from violating academic integrity.

Responding to the items in the first research question that students give their printed assignment paper to another student, 48.1% denied not to give it and help others, while 23.7% said that they sometimes give and 7.4% said that they often give it to others. 23.7% sometimes take help from professionals, 17.0% include content from other students' academic work, and 21.5% sometimes borrow content from a book without citing the source. 50.4% replied that they never ask social platforms to solve an assignment, while 36.2% said that sometimes they ask social platforms to assist them. There is a strong decline in the number of students who tried to copy from a mobile or smart watch during an exam when they had to write their academic task, but a lower percentage. 4.4% tried to cheat or copy during the exam. 27.4% sometimes asked another student to help them write an assignment for them, while 5.2% always included content from the internet without acknowledging and citing the website and URL. 21.5% agreed that they sometimes fabricated the statements and data on an assignment, while 59.3% denied fabricating the data.

Research question 2: *What elements (or causes) contribute to the disregard for academic integrity among EFL students?*

Table 7. Elements (causes) contribute to disregard the academic integrity

Elements(causes) contribute to disregard the academic integrity	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Wish to show the best than other students	26	14	43	31	21
	19.3%	10.4%	31.9%	23.0%	15.6%
Unknown about grammar and transition words/phrases	30	21	52	21	11
	22.2%	15.6%	38.5%	15.6%	8.1%
Poor and weak learning at their previous classes	29	18	47	29	12
	21.5%	13.3%	34.8%	21.5%	8.9%
Unaware of academic writing skills/format and proposals	33	21	45	26	10
	24.4%	15.6%	33.3%	19.3%	7.4%
Unfamiliar of critical and creative thinking, and another writing skills	30	29	43	22	11
	22.2%	21.5%	31.9%	16.3%	8.1%
Knowing that other students also violate academic integrity	35	24	41	24	11
	25.9%	17.8%	30.4%	17.8%	8.1%
Feeling bored with the given assignment	33	29	41	21	11
	24.4%	21.5%	30.4%	15.6%	8.1%
Teacher's unclear explanation what to be written in assignment	40	22	45	19	9
	29.6%	16.3%	33.3%	14.1%	6.7%
Wanting to help friends	26	21	47	31	10
	19.3%	15.6%	34.8%	23.0%	7.4%
Having a lot of assignments to do at the same time	0	13	29	32	61
	0.0%	9.6%	21.5%	23.7%	45.2%
Lack of study forces towards taking help from outside	32	23	47	23	10
	23.7%	17.0%	34.8%	17.0%	7.4%
The need to score a high grade	26	13	28	32	36
	19.3%	9.6%	20.7%	23.7%	26.7%
Difficulty of exams/assignments/projects	31	23	39	23	19
	23.0%	17.0%	28.9%	17.0%	14.1%
Lack of skills to effectively complete an assignment	41	23	40	28	3
	30.4%	17.0%	29.6%	20.7%	2.2%
Lack of interest to complete the assignments	47	31	32	19	6
	34.8%	23.0%	23.7%	14.1%	4.4%
Not giving enough time to submit the assignments	39	21	35	30	10
	28.9%	15.6%	25.9%	22.2%	7.4%

Responding to the second research question, the questions asked in Table 7 by students ranged from strongly disagreeing to strongly agreeing. There are various reasons that motivate and force students to disregard academic integrity. The major reason that is found from the analysis is that having a lot of assignments at the same time in English as well as in other subjects' forced students to copy them anyway and submit them timely, and 61 (45.2%) students strongly agreed with this cause. Another reason is the need to score a high grade in individual subjects (mainly English skills). The highest number of students is between 32 and 36 who agree or strongly agree with the statement. 23.7% and 26.7% are the frequency percentages. The wish and desire to show themselves better than others by getting good grades at their level is

another reason that forces the students to copy and cheat for assignments. About 52 (23% and 15.6%) students agreed and strongly agreed with this cause. The difficulty of exams, assignments, and projects also persuades students to cheat and copy. 42 students (about 31.1%) agreed to the statements. Unfamiliar and unrehearsed grammar rules and transition words and phrases are also some reasons that motivate students to reproduce copied work.

Additionally, one major reason that is found in the analysis is the poor or weak learning of students at their previous levels. 29 students agree and 12 agree with the fact, while 47 students are neutral on this cause. Unawareness of academic writing skills is one of the causes of not composing the essays correctly in a structured manner. Unfamiliarity and a lack of practice in critical and creative thinking also insisted on the fabrication of writing work. The rest of the issues are following other students (25.9%), who do violate the ethics and integrity of writing any academic paper, the teacher's unclear explanation (28%), feeling bored to write the assignments (23.7%), and the desire to help students (30.4%). Lack of skills to effectively complete the assignment (22.9%), lack of interest (25%), and sometimes not having enough time to submit the assignment (40%) are other reasons found in the SPSS analysis of the questionnaire.

Research question 3: What are the suggestions of Applied College students to maintain the fundamental values of academic integrity in the writing skill?

Table 8. Suggestions for students to keep the fundamental values of academic integrity

Suggestions for students	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Very important
Avoid all forms of plagiarism for academic writing work	8	7	47	28	45
	5.9%	5.2%	34.8%	20.7%	33.3%
Provide an original academic voice/thought and ideas for writing	16	11	38	30	40
	11.9%	8.1%	28.1%	22.2%	29.6%
Accurately cite credible sources for your academic work	18	8	37	30	42
	13.3%	5.9%	27.4%	22.2%	31.1%
Use relevant evidence to your topic	13	13	36	38	35
	9.6%	9.6%	26.7%	28.1%	25.9%
Look for credible sources for accurate and valuable information	7	20	39	26	43
	5.2%	14.8%	28.9%	19.3%	31.9%
Perform an academic search instead of relying solely on Google	8	21	40	36	30
	5.9%	15.6%	29.6%	26.7%	22.2%
Provide full knowledge of Academic dishonesty	10	18	37	33	37
	7.4%	13.3%	27.4%	24.4%	27.4%

Table 8 gives an analysis of the questions that stop students from violating the integrity of their writing tasks, based on the importance of following the things the questions evaluate from very unimportant to very important. From the students' point of view, avoiding all forms of plagiarism for academic writing work, 45 students (33.3%) said that it is very important to maintain digital academic integrity. 20.7% (28 students) said that it is important to avoid all forms of plagiarism. 43 students (31.1%) suggested that it is very important to look for credible digital sources for accurate and valuable information. Similarly, 42 students (31.1%) said that it is very important to accurately cite credible sources for academic writings, and it is also important (28.1%) to use relevant evidence for the topic while acknowledging the sources. Additionally, they found that when performing academic research, it is very important (30%) not to rely solely on Google. Moreover, providing full knowledge of academic dishonesty while using digital tools is essential (24.4%) for 37 students. 33 (24.4%) students found it important at the college level.

Table 9. Suggestions for academic institutions to maintain the fundamental values of AI

Suggestion for an academic institutions	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Very important
Evaluate and update academic integrity policies and processes regularly	6	11	36	44	38
	4.4%	8.1%	26.7%	32.6%	28.1%
Monitor higher education and technology trends affecting academic Integrity programs	6	10	35	43	41
	4.4%	7.4%	25.9%	31.9%	30.4%
Set up campus-wise academic honesty programs	13	9	38	26	49
	9.6%	6.7%	28.1%	19.3%	36.3%
Have a clear, accessible, and fair policy violation punishment	15	12	34	29	45
	11.1%	8.9%	25.2%	21.5%	33.3%
Educate the community about academic integrity guidelines	12	10	34	33	46
	8.9%	7.4%	25.2%	24.4%	34.1%
Have consistent academic integrity statements, policies, and processes	15	10	38	36	36
	11.1%	7.4%	28.1%	26.7%	26.7%

Table 9 gives an analysis of the academic institution's guidelines regarding the academic ethics to be followed by the students. Responding to their answer about evaluating and updating academic integrity policies and processes regularly, 44 students (32.6%) said it was important, and 38 students (28.1%) considered it very important to update the ethical policies. 26.7% of students did not react to this. Monitoring higher education and technology trends affecting academic integrity: 84 students (62.3%) find this important and very important. 49 (36.3%) students said that it is very important to set up campus-wise academic honesty programs to raise awareness among students. Having clear,

assessable, and fair policy violation punishment is necessary for institutions. 72 students (53.4%) gave their consent that it is very important to put strictness into following ethical integrity for their academic writing tasks.

Table 10. Suggestions regarding teaching pedagogy to sustain academic integrity

Suggestions regarding teaching pedagogy	Very unimportant	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Very important
Teaching academic writing skills/format and proposals in detail	7	10	33	41	44
	5.2%	7.4%	24.4%	30.4%	32.6%
Academic advice and tutoring should be given	5	14	38	39	39
	3.7%	10.4%	28.1%	28.9%	28.9%
Stress and time management skills should be introduced	3	9	25	44	53
	2.2%	6.7%	18.7%	32.8%	39.6%
Referencing and research skills should be taught	9	13	20	43	50
	6.7%	9.6%	14.8%	31.9%	37.0%
Group work should be applied	12	12	33	36	42
	8.9%	8.9%	24.4%	26.7%	31.1%
Provide full knowledge of academic dishonesty	14	8	32	27	54
	10.4%	5.9%	23.7%	20.0%	40.0%

Table 10 shows students' suggestions regarding teaching pedagogy to maintain digital academic integrity. 85 (63%) students said that it is very important to teach academic writing skills with proper formatting, structure, and proposals in detail to help students not copy from someone else. Only 12.6% of students found it unimportant, while 24.4% of students remained neutral and did not say whether it was important or unimportant. It is the full responsibility of the instructors to provide full knowledge of academic integrity to the students. There are various types of plagiarism that should be introduced to the students, especially intentional and unintentional plagiarism. 60% of students (81 students) said it is very important that all the knowledge be given to students at the college level. Stress and time management skills are equally important to be introduced to the students; 97 students, or 72.4%, said that these are very relevant to be learned to avoid academic dishonesty. 93 students said that it is very important that referencing and research skills be taught to the students. 68.9% of the students said that proper citing and referencing skills should be introduced at the college level to be mastered at writing without any academic dishonesty. Group work is really beneficial while practicing academic writing; 31.1% of students found it very important, while 26.7% of students said that it was important for them.

6. Discussion

This quantitative descriptive study presents only students' acquaintances with digital academic integrity, their conduct of dishonesty while composing English academic tasks, and their use of digital tools. A large number of students from applied colleges responded that they do not know about plagiarism in writing assignments and projects. This shows the obliviousness of ethics and norms of academic integrity in English writing. The analysis shows students unawareness of the fact that cheating and copying someone else's ideas, thoughts, and work is a type of academic theft and fraud. In the academic field, it is considered an academic crime, such as stealing. This result is very close to the findings of Alsmari (2020), where he found language barriers and a lack of awareness about unintentional plagiarism. The rest of the responses show that there is a prevalence of cheating among college students, and there are different ways of conducting this behavior, mainly without any attribution, citation, or fabrication of assignment data. The results show a proximity to the study of Al-Hasemi et al. (2017).

Analyzing the common medium of cheating and copying is using technology, of which the most commonly used gadgets are phones and tablets. Along with it, many applications like WhatsApp, Facebook, and texting apps are helpful in providing data. On the one hand, the students beg for some solved manuals online from publishers, teachers, and experts; on the other hand, friends are very helpful in cheating. There are some more tricks for getting help and helping friends. Razek (2014) explored similar outcomes from their research, where copying and pasting were common forms of academic dishonesty. The latest advanced technologies have made the cheating process easier for students. Alghamdi et al. (2016) investigated the use of technology in academic dishonesty and found that those who were more familiar with digital technologies were more likely to engage in cheating behaviors and create plagiarized writing tasks.

Discussing research question 1 of different ways of violating academic integrity, the analysis is being done using SPSS using a 5-point Likert scale from never to always. A large number of students said they do not participate in activities that claim they violate integrity; however, many of them accepted that they sometimes give their printed assignment papers to other students and include content from them or contain ideas from the book without citing them. Social platforms are generally asked to solve and write for them a writing task. The Internet proved to be a very easy source for providing suitable answers for the students. Fabrication in the data of others is a commonly used way of composing an assignment. The fact that is noticeable here is the denial, and a few accept doing this very often and always. Tayan (2017) discussed that cheating is prevalent and plagiarism is the most common method among undergraduates. Mostafa et al. (2021) also explored the fact that students copy but use Turnitin as a plagiarism detection tool and try to maintain their academic integrity.

Analyzing research question 2 regarding the causes that contribute to disregarding academic integrity, the responses range from strongly agreed to strongly disagreed. The major reason that is found from the analysis is that having a lot of assignments at the same time in English as well as in other subjects' forced students to copy them anyway and submit them timely. Moreover, the statistical analysis shows that students are overburdened and are not able to accomplish many assignments at the same time. It shows a lack of time management skills and

coping with other subjects at the same time. The results show that students wish and desire to get high scores, which is one of the reasons they insist on doing it anyhow. The study by Al-Hasemi et al. (2016) also found in their study the lack of motivation and the pressure to achieve high grades, which contribute to academic dishonesty. It encourages them to indulge in dishonest activities. Kattan et al. (2017) investigated the attitudes of the Saudi students, which were mainly cultural attitudes towards copying. Moreover, the results of one study published in 2019 indicated that students are engaged in cheating practices due to the belief that it is common and socially accepted. This is because of their lack of information. In addition, poor and weak learning by students at their earlier levels triggered them to cheat and take help from others. Additionally, being unskilled and untrained in writing skills is one of the causes of not composing the essay correctly and academically. The unfamiliarity of critical and creative writing skills enhances this problem. The findings match Mansour et al. (2017), where he explored that graduate students lacked adequate academic writing skills, which is more likely to engage students in plagiarism. The problems with writing skills lead to a lack of interest in completing the assignments and feeling bored with a given assignment.

The study ends with many suggestions to maintain academic integrity from the students' point of view. Firstly, most of them suggest avoiding all forms of dishonesty. It is required to practice writing skills very well and create your own ideas, thoughts, and voices to generate an original piece of writing. It is required to look for various reliable, fitting, and appropriate sources, and it is needed to accurately cite them for academic work. Academic searches for credible sources must be done instead of relying on Google. Students' must get a full knowledge of academic dishonesty while they are at university. As a consequence, the study suggests that students' self-awareness, awareness, and mindfulness of being fair in their writing. All the suggestions highlight the need for students to take responsibility for creating an authentic piece of work.

Secondly, students gave some suggestions for academic institutions to maintain academic integrity among students. The first and foremost is to evaluate and update academic policies and processes regularly. From students' perceptions, it was found that college campuses should set up their policies and campus-wise academic honesty programs. Further, they initiated the idea that the college community for the enrolled students for the evening classes must be educated about academic integrity guidelines so that they could further convey academic ethics to the students. Monitoring of higher education and technological tools and trends that affect academic integrity programs should be developed. The colleges must have a clear, accessible, and fair policy violation punishment for rule breakers.

It is not only the policies at colleges but also the teaching pedagogy that should be improved and transformed. The learning should be student-oriented and skills-based. Since writing is the most difficult of all skills, it needs more attention and practice in the class. Students must be given enough practice to reduce mistakes and errors in their academic writing. Teaching pedagogy should be more comprehensive and practical. It is emphasized that students should be introduced to different essay writing formats and the structures for writing them academically. For this, proper advice and tutoring should be given at colleges. Further, proper referencing and research skills should be taught along with teaching writing. Moreover, group work should be introduced among students to involve them in writing activities and learning by doing. Students should be taught stress and time management skills to manage their time when submitting plagiarism-free writing and performing academic activities.

7. Conclusion

In light of the discussion surrounding academic dishonesty and integrity among Saudi students, the conclusion of the paper has the potential to touch on a variety of topics. Saudi EFL students' perceptions of academic dishonesty are revealed, and an attempt to determine the primary reasons why students engage in such dishonest activities in the prescribed English writing course has been pointed out. The findings reveal that the diploma students at evening applied colleges in King Khalid University under the English Unit are familiar with digital academic integrity concepts; they use digital tools to accomplish their writing assignments and tasks. The students are intentionally and unintentionally engaged in dishonest practices due to handy and approachable digital tools and gadgets. Even if they do not accept that they have indulged in some type of dishonesty, some of these reasons include a lot of competition among students, societal pressures, a lack of writing and critical thinking skills, a lack of understanding, and the desire for better grades. It has been emphasized how important it is to educate people about the importance of maintaining academic integrity and the severe consequences of dishonesty. The study has also placed an emphasis on the suggestions that should be made not only for students but also for institutions and teachers in order to change their teaching methodology to one that is oriented on the needs of the students. Very clear instructions and training in referencing and acknowledging the source should be given to the EFL learners. More practice and research on academic writing should be done by the students. The necessity for educational institutions to take preventative measures to prevent and treat academic dishonesty, such as creating stronger policies, providing clearer guidelines, or offering support resources for students. In general, the conclusion ought to place a strong emphasis on how important it is to cultivate a culture of honesty and integrity within the context of the academic setting.

8. Limitations

Despite the limited scope of the study, it would be beneficial to provide a more comprehensive analysis from the perspective of teachers. Hence, this discussion solely focuses on the perceptions of learners. Furthermore, the focus of the study pertains to the individual conduct of the students. Consequently, the researcher granted the students the autonomy to the last decide whether or not to disclose their perceptions. Consequently, a greater number of students could have been involved in the research. The study also identifies a limitation in which students cannot be solely held responsible for instances of academic dishonesty. This is due to the fact that many students lack proficiency in utilizing digital tools to effectively manage, locate, and reference sources, as well as address issues of plagiarism in their written work. Consequently, it is imperative for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students to possess technological knowledge and skills in order to navigate these

challenges.

Author's contributions

Dr. Hebah Asaad Hamza Sheerah is the sole author of this research paper. She designed, collected data, drafted, analyzed, explained, revised, and contributed everything to this study. She approved the final manuscript.

Competing interests

The author declares that she has no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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