

Examination of Plagiarism Tendency of Faculty of Education Students

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the tendency among students of the Faculty of Education to commit plagiarism. The research was conducted using a screening model, and was made on a sample of 1,136 students studying Classroom Teaching, Mathematics Teaching, Preschool Teaching, Social Sciences Teaching, Turkish Teaching, and Science Teaching at the Faculty of Education of Kafkas University, Kars, Turkey, during the 2016-2017 academic year. The Academic Fraud Tendency Scale (ASEÖ) developed by Eminođlu and Nartgün (2009) was used for data collection. From the findings of the research it was concluded that the plagiarism tendencies among students studying in the Faculty of Education were at low levels; male students were found to be more likely to commit plagiarism than female students; students who study in the science departments were found to be more likely to commit plagiarism than those studying in the social sciences departments; the tendency to plagiarize becomes greater as the grade level increases; the students who believe they are unsuccessful were found to have higher tendencies towards plagiarism than those who believe they are successful; students who are anxious about failure were found to have higher tendencies towards plagiarism than those who are not anxious about failure; and students who were not in the habit of studying on a regular basis were found to have higher tendencies towards plagiarism than those who were.

Key Words: Plagiarism, Cheating, Plagiarism, Fraud, Academic plagiarism

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INTRODUCTION

Today, the rapid advances in computer and Internet technologies play an important role in the worldwide dissemination of information, while also facilitating access to information. However, this simple and rapid access to information brings with it some problems (Uzun, Karakuş, Kurşun, & Karaaslan, 2007), one of which is the Internet providing students with the opportunity to copy information easily and prepare their homework based on this copied information (Uçak, & Ünal, 2017). The factors that encourage students to behave unethically include pressure to succeed, competitiveness, exam anxiety, fear of punishment, lack of competency in research and writing skills, lack of knowledge about scientific ethics and plagiarism, poor time management, and moral and cultural perception (Schiller, 2005, as cited in Demirel, Erol, & Saraç, 2011).

One component of unethical behavior often encountered among students is cheating (Ersoy, & Özden, 2011), while another component is plagiarism (Özden, & Özdemir-Özden, 2015). In the most general sense, plagiarism can be defined as the deliberate copying or translation of a single part or an entire idea, finding, research result or research outcome that belongs to someone else, and its subsequent presentation as an original work (Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi Bilim Etiği Komitesi [Turkish Academy of Sciences, Council of Scientific Ethics], 2002, p. 39). Cheating is defined as the use of information, documents and materials by an individual to give themselves an illicit advantage over others in order to achieve success (Çetin, 2007), and as a set of actions carried out to obtain something by fraud (Trost, 2009).

Park (2003) suggests that cheating and plagiarism have become gradually widespread among students, and that this has been supported by many researchers who have stated examples of academic plagiarism found in primary schooling all the way up to graduate education (Whitley, 1998; Murdock, & Anderman, 2006; Uçak, 2012). Unethical behaviors left unaddressed in early education and delaying the development of research skills and ethics until university can make it harder for such misbehaviors to be addressed at university (Uçak, & Ünal, 2015).

A review of international studies reveals many external factors that are considered to be associated with a tendency for academic plagiarism. Studies examining unethical behavior among students (Newstead, Franklyn-Stokes, & Armstead, 1996; Finn, & Frone, 2004) have found that students who achieve lower academic success are more likely to engage in plagiarism, while there are also studies (e.g., Graham, Monday, O'Brien, & Steffen, 1994) that found a tendency for plagiarism also among successful students, which is attributed to their efforts to maintain their level of success. Studies conducted at the higher education level aimed at examining the relationship between the gender variable and plagiarism found that male students are more likely to engage in plagiarism than female students (Newstead et al., 1996; Whitley, 1998; Whitley, Nelson, & Jones, 1999; Lin & Wen, 2007). Furthermore, Taylor, Pogrebin, and Dodge (2003) found that tendencies among students towards plagiarism are likely to be higher in more competitive environments, where the success expectation (Whitley, 1998) and fear of failure among students (Schab, 1991) becomes a driving force for unethical behavior. Accordingly, the self-perception of success and the fear of failure among those students with greater tendencies towards plagiarism are considered worthy of further study.

Academic plagiarism at the university level is an issue that has been the subject of much discussion and educational research for decades (Simpson, 2016). Bill Bowers published

the first report analyzing academic plagiarism among university students in 1964 (as cited in: McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2001), based on a study of more than 5,000 students from 99 different universities in the United States, and found that one-third of the sample demonstrated a high tendency for plagiarism (Simpson, 2016). A study of university students conducted by Burton, Talpade, and Haynes (2011) found that the factors that lead students to engagement in academic plagiarism were poor academic standards, the large number of students in a class, the increasingly competitive job market, distance learning technologies and access to unlimited resources on the Internet.

The objectives of universities can be summarized as raising individuals with such moral values as excellence in research and education, honesty and respect for others who are able to contribute to the society in which they live. The main objectives of candidate teachers trained in faculties of education are to help their students change their behaviors in a positive way and to encourage them to adopt certain moral values when they themselves start teaching. Demir (2011) concluded that cheating is one of the student behaviors that students in the faculty of education would not want to encounter, based on the findings of a research conducted among faculty of education students. That said, the fact that students in the faculty of education cheat raises a question regarding the training of teachers with moral values (Ömür, Aydın, & Argon, 2014). Accordingly, as has been indicated in numerous researches, students who cheat at university may continue to cheat in their future careers (Sierles, Hendrickx, & Circle, 1980; Swift, & Nonis, 1998; Lim, & See, 2001; Lawson, 2004).

Considering the importance of raising students with positive moral standards throughout the careers of candidate teachers, studies in the literature of students conducted in faculties of education related to academic plagiarism can be considered of great importance. One such study, by Bozdoğan and Öztürk (2008), took a research sample of 194 senior students studying at four different departments of a faculty of education. The authors of the study found that questions based on interpretation are not usually preferred during the university process, and that knowledge evaluated based on several exams, sat within a short period of time had been observed to encourage students to memorize information and cheat on exams when given the opportunity. Bozdoğan and Öztürk (2008) concluded that students who have a fear of failing class may opt to cheat with motivations such as “inability to remember due to nervousness,” “not revising sufficiently for exams,” “fear of being forced to repeat a class,” “feelings of shame in the family and environment,” “distrust in oneself,” and “dislike of the lesson or teacher.”

In a study conducted by Avaroğulları and Ata (2013), the foreknowledge of candidate social sciences teachers related to plagiarism, how commonly plagiarism was used in their homework and projects they prepared, and the methods commonly used to plagiarize were researched. According to their findings, plagiarism was found to be extremely common among candidate teachers, with the most-widely used method being the copying of resources from the Internet. Ömür et al. (2014), in a study of 958 candidate teachers in six different departments of a faculty of education, examined the relationship between the fear of a negative evaluation and tendencies for academic fraud among candidate teachers. In the study, significant differences were identified between the academic fraud tendency scale and fear of negative evaluation scale among the gender, grade average, and department variables.

In a study conducted by Özden and Özdemir-Özden (2015), the academic fraud behaviors of candidate classroom and social sciences teachers were studied, with data for the

research collected using a “survey of opinions on the behaviors that involve academic fraud.” The study identified a clear relationship between the academic fraud behaviors of candidate teachers and their personal characteristics, which, the authors concluded, was linked strongly to the gender variable. In the study, the female students agreed more with the fact that some situations given on the survey involved academic fraud compared to the male students. Although there is a statistically significant relationship between grade level and some academic fraud behaviors, the existence of this relationship has been observed to be limited in several studies.

Eraslan (2011) carried out a qualitative study to understand the reasons behind cheating among primary school candidate mathematics teachers and their tendencies related to other dishonest behaviors. To this end, 48 candidate mathematics teachers studying the teaching of primary school mathematics in their final year were asked an open-ended question in the survey conducted by Eraslan (2011), and it was found that 81% of candidate teachers admitted such behaviors, while the remaining 19% indicated that they had never cheated, based on “their fear of being caught and punished,” “their moral values and understanding,” and “their need to be deserving of success.”

A review of national studies involving faculty of education students related to academic plagiarism reveals that such studies are usually limited to the identification of the relationship between the tendencies of students towards plagiarism and gender, department, grade level and grade average variables. In this current study, the plagiarism tendencies of candidate teachers studying in six different departments (Mathematics Teaching, Classroom Teaching, Science Teaching, Preschool Teaching, Turkish Teaching, and Social Sciences Teaching) of a faculty of education are examined. The study identifies variables as the self-perception of success among students, anxieties related to failure and studying on a regular basis, as well as the participants’ gender, department and grade level. In this sense, this current study examines the tendencies of candidate teachers related to plagiarism and their links to various variables, and identifies in detail with which variables plagiarism tendencies are more closely related. In this regard, this current study can be considered as making an important contribution to the national literature of Turkey. In brief, this study aims to identify the tendencies towards plagiarism among students of a faculty of education.

This study seeks answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the tendencies of education faculty students towards plagiarism?
2. Do the tendencies of education faculty students towards plagiarism differ according to their gender, department in which they study, grade level to which they are taught, self-perceptions of success, anxiety related to failure and the regularity of their studying habits?

METHOD

This section includes information on the research model, population and sample, the data collection tool used, and the analysis of the data.

Research Model

A screening model is a research approach used to define a past or current situation as it was/is (Karasar, 2012), and offers the additional benefits of identifying relationships and allowing the researcher to make estimations. Researchers may better understand a phenomenon by researching potential relationships. Research that examines relationships and relations is usually referred to relational research (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz, & Demirel, 2010). The method used in this current research is the relational screening model.

Population and Sample

The population of this research comprises students studying Classroom Teaching, Science Teaching, Preschool Teaching, Social Sciences Teaching, Turkish Teaching, and Mathematics Teaching at the Faculty of Education of Kafkas University, Kars, Turkey, during the 2016-2017 academic year. No sample selection was made, as the intention was to study the entire department population. The study was conducted with 1,136 students, and their distribution in terms of gender, department and grade level are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Distribution of students in terms of gender, department and grade level (n=1136)*

		N	(%)
Gender	Male	456	40.1
	Female	680	59.9
Grade Level	1st	348	30.6
	2nd	316	27.8
	3rd	262	23.1
	4th	210	18.5
Department	Classroom Teaching	278	24.5
	Social Sciences Teaching	171	15.1
	Science Teaching	151	13.3
	Turkish Teaching	206	18.1
	Mathematics Teaching	173	15.2
	Preschool Teaching	157	13.8

According to Table 1, 40.1% of the candidate teachers included in the research were male and 59.9% were female. An examination of grade levels revealed that of the sample, 30.6% were first grade candidate teachers, 27.8% were second graders, 23.1% were third graders and 18.5% were in the fourth grade. The distribution of classes was Classroom

Teaching 24.5%, Social Sciences Teaching 15.1%, Science Teaching 13.3%, Turkish Teaching 18.1%, Mathematics Teaching 15.2% and Preschool Teaching 13.8%.

Data Collection Tool

The Academic Fraud Tendency Scale (ASEÖ) developed by Eminoğlu and Nartgün (2009) was used for the collection of data in this study. In their study, Eminoğlu and Nartgün, found the reliability of the scale to be $\alpha=0.90$, while the result of the reliability analysis of the data obtained from this current research was found to be $\alpha=0.847$. According to these results, the reliability of the scale can be said to be high (Büyüköztürk et al., 2010).

The scores obtained during data collection were evaluated at three levels. The score intervals regarding the standards used in this evaluation are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Score intervals used in grading tendencies towards plagiarism

	Extreme Values		Level		
	Lowest	Highest	Low \bar{X}	Medium \bar{X}	High \bar{X}
Tendency Towards Plagiarism	1	5	1.0 – 2.3	2.4 - 3.7	3.8 – 5.0

When Table 2 is examined, the lowest average score obtainable from this scale was found to be (\bar{X}) 1, whereas the highest average score obtainable was (\bar{X}) 5. The difference between the lowest and highest score obtainable was calculated, and intervals were divided into three equal ranges. From the determined intervals, a low level was evaluated as a 1.0–2.3 score interval, a medium level was evaluated as a 2.4–3.7 score interval, and a high level was evaluated as a 3.8–5.0 score interval.

Data Analysis

The value of normality of the data was observed prior to the analysis of the research data, and the data was found not to be distributed normally. The results of the normality tests are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Normality test

Statistic	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
	SD	p		Statistic	SD	p
0.48	1136	.00		0.987	1136	.00

When the results of the normality test are examined, the data was found not to be distributed normally, and so it was concluded that the analyses should be conducted using non-parametric tests, and so Mann Whitney U-Test and Kruskal-Wallis Tests, as well as descriptive statistics, were used in the data analysis. The level of significance in statistical analyses is considered to be a standard of .05.

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

In this section, the findings obtained from the research are presented and an interpretation made. The findings regarding the tendencies of the faculty of education students towards plagiarism are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. *Students' tendencies towards plagiarism (n=1136)*

	\bar{X}	S	Level
Tendency Towards Plagiarism	2.29	0.62	Low

According to Table 4, the score of the tendencies of students who study at the faculty of education towards plagiarism is at a low level ($\bar{X}= 2.29$), meaning that the students can be said to have a low level tendency towards plagiarism.

The results of the Mann Whitney U-Test, conducted to compare the averages of the tendencies of students of the faculty of education towards plagiarism related to the gender variable are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. *Mann Whitney U-test: Students' average tendencies towards plagiarism compared with gender variable (n=1136)*

<i>Tendency Towards Plagiarism</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Sequence Average</i>	<i>Rank Totals</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>p</i>
Male	456	635.98	290,005	124,271	.00
Female	680	523.25	355,811		

According to Table 5, the tendencies of the participant students in the faculty of education towards plagiarism show a significant difference to the gender variable [$U=124271$, $p<.05$]. When the sequence averages are examined, male students can be seen to have a greater tendency for plagiarism than female students.

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis Test, conducted with the aim of comparing the tendencies of in the faculty of education students towards plagiarism according to the department variable, are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. *Kruskal-Wallis Test: Students' average tendencies towards plagiarism compared with department variable (n=1136)*

Department	N	Sequence Average	sd	X ²	p	Significant Difference
A) Social Sciences Teaching	171	491.95	5	33.232	.00	A<E, A<F,
B) Turkish Teaching	206	517.15				A<D,
C) Classroom Teaching	278	556.26				A<C, B<F,
D) Preschool Teaching	157	600.43				B<D,
E) Science Teaching	151	602.64				B<E, C<F
F) Mathematics Teaching	173	666.22				

As can be seen in Table 6, the tendency among students of the faculty of education towards plagiarism differ significantly according to the department variable [$X^2_{(5)}=33.232$, $p<.05$]. A Mann-Whitney U-Test was conducted separately for each department to determine the differences among them, the results of which are presented in Table 6. According to these results, students who study in the science departments have greater tendencies with regards to plagiarism than those studying in the social sciences departments.

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis Test, which was conducted to compare students of different grades in the faculty of education in terms of their plagiarism tendencies, are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. *Kruskal-Wallis Test: Students' average tendencies towards plagiarism compared with grade level variable (n=1136)*

Grade Level	n	Sequence Average	sd	X ²	p	Significant Difference
Grade 1	348	496.84	3	37.266	.00	1<2
Grade 2	316	582.28				1<3 1<4
Grade 3	262	565.77				2<4 3<4
Grade 4	210	669.92				

As can be seen in Table 7, the plagiarism tendencies of students in the faculty of education differ significantly according to the grade level variable [$\chi^2(3)=37.266$, $p<.05$]. The Mann-Whitney U-Test was conducted separately for each grade level in order to determine which grade levels stood out in this regard. It was found that a tendency for plagiarism was higher at all grade levels beyond the first grade, while the tendency for plagiarism among second-grade students was higher than in the third grade, though not to a statistically significant level. Finally, a comparison of the third and fourth grades reveals a greater tendency for plagiarism in fourth grade students.

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis Test, which compares the tendencies towards plagiarism of faculty of education students and their self-perception of success variable are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. *Kruskal-Wallis Test: Students' average tendencies for plagiarism compared to self-perception of success variable (n=1136)*

Self-perception of Success		<i>n</i>	Sequence Average	<i>sd</i>	X^2	<i>p</i>	Significant Difference
A)	Unsuccessful	65	673.21	3	17.337	.00	B<A, C<A, C<B
B)	Successful (medium level)	583	588.28				
C)	Successful	398	520.48				
D)	Very Successful	90	577.08				

As can be seen in Table 8, the tendencies related to plagiarism among faculty of education students differ significantly, according to their self-perception of success variable [$X^2(3)=17,337$, $p<.05$]. The Mann-Whitney U-Test was used for a separate comparison of self-perceptions of success among the respondents, with the intention being to identify in which levels there are differences. The results of the difference are presented in Table 8, from which it can be seen that the tendency towards plagiarism can be said to increase as the self-perception of success decreases.

The findings obtained from the comparison of the tendencies towards plagiarism of students at the faculty of education towards plagiarism and the anxiety of failure variable are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. *Mann-Whitney U-Test: Students' average tendencies towards plagiarism compared with anxiety of failure variable (n=1136)*

Anxiety of Failure	<i>n</i>	Sequence Average	Rank Totals	<i>U</i>	<i>p</i>
Present	527	584.27	307,910.5	152,160.5	.13
Absent	609	554.85	337,905.5		

From Table 9 it can be seen that the tendencies towards plagiarism among the participant education faculty students do not show any significant difference when compared with the anxiety of failure variable [$U=124271$, $p>.05$], and so it can be concluded that anxiety of failure has no relationship with plagiarism tendencies.

The findings obtained from a comparison of the tendencies towards plagiarism among faculty of education students towards plagiarism in terms of the regularity of their studying habits are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. *Kruskal-Wallis Test: Students' average tendencies towards plagiarism compared with regular studying variable (n=1136)*

Studying on a Regular Basis		<i>n</i>	Sequence Average	<i>sd</i>	X^2	<i>p</i>	Significant Difference
A)	I study on a daily basis	271	534.27	3	35.459	.00	A<D, B<D, C<D
B)	I study on a weekly basis	286	508.59				
C)	I study once in a while	237	557.94				
D)	I study only before exams	342	653.04				

According to Table 10, the tendencies towards plagiarism among faculty of education students differ significantly in terms of the relationship with the studying on a regular basis variable [$X^2_{(3)}= 35.459$, $p<.05$]. The Mann-Whitney U-Test was conducted separately for each studying variable in order to determine which levels stood out; the results of which are presented in Table 10. It was found that students who study only before exams are more likely to commit plagiarism, and so it can be said that studying on a regular basis has a strong link with plagiarism tendency. Getting into the habit of studying on a regular basis can have a positive effect on this.

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the findings obtained from the research, the tendencies towards plagiarism among candidate teachers were seen to be at low levels, although they were found to be at medium level in a similar study conducted by Ömür et al. (2014), with $\bar{X}= 2.86$. The low tendency among candidate teachers to commit plagiarism is a positive and desired result, as having teachers in the future that take a low view of plagiarism should be considered a positive situation.

Gender, as one of the variables in the study, was identified as having an effect on the tendency towards plagiarism, with the tendencies for plagiarism among male candidate teachers being higher than those of female candidate teachers, and similar results were obtained in earlier studies (Akdağ, & Güneş, 2002; Yangın, & Kahyaoğlu, 2009; Küçüktepe, & Küçüktepe, 2012; Certel, Bahadır, Saracaoğlu, & Varol, 2017). When the social structure is examined, the fact that men in Turkey are traditionally raised with more freedoms may have influenced this result.

When the relationship between the department in which the candidate teachers study and their tendencies towards plagiarism is examined, it can be concluded that those studying in the science departments have higher tendencies towards plagiarism than those studying in social sciences departments. It should be noted, however, that the study by Akdağ and Güneş (2002) found that the department variable had no effect on plagiaristic tendencies. This different finding may be a result of lessons taught in science departments being more abstract in content and including formulae in which there is no margin of error.

When the grade level variable of the research is examined, tendencies towards plagiarism of the candidate teachers were higher at all grade levels above first grade. When examined from the perspective of the second grade students, tendencies towards plagiarism

were found to be lower in the second grade than in the third grade, but not to a statistically significant degree. A comparison of third and fourth grade students revealed a greater tendency for plagiarism among fourth grade students. Özyurt and Eren (2014) concluded in their study of candidate science teachers that grade level had no effect on tendency towards cheating. Furthermore, Akdağ and Güneş (2002) concluded in their study that the tendency towards plagiarism decreases as grade level increases, which may be a result of such situations as a fear of having to repeat a class or anxiety related to the Public Personnel Selection Examination (KPSS – the Turkish national exam required for entrance to Civil Service).

When the relationship between the self-perception of success and the tendency towards plagiarism is examined, it can be concluded that students who believe they are unsuccessful have higher tendencies towards plagiarism than those who believe they are successful. Those with lower academic grades have been found in other studies to be more likely to plagiarize than those who have higher academic grades (Akdağ, & Güneş, 2002; Ömür et al., 2014). A tendency for plagiarism may be rooted in the desire to avoid failure, although Certel et al. (2017) could identify no relationship between self-perception of success and plagiaristic tendencies.

When the relationship between the anxiety of failure and tendency towards plagiarism is examined, it can be concluded that plagiaristic tendencies increase as anxiety of failure increases, which supports also the relationship between the self-perception of success and the tendency for plagiarism. In a similar manner, Ömür et al. (2014) concluded in their study that a positive and significant relationship exists between a student's fear of a negative evaluation and a tendency for plagiarism.

An examination of the variable of studying on a regular basis reveals a significant relationship between the tendency towards plagiarism and studying on a regular basis. Students who do not study on a regular basis, and especially those who study only before exams, have been identified as having a greater tendency to commit plagiarism. In a similar study conducted by Akdağ and Güneş (2002), it was concluded that a relationship exists between the time allocated for studying and plagiarism tendencies, and students who spend less time studying were found to be more likely to cheat. As the time allocated for studying decreases, the anxiety of failure can be said to increase, meaning that students are more likely to commit plagiarism.

Taking all of these points into account, the following recommendations can be made with regards to future studies. The reason why the tendencies for plagiarism are higher among candidate teachers studying in science departments may be revealed by a detailed study of their specific situation. The negative increase in plagiaristic tendencies as grade level increases is an undesired result, and so a study should be conducted to identify factors leading to this situation and proposals drawn to eliminate these factors. It is found that decreases in the self-perception of success and increases in the anxiety related to failure variables increases tendencies towards plagiarism. To overcome this, students should be assisted in their efforts to succeed academically and their anxieties of failure should be addressed. Students who are not in the habit of studying on a regular basis have greater tendencies towards plagiarism, and so encouraging students into habitual regular studying could also produce improved results.

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