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STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARD DISPLAYS OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS

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The article discusses the problem of academic dishonesty, which has been growing in Western Europe, North America, in transitional economies of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. However, cross-cultural comparisons remain scarce, particularly with regard to the former communist countries. This paper presents an exploratory study on academic misconduct in Switzerland, Ukraine and Poland. The Academic Dishonesty Scale was used. A sample of 870 university students participated. The results reveal no difference between Ukrainian and Polish students in terms of attitudes toward cheating. Swiss students expressed a significantly more negative attitudes. The results offer implications for the practice of moral awareness.

Key-words: cross-cultural comparison, academic misconduct, attitude toward cheating, subjective social norms.

INTRODUCTION. Indeed, academic misconduct by young adults during their studies risks seeping through to the workplace, threatening individual careers and organizational performance [10, p. 221]. Academic unethical behaviour has often been studied in Western Europe and in the United States. These findings cannot necessarily be generalized to other cultural contexts (K. Parboteeah, J. Bronson, J. Cullen). Students from the former communist countries might differ in their attitudes regarding academic cheating, because different cultural and institutional heritage. Research on that problem in Central and Eastern Europe still remains scarce and is limited to few

publications in local languages. Honesty - it's not so much a moral value as a necessary condition for the existence of a democratic state, a legal society, competitive economy. Freedom and fairness – two necessary components of a democratic society. Unfortunately, Ukrainian scientists consider only issues of social and academic freedom. In Ukraine there is no dissertations on the problems of fairness in higher education. Academic dishonesty enhances the appearance of shots that can later pose a threat to national security (Kalinowski, 2012), in particular the threat to the security of the university [1]. The fight against dishonesty in Ukrainian universities is almost absent. No system for preventing various types of academic dishonesty (cheating, lying, giving or receiving help, prohibited, or falsification of laboratory research results, assessments fake, buying or stealing of work, etc.) It is therefore necessary to create a system to prevent academic dishonesty democratize Ukrainian legal and social and economic system (Romakin, 2010) [2]. First, we plan to analyze the national system of ethical attitudes and traditions. The totalitarian state was based on censorship and persecution of dissent. For decades, the post-Soviet generation of people brought up with the dual morality. More than half of this generation of people working in modern Ukraine teachers and teachers of educational institutions (Tsokur, 2009) [3].

Research suggests that academic misconduct among students is a growing problem as demonstrated in the context of Western Europe, North America [11], in transitional economies of Eastern Europe and Central Asia [10]. To address the gap, we will compare academic misconduct in Switzerland, Ukraine and Poland to gain insights beyond situational and individual determinants. Indeed, past research points to an important role of culture in predicting deviant behaviours. For example, a comparison of the United States with Central Eastern European students reveals that college members in the transitional economies attach lower levels of importance to individual actions of dishonesty than American respondents (Grimes, 2004) [7, p. 274]. That is why the sharing of information and other activities that are viewed as “cheating” on an exam or classroom assignment might not necessary carry the same stigma in the transitional economies [8].

Research aim: to compare attitude toward academic deception, and also subjective social norms for the Ukrainian, Polish and Swiss students.

Method. To examine students' *attitudes towards cheating* and their *subjective social norms* we used the subscales of the Academic Dishonesty Scale – the French, Ukrainian and Polish version of them. The method was based on Philmore Alleyne and Kimone Phillips' measure (Alleyne & Phillips, 2011), adapted for the research by the authors [5, p. 325]. The study presented in this paper is based on Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour (1985) and on Fishbein's and Ajzen's theory of reasoned action [4, p. 12]. The different language versions of the scale were developed using a back-translation process (Brislin, 1986) in accordance with a standard procedure involving translators of the English language and academic lecturers from Switzerland, Ukraine and Poland, proficient in English. Both constructs were measured using a 7-point Likert-type scales. We believe our investigations can help understand how cultural and institutional context in academia may influence an acceptance of cheating in three countries which differ in terms of political system and culture: Ukraine, Poland and Switzerland. Ukraine is not a European Union member state and is a country on the verge of transformation, still economically and socially unstable. Poland is a relatively new European Union member state and a post-socialist country undergoing changes resulting from political, economic and social transformation for more than twenty years now. Switzerland is a country on equal terms with EU member states, with a consolidated capitalist system. It has a well-established, highly competitive economy, with a leadership in innovation. It

could be assumed that students' attitude towards cheating and the norms that apply in that culture should differ from the Ukrainian and Polish ones. We argue that while attitude of Swiss students may differ significantly from the attitude of students in Ukraine and in Poland, differences may exist between Ukrainians and Poles resulting from the relatively long time of Poland's adjustment to European standards, as well as similarities related to the many years of socialism in both countries. In the last internet-questioning on a web-site web-site of social network in 2012 among the Polish teenagers such results were got. It turned out that more one third of students "often" and "very often" are the witnesses of school misconducts, the more than half of students told, that the theme of writing did not have come into question in their educational establishments, and also consider that writing is a good method to manage with heavy to the situations of uncertainty in own knowledge on examinations. Writing is examined by students rather as a display of shrewdness, than in the categories of dishonest actions and unethical acts [6, p. 68].

Positive attitudes towards misconduct are probably widespread among Ukrainian students. Ukrainian academics in particular blame the widespread acceptance of academic misconduct on the post-totalitarian context, wherein, despite officially proclaimed democracy, human rights remain threatened [9, p. 77]. Social injustice in Ukraine is evident – broken promises regarding much needed reforms, a weak legal system, scandals of fake degrees possessed by civil servants and government officials. Indeed, control measures such as anti-plagiarism computer software, video monitoring, or metal detectors cannot solve the problem but rather fundamental changes in individuals appear to be needed through lectures on ethical behaviour, and developing research on cheating and its sources.

RESEARCH RESULTS. Our empiric study was undertaken a to Ukraine, Poland, Switzerland in 2012. Polled 870 the students chosen by chance 3-5 courses of university, stationary form of studies. Age 20-26 investigated the. The groups of investigated were homogeneous after the parameter of semester studies in an university. Students preparation of that comes true at higher school after such areas of knowledge were investigated:., socio-political humanity/pls natural sciences, economy and enterprise, management and administration, right, medicine. Students from Ukraine are, on average, almost five years younger than their cohorts from Poland and Switzerland. This results from the differences between educational systems. Because ethical standards may be influenced by religious beliefs, respondents were asked to judge their religiosity on a Likert-type scale (1 – "I'm not religious at all" to 5 – "I'm very religious"). The Swiss students were less religious on average than the Poles and Ukrainians.

The study presented in this paper is based on Ajzen's theory of planned behaviour (1985) and on Fishbein's and Ajzen's theory of reasoned action [5, p. 330]. According to Ajzen, behaviour is determined mainly by one's attitude towards the specific phenomenon and by individual norms related to the attitude which prevails in one's surroundings. *Attitude towards behaviour* is the result of one's earlier experience and of the assessment of the potential positive and negative effects of such behaviour, while *subjective social norms* relate to other people's expected reaction to our behaviour, to social pressure to behave in a specific manner. According to Ajzen (op. cit.), attitude and subjective norms determine the individual's intentions and further action.

Research confirms the significance of the attitude towards cheating and proves its influence on the individual's involvement in action – approval of unethical behaviour is a predictor of such behaviour (Beck and Ajzen, 1991; Harding, Mayhew, Finelli, & Carpenter, 2007). Similarly large is the role of subjective beliefs of whether cheating is appropriate and ethical, i.e. the social

norms one has. Research (Beck and Ajzen, 1991; Stone, Jawahar, & Kisamore, 2009) shows that beliefs on the opinions relatives, friends and classmates have about cheating are connected with the individual's inclination to break norms.

Purpose and hypotheses. The aim of the exploratory study, which is preliminary and starts a bigger international project between Swiss, Ukrainian and Polish scholars, was to compare students' attitude towards academic cheating and their subjective social norms. The research whose results are described in this paper, is built on findings of Alleyne and Phillips (2011), who reveal that attitudes towards cheating and subjective social norms related to that phenomenon and taken into account by the individual are important factors influencing intentions to unethical behaviour. That is why we focused on the attitudes and on social norms. This research, however, involves students from three different countries, and its significant goal, apart from evaluating selected elements of Ajzen's model, is to identify cross-cultural differences.

We propose that: Hypothesis 1: Swiss and Ukrainian students differ in their attitudes towards cheating. Hypothesis 2: Swiss and Polish students differ in their attitudes towards cheating. Hypothesis 3: Ukrainian and Polish students differ in their attitudes towards cheating. Hypothesis 4: Swiss and Ukrainian students have different subjective social norms connected with cheating. Hypothesis 5: Swiss and Polish students have different subjective social norms connected with cheating. Hypothesis 6: Ukrainian and Polish students have different subjective social norms connected with cheating.

Attitudes towards cheating were measured by using the following five evaluative semantic differential scales: good-bad, pleasant-unpleasant, wise-foolish, useful-useless, and profitable-unprofitable. High scores indicate favourable or accepting attitudes of academic misconduct behaviours, while low scores indicate unaccepting and unfavourable attitudes.

To check *subjective social norms* three-item subscale was used: 1) "If I cheated on a test or exam, most people who are important to me would: (disapprove- not care)", 2) "People who are important to me think that cheating on a test or exam (is not OK-is OK)", and 3) "If I cheat on a test or exam, most people who are important to me (will look down on me-will not think anything wrong about me)." High scores indicate perceptions that significant others do endorse academic dishonesty, while low scores indicate perceptions that significant others do not endorse the practice.

Reliability of the *attitudes towards cheating* subscale (Cronbach's α) for the French version was 0.79, for the Ukrainian version – 0.80, and for the Polish version – 0.79, reliability of the *subjective social norms* subscale for the French version – 0.81, the Ukrainian version – 0.70, and the Polish version – 0.80.

Examination of the estimates indicated that reliabilities were acceptable. More specifically, Cronbach's α values obtained in this manner were higher than 0.70, often cited as indicative of a reasonable level of reliability.

The research was conducted in Switzerland, Ukraine and in Poland, in 2012. Results of a survey were collected from 870 randomly selected university students. Table I provides a brief demographic profile of the students included in the investigative sample.

The data in Table I reveal the samples are similar in terms of the university years involved a great deal. All the courses studied were represented in every national sample: humanities/social sciences, economics/business and science/medical. Students from Ukraine are, on average, almost five years younger than their cohorts from Poland and Switzerland. This results from the differences between educational systems.

Table I

Profile of student sample by nation						
Nation	Mean Age	Gender %	Course type %	Year %	Faculties %	Religiosity
Ukraine (N=200)	19,3	(F)80	(FtC)90	I - 19	(H+S)65	3.6
				II - 46	(E)10	
		(M)20	(PtC)10	III - 25	(S+M)25	
				IV - 10		
Poland (N=317)	24	(F)68	(FtC)48	I - 35	(H+S)61	3.5
				II - 31	(E)10	
		(M)32	(PtC)52	III - 16	(S+M)29	
				IV - 18		
Switzerland (N=353)	24,2	(F)35	(FtC)58	I - 47	(H+S)13	2.6
				II - 22	(E)41	
		(M)65	(PtC)42	III - 18	(S+M)46	
				IV - 13		

Legend: (F) – Female, (M) – Male; (FtC) – Full-time course, (PtC) – Part-time course; (H+S) – Humanities+Social sciences, (E) – Economics/Business, (S+M) – Science+Medical

Because ethical standards may be influenced by religious beliefs, respondents were asked to judge their religiosity on a Likert-type scale (1 – “I’m not religious at all” to 5 – “I’m very religious”). The Swiss students were less religious on average than the Poles and Ukrainians. Student’s t-test for independent samples was used to verify all the hypotheses. The results are shown in Table II.

Table II.

Tests for differences in mean scores between nations						
Variable	Nation	Mean	Std. dev.	t-value U-P	U-S	P-S
Attitude towards cheating	Ukraine	17.14	6.10			
	Poland	17.77	6.07	-1.16	8.40*	10.94*
	Switzerland	12.92	5.42			
Subjective social norms	Ukraine	14.40	4.14			
	Poland	14.00	4.07	1.06	16.42*	17.38*
	Switzerland	8.70	3.82			

Legend: U-Ukraine, P-Poland, S-Switzerland; * Statistically significant at $p < 0.01$;

Average results were compared related to the studied individuals' attitude towards cheating and significant differences were found between the Swiss and Ukrainian sample and between the Swiss and Polish sample, making it possible to accept hypotheses 1 and 2. The average results for the Polish and Ukrainian sample, on the other hand, did not differ from each other in a statistically significant manner, and consequently hypothesis 3 needs to be rejected. The results prove that students have the most positive attitude towards cheating in Poland, insignificantly less positive in Ukraine, and the least positive attitude in Switzerland.

An analysis of the results also makes it possible to accept hypotheses 4 and 5 – the average results concerning *subjective social norms* in the Swiss sample differ significantly from the average results of the Ukrainian and Polish samples. Hypothesis 6 is therefore rejected – students from the Polish and Ukrainian samples do not differ significantly in terms of their judgment of subjective social norms about cheating. The average results show that students in Switzerland have more restrictive subjective social norms about cheating than Polish and Ukrainian students.

Discussion. The purpose of this joint study was to compare students' attitude and their social norms connected with academic misconduct across cultures. The obtained results show that Poles and Ukrainians evaluate cheating more positively than the Swiss, more often agreeing with the opinion that it is *good, wise, useful, pleasant* and *profitable*. The results concerning subjective social norms reveal that the highest consent to cheating exists in Ukraine and in Poland, while Swiss express more negative attitudes. Indeed, Poles and Ukrainians claim that their cheating at the university would not be negatively perceived by significant others – friends and relatives.

And more surprising, despite growing institutional differences between Poland and Ukraine, cultural similarities persist in terms of cheating and existing social norms. Our study suggest that Poles still might not have sufficient of ethical awareness, and consent to such behaviour still exists and is perceived as high. On the other hand, in Western countries, the attitude towards dishonesty is different and different norms prevail there: the social consent to such behaviour is significantly lower despite Swiss being the least religious among the nations studied.

Academic lecturers, who wish the students to behave in ethical ways need to understand extent to which students' care about justice judgments. Results of our study help develop specific measures allowing decrease of academic misconduct taking into consideration cross-cultural differences. Better understanding of an impact of national culture on academic misconduct may help prevent unethical behaviors of generally honest students through culturally sensitive code of ethics, training and other awareness increasing initiatives. Our findings are particularly valuable in light of growing academic mobility programs and they may contribute to promoting academic integrity and address an interesting question for international academic ethics.

CONCLUSIONS. The results of our research have practical meaningfulness, they will assist development certain events on different institutional levels, in particular in higher educational establishments. Attitudes of the Polish and Ukrainian students toward the displays of academic dishonesty(writing) and their subjective sociocultural norms related to the investigated phenomenon, does not differ substantially. There are differences between the attitudes of students from the former post-socialist countries of Eastern Europe, where the ongoing development of democracy and socio-economic transformation and students from Switzerland. It will last, while people will live in the conditions of *зарпложеної* democracy, when unethical behavior is often examined as a sign of ingenuity, and swindle – only by the possible method of achievement of meaningful aims.

Consoles that among students there are persons that look at writing other gates, id est consider such behavior dishonest and estimate her negatively.

We believe that education systems in countries such as Ukraine and Poland should strengthen the provision of learner-centered teaching approach in the classroom. It should bother improving organizational, psychological and educational circumstances harmonic relationships of teachers and students. The teachers, in addition to efforts aimed at forming an independent thought, an opinion of the students should also include specific measures for easing students of academic dishonesty – cheating, prompting, plahiat. Managers at different levels of education in Ukraine may require significant changes to existing social norms, introducing new ones.

University student government organizations to conduct significant work among young weakening loyalty to cheating among students. We believe that promoting high ethical standards in universities and schools not only illustrates the concern for the students, but also demonstrates the commitment of teachers to the formation of future professionals with ethical behavior. Intercultural comparison Ukraine, Poland and Switzerland are only exploratory. The next step of our cross-cultural study of the problem of academic cheating, to compare the responses of teachers in cheating and reactions of students in response teachers. It features comments will influence and impact of teaching ethics courses in relation to students' cheating. We suggest that future research should continue to examine some individual variables that influence ethical behavior, including personal moral philosophy and sensitivity to justice. Need findings may be useful in view of the results of research can pay more attention to the formation of values the attitude of students towards obtaining knowledge obumovyt qualitative changes in the education of Ukraine, focused on the Bologna Process. Results with the prospect's potential to enhance academic unity and contribute to solving urgent problems of international academic ethics.

Author's translation of the article

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