



# Authority Concerns Regarding Research Students' Academic Dishonesty: A case Study for Promoting Academic Integrity in a Public University in Bangladesh

Md. Atikuzzaman<sup>1</sup> · Shamima Yesmin<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The present study aims to examine the context of academic dishonesty of research students in a public university setting in Bangladesh. In this regard, the researchers conducted interviews with the concerned authorities of the university, i.e., Chairpersons of the Departments, Deans of the Faculties, Proctor of the University, and Director of Students Guidance and Counselling Cell in order to get an impression about the current practice of academic dishonesty by the students of that university; factors influencing these activities and recommendations to uphold academic integrity among the students. The results showed that though there were several instances of academic integrity violation, negligible actions were taken against them due to the absence of an established policy on academic dishonesty. At the same time, the nonexistence of a course on academic integrity and research ethics in the curriculum is also responsible for this scenario. To mitigate this issue, all the concerned authorities strongly recommended formulating a central policy on academic dishonesty for promoting academic integrity and achieving university ranking success in global competitiveness.

**Keywords** Academic dishonesty · Academic integrity · Plagiarism · Research ethics · Public university

## Introduction

Academic Dishonesty (AD) has been identified as a widespread problem faced by universities around the world, no matter how diversified from a nationwide or religious lens (Arshad et al., 2021). AD is highly common (Jensen et al., 2002) and so common that it can be

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✉ Md. Atikuzzaman  
atik.iis@nstu.edu.bd

Shamima Yesmin  
shamima.iis@nstu.edu.bd

<sup>1</sup> Institute of Information Sciences, Noakhali Science and Technology University,  
Noakhali 3814, Bangladesh

referred to as an ‘epidemic’ (Haines et al., 1986); consistent with the report of the U.S. Department of Education which described AD as a ‘chronic problem’ (Maramark & Maline, 1993).

AD involves attempts to have an unfair advantage through non-legitimate acts (Benson et al., 2019). It is a universal, long-standing, and also culturally dependent phenomenon related to what is right or wrong (Leask, 2006; Martin et al., 2011; Peled & Khaldi, 2013). It refers to actions that undermine academic integrity. AD occurs at many institutions where unethical students with their activities successfully interrupt the learning harmony; even faculty members and organizational reputations are compromised in the process (Morrisette, 2001).

Among various forms of students’ AD, cheating is undoubtedly a general one (Peled et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2021; Stoesz, 2022). Other forms of AD include attending classes or sitting for examinations on another student’s behalf (Piascik & Brazeau, 2010); outsourcing assignments involving students’ hiring other persons to accomplish their assessment (Awdry, 2021; Awdry & Ives, 2021); plagiarism (Roig & DeTommaso, 1995; Denisova-Schmidt, 2017) which occurs when the authors present a work of another person as their own (Čipáková, 2005); incorrect or inadequate referencing to documents; copying assignments from other students (Lane et al., 1988; Crown & Spiller, 1998; Johns & Strand, 2000; Cabral-Cardoso, 2004); information falsification and fabrications (Bryzgoria, 2022), as well as a donation, gifts, informal agreements as a replacement of grades, admission, advance questions in examinations, preferential treatment, graduation, and fake degrees (Denisova-Schmidt & Leontyeva, 2016).

Research has revealed that the causes of students’ engagement in academic dishonesty are various motivations such as: being unprepared to learn in the language of instruction or not understanding the expectations of another environment (Awdry & Newton, 2019; Bretag et al., 2019); frustration with the learning environment and perception of chances to cheat (Bretag et al., 2019); lacking academic talent or fear of failure; pressure to achieve high grades (Amigud & Lancaster, 2019; Awdry & Newton, 2019); time limits or unawareness of plagiarism (Stephens & Nicholson, 2008); laziness (Foltynek & Kralikova, 2018); stress (Eaton et al., 2019); absence of self-determination and discipline (Amigud & Lancaster, 2019); availability of internet resources i.e., a number of websites contain pre-written and customized essays, reports and term papers (Owings, 2002); lower risk of probable detection (Rigby et al., 2015) and impact of peer cheating (McCabe & Trevino, 1993; Rettinger & Kramer, 2009).

AD is a severe problem that needs all stakeholders’ urgent attention (Anderman et al., 2007). Studies have shown that many educators feel they are not in charge of fostering students’ honesty (Curtis & Vardanega, 2016) or that they have not received enough training in doing so (Srivastava & Dhar, 2016). Thus, it can be seen that some educators’ behaviors regarding integrity are mostly based on their character traits and background. Contrarily, some studies contend that while some educators feel they are in charge of upholding students’ integrity, issues like work overload and the pressure to publish may hinder them from doing so (Roberts et al., 2001). The environment in which an educator was reared or socialized can have an impact on their ideas and behaviors (Robertson & Crittenden, 2003).

As students’ AD in various forms is increasing gradually (Ludeman, 2005), effective initiatives should be taken in educational institutions (Boehm et al., 2009). The basic responsibility of students is to avoid any sort of AD, as it also reflects on their professional careers

(Nonis & Swift, 2001). At the same time, educators' responsibility is to design and conduct the courses to reduce AD by incorporating integrity-related content in their curriculum and to deliberate these issues in the classroom (Whitley Jr & Keith-Spiegel, 2001). Furthermore, to minimize cheating, instructors must communicate to students their expectations for not engaging in any form of AD both inside and outside of the classroom as they play an important role in cultivating an atmosphere of honesty, fairness, trust, respect, and responsibility among students (Gottardello & Karabag, 2022). Students depend on instructors to set clear class prospects, foster an environment that encourages ethical learning, and confront cases of AD (Baylor University, 2023). Faculty members must foster an environment of open communication and trust in order for students to be more committed to fighting AD (Simon et al., 2004).

The administration has a key role in reducing the occurrence of AD and fostering academic integrity (Bok, 1990; Whitley Jr & Keith-Spiegel, 2001). The most vital question may be exactly how an academic institute can create an environment where AD is socially and communally unacceptable (McCabe & Trevino, 1996). Ways may include formulation of an effective integrity policy, campus-wide activities intended to foster it, the progress of a campus-wide philosophy, ethos that inspires integrity (Kibler, 1993; Gehring & Pavela, 1994; Alschuler & Blimling, 1995), and taking appropriate measures against integrity violations even if those measures demolish institutions' reputations also (Whitley Jr & Keith-Spiegel, 2001). How a university is concerned about AD is reflected by its policy as policies, teaching and learning procedures, and assessment methods are interconnected (Bretag et al., 2010). The policy on academic integrity must specify the level of penalties that can be implemented for violating the policy (Whitley Jr & Keith-Spiegel, 2001).

## About NSTU

Noakhali University of Science and Technology (NSTU) is a remote public university situated in the southern coastal area of Bangladesh. This university was established in 2006. Along with subjects of scientific and technological arenas, there are also separate faculties of social sciences, education, business, and law (Yesmin & Ahmed, 2019). A total of 7,301 (undergraduate 6202, post-graduate 1099) students are studying in 2 institutes and 28 departments (UGC, 2017). A simple organizational chart of the university structure has been shown in Fig. 1. Besides, detailed information about the departments and institutes has been shown in Table 1 along with the existence of courses on information and research ethics in their curricula.

In higher education, the emphasis has been on factors such as curriculum, lecturers' styles, and/or feedback (Ayoub & Aladwan, 2021). There have been few studies that look into students' ethical behavior in relation to learning quality. Furthermore, the authority's concerns regarding students' academic dishonesty are a less researched topic. As a result, this issue requires extensive research. To address these gaps, the current study aims to aggregate and analyze studies on different forms of AD in higher education.

Furthermore, the study described students' AD based on the observations of various authorities, such as Deans, Chairpersons of Departments, the Proctor, and the Director of the Student Guidance and Counselling Cell, and finally, the authors proposed a plagiarism policy to promote academic integrity at NSTU.

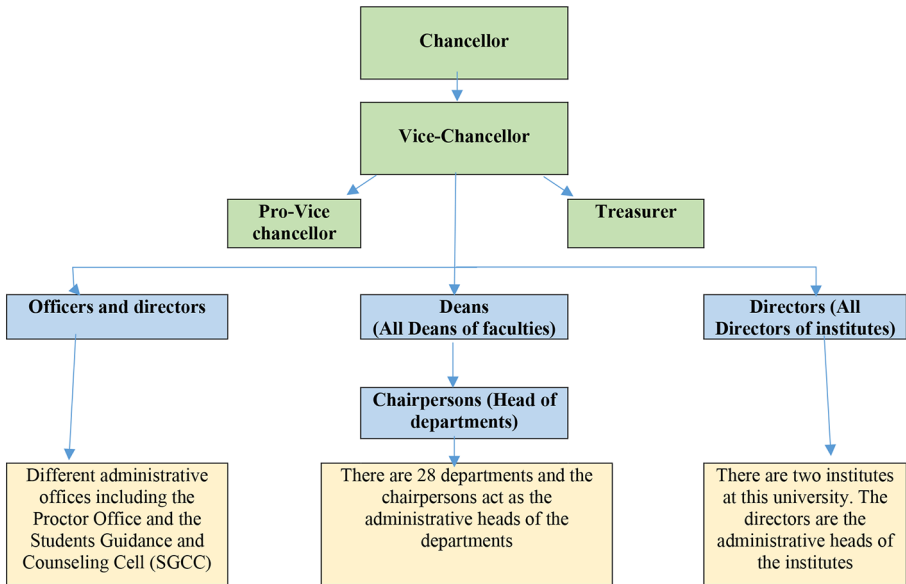


Fig. 1 Organizational chart of NSTU structure

## Literature Review

The issue of AD has become significantly important to consider, as students are engaging in unethical behavior with increasing predominance (Chiang et al., 2022). The exploitations of ethical norms and values can be a reason for ‘moral panic’ (According to Rohloff & Wright (2010), the term “moral panic” refers to a sociological concept that attempts to explain a specific type of overreaction to a perceived social problem) among those employed in academia which cause great societal damage (Venera-Mihaela & Mares, 2021). In a study, McCabe and Trevino (1996) found that one third students were involved with dishonest academic behavior; whereas Newstead et al., (1996) found it as more than half. In another study, Nonis and Swift (2001) found it between 30 and 96%. According to the survey results of Center of Academic Integrity at Duke University, 68% of students surveyed had committed at least one AD, i.e., plagiarism (Owings, 2002), whereas Jones (2011) figured out that 92% of students involved in any form of AD at least once, or knew someone who was.

Arshad et al. (2021) broadly categorized the academically dishonest behavior of students into four dimensions: plagiarism, cheating on tests, cheating on paper and work assignments, and other general dishonest behavior. Karassavidou and Glaveli (2007) and Whitley et al. (1999) reported that in regard to AD, women are more obedient and truthful compared to men. However, a recent study showed that female students were more likely to engage in AD compared to male students (Fell & König, 2020).

To assess the phenomenon, many researchers such as Nonis and Swift (2001), Jordan (2001), Lupton and Chaqman (2002), Hodges (2017), Winardi and Azalea (2017), Firdaus and Solicha (2018), Bashir and Bala (2018), and Amir (2019) have studied the most problematic issues of academic dishonesty among the students of higher education. These stud-

**Table 1** Basic information about NSTU

Faculty /Institute	Name of Institute/ Department.	Year of Establishment	No. of Faculty members	No. of students (under-grad + Post grade)	Course on Inf. And Research Ethics in curricula
<b>Institutes</b>	Institute of Information Sciences (IIS)	2015	9	160	Yes
	Institute of Information Technology (IIT)	2015	11	128	No
<b>Faculty of Engineering and Technology</b>	Department of Computer Science and Telecommunication Engineering (CSTE)	2006	20	200+31=231	No
	Department of Applied Chemistry and Chemical Engineering (ACCA)	2006	13	196+90=286	No
	Department of Information and Communication Engineering (ICE)	2013	16	200+38=238	No
	Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering (EEE)	2016	10	121	No
<b>Faculty of Science</b>	Department of Fisheries and Marine Science (FIMS)	2006	25	176+28=204	No
	Department of Pharmacy	2006	30	230+24=254	No
	Department of Microbiology	2009	26	123+24=147	No
	Department of Mathematics	2010	17	271+49=320	No
	Department of Food Technology and Nutrition Science (FTNS)	2012	19	120+75=195	No
	Department of Environmental Science and Disaster Management (ESDM)	2012	20	230+50=280	No
	Department of Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering (BGE)	2012	23	125+50=175	No
	Department of Agriculture	2013	15	185+7=192	No
	Department of Statistics	2016	10	193+26=219	No
	Dept. of Oceanography	2016	10	149	No
Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (BMB)	2018	7	141	No	
Department of Zoology	2018	4	90	No	

**Table 1** (continued)

Faculty /Institute	Name of Institute/ Department.	Year of Establishment	No. of Faculty members	No. of students (under- grad + Post grade)	Course on Inf. And Re- search Ethics in curricula
<b>Faculty of Social Science and Humanities</b>	Department of English	2010	20	220+100=320	No
	Department of Economics	2013	19	210+45=255	No
	Department of Ban- gladesh and Liberation War Studies (BLWS)	2015	12	181+47=228	No
	Department of Sociology	2017	5	190	No
	Department of Bangla	2017	14	145	No
	Department of Social Work	2018	4	130	No
<b>Faculty of Business Administration</b>	Department of Busi- ness Administration	2012	14	278+61=339	No
	Department of Man- agement Information Systems (MIS)	2018	8	190	No
	Department of Tourism and Hospitality Man- agement (THM)	2017	09	180	No
<b>Faculty of Education</b>	Department of Education	2018	6	180	No
	Department of Educa- tion Administration	2018	4	130	No
<b>Faculty of Law</b>	Department of Law	2018	8	160	No

Source: University website, interview with dept. chairpersons and curriculum of the dept.

ies provided evidence about various dishonest behaviors of students during the course of acquiring their higher education.

The AD is not only committed by students alone, but the faculty members engaged in teaching, evaluating, grading and finally certifying these students are also guilty of this misconduct (Adebakin, 2014). As faculty members are role models, their ethical practice would be a significant factor in developing students' moral values (Sausser, 1990). Aside from the role of faculty members, the assessment process is a major factor in lowering students' AD in higher education around the world (Nnam & Inah, 2015).

Some researchers suggested different techniques to reduce AD from different perspectives. For example, Sotiriadou et al. (2019) carried out a survey using the interactive oral test as an assessment procedure that would restrain students from AD. This assessment also helps students to advance their values, knowledge, skills, and leadership in a professional way. Chiang et al. (2022) proposed the use of technological detection methods in an online learning system and assessment which helped students realize that AD has risk and the rate of dishonesty dropped significantly. Bretag et al., (2010) suggested an exemplar policy indicating a systematic and long-lasting commitment to the practice of academic values. Similarly, McCabe and Trevino (1996) and Nonis and Swift (2001) recommended the same policy and also encouraged awareness among students of their institutions' policies regarding academic dishonesty. In contrast, some authors recommended the campus culture and

environment as highly influencing factors for reducing dishonesty (see McCabe & Trevino, 1996; Hendy et al., 2021; Chiang et al., 2022). Hendershott et al. (2000) conducted a study of the ethical environment of a comprehensive private university. The study suggested raising awareness about campus culture among students, faculty, administrators, and governing boards in order to support and sustain a climate before attempting to create a student's ethical code.

For creating an ethical code on students' AD, it is necessary to know their self-reported understanding of AD along with the administration's perception of students understanding regarding AD parallelly. In a study, Arshad et al. (2021) examined 'academic dishonesty' among a sample of 243 students from business universities in Pakistan. It was found that a considerably small number of students reported their engagement in AD behavior. Yang et al. (2013) studied students' self-reported personal AD as well as their perceptions of their peers' AD. The findings revealed students' beliefs that their peers were more likely to engage in AD and had more motivation to do so than the students themselves. These findings are consistent with those of Yang et al. (2017). Bretag et al. (2014) investigated two major aspects of academic integrity: students' self-reports of cheating behaviors and students' actual understanding of academic integrity. According to the findings, students had a general understanding of academic integrity but were unable to put it into practice effectively. Tabsh et al. (2017) conducted a survey on faculty perceptions of various issues related to students' AD. According to the faculty member, students' AD is more common when doing out-of-class work. The majority of faculty members supported tougher penalties and more monitors in exams as measures to reduce AD.

AD may have consequences in different aspects of life (Guerrero-Dib et al., 2020; Arshad et al., 2021; Nonis & Swift, 2001) addressed the relationship between academic integrity in classroom and the work environment. The authors found that students who are engaged in dishonest acts in classes were more likely to engage in dishonest acts in the workplace.

The future of every country is reliant on the quality of their graduates (Eneji et al., 2022). Kyei (2014) found a significant relationship between AD and poor graduate quality which might affect global competitiveness. Several studies found that a country's development is greatly influenced by high-quality graduates (Timothy & Abubakar, 2013; Onyibe et al., 2015; Nnam & Inah, 2015; Phiri & Nakamba, 2015; Tabsh et al., 2019). In Bangladesh, research has been done on knowledge, attitude or practice of ethical issues and academic dishonesty among business, computer and medical students (see Acharya & Shakya, 2015; Adhikary & Mitra, 2015; Mazumder & Mahankali, 2016; Alam, 2016; Gazi & Jamal, 2019; Arefeen et al., 2020; Jahan & Flora, 2022) in an attempt to measure university students' information literacy self-efficacy level based on different established scales (Atikuzzaman & Ahmed, 2022), but there is huge inadequacy on its remedies, i.e., how the university authority can rescue the future leaders from this social disorder. For that reason, this gap draws the attention of the authors.

## Objectives

The major objectives of this study are to:

1. Examine the perceptions of authority regarding the causes and dimensions of students' AD in a public university of Bangladesh;
2. Explore the existing role of the departments to uphold academic integrity among students i.e., departmental steps towards fraudulent practice prevention;
3. Analyze the possible gap and recommend some suggestions for authority concerning all responsible bodies that will interface with any form of AD and promote academic integrity.

## Methodology

This study is a case study using a mixed-method approach (both qualitative and quantitative). For quantitative data, a semi-structured interview was conducted with chairpersons of all departments (30) of the university. The interview form contained a set of standard close and open-ended questions about the practice of his/her department regarding AD, academic integrity, and other ethical issues. The questions reflected chairpersons' perceptions about their students' familiarity with different ethical terminologies; maintaining ethical issues while conducting research and departments' role in response to any form of AD.

University deans are the core persons for formulating, updating, and implementing policies of the faculties of a university. The mentioned thirty departments are under 6 faculties (see Table 1) in NSTU. Therefore, their opinions were also collected using a formal interview in order to redesign the policy on students' AD to uphold student quality, and university reputation and create a strong and sustainable global position.

To learn about the university's existing regulations against academic dishonesty, a number of related papers were collected from the university registrar's office and the exam controller's office concerning students' disciplinary rules, university ordinances, and constitutions that reflect ethical issues. This evidence also revealed a potential gap that could impede moral and academic integrity.

As the Proctorial body plays a vital role to maintain rules and disciplines for running a university smoothly and ensure quality education, the proctor was also interviewed to gather data on the current situation of anti-disciplinary activities, the number of cases faced for unfair means during the semester final examinations; patterns of punishments and possible barriers in imposing it; and plan for prospective preventive measures against AD.

As a university's Student Guidance and Counseling Cell (SGCC) always helps students make the right decisions, choose the right career, develop self-awareness and mental health, solve problems, and ultimately help them reach their highest academic and personal potential, the director of the aforementioned cell was also questioned to learn the true state of the students' mental health after they receive a punishment that affects their academic career.

## Results and Discussion

The interview results of the chairpersons of the departments, deans of the faculties, proctor of the university, and director of the SGCC of the university are presented in the following ways:



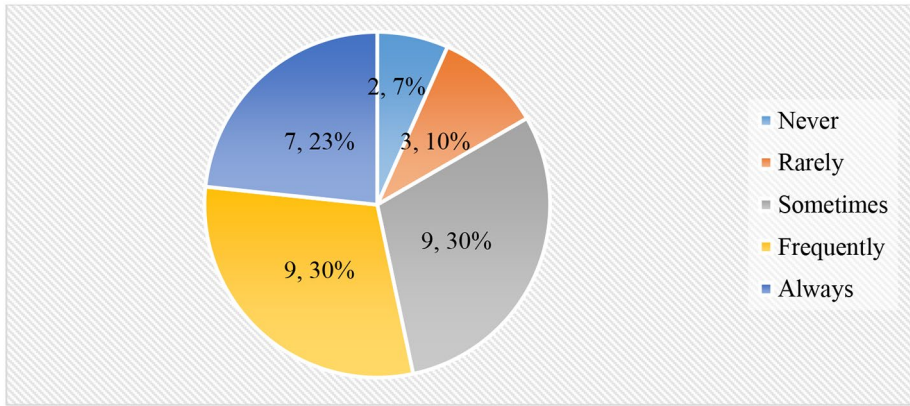


Fig. 2 Students' frequency of maintaining research ethics (from the viewpoint of the chairpersons)

Table 2 Students' familiarity with ethical terminologies (rated by chairpersons)

Terminology	Not at all familiar		Slightly familiar		Somewhat familiar		Moderately familiar		Extremely familiar		Total %
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Intellectual property	8	26.7	4	13.3	8	26.7	8	26.7	2	6.7	100
Plagiarism	2	6.7	0	0	7	23.3	11	36.7	10	33.3	100
Paraphrasing	4	13.3	3	10.0	14	46.7	6	20.0	3	10.0	100
Fair use	6	20.0	1	3.3	15	50.0	6	20.0	2	6.7	100
Citation/ referencing	3	10.0	1	3.3	6	20.0	8	26.7	12	40.0	100

### Findings from Chairpersons

In response to the question, “How frequently do your students maintain academic integrity while conducting research works?” the chairpersons stated that only a small percentage of students (23%) always do (see Fig. 2). On a five-point Likert scale, the majority of the chairpersons (18, 60%) rated their students' academic honesty as mid-level.

In order to measure students' awareness regarding different aspects of academic integrity, the chairpersons were asked to rate their students' familiarity with different academic integrity-related terminologies (see Table 2). The results show that most of the students were unfamiliar with different aspects of academic integrity, i.e., intellectual property, paraphrasing, and fair use, however, they were familiar with terminologies like plagiarism and citation/ referencing.

As the students were not familiar with most of the ethical terminologies, the chairpersons were questioned ‘Is there any indication of AD by your department's students in the last five years while submitting their thesis report?’. Chairpersons from seven (7, 23.3%) departments admitted that such incidents occurred in their department (Table 3). One department took no action because there is no established regulation in the university, while the remaining six departments imposed penalties through the departmental academic committee (Table 4). The punishment pattern was as follows: suggesting that the accused student

**Table 3** Instance of AD for the last 05 years by students

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	23	76.7
Yes	7	23.3
Total	30	100.0

**Table 4** Instances of penalty for the convicted

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes, as it's a misconduct	6	20.0
No, as there is no established regulation in ethical misconduct	1	3.3
Missing	23	76.7
Total	30	100.0

**Table 5** Opinion of dept. chairman in integrating a central policy on academic integrity

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	1	3.3
Disagree	1	3.3
Neutral	1	3.3
Agree	5	16.7
Strongly agree	22	73.3
Total	30	100.0

resubmit his/her report; changing his/her research area, or even dropping him/her from the semester based on the level of misconduct committed.

In response to the question 'Do you believe it is the core responsibility of a tertiary level educational institution's administration to take initiatives for a central policy to reduce AD?', the majority of chairpersons (22, 73.3%) strongly recommended taking such initiative (Table 5).

## Findings from Deans

As the students are increasingly using digital environments to cut, copy, and paste the materials of their reports, we asked the Deans whether there was any option to check the originality of the students' thesis or report in their faculty; whether there was any provision of imposing penalty in case of plagiarism detection; whether there should be any common policy or code of conduct in the university on students' AD; whether there should be any distinct committee to deal with AD; whether the university's existing code of AD should be updated; and lastly, whether preventing AD can have a good impact on university ranking success. In response, they stated that each department checks the percentage of similarity in their own way, such as using free and trial software, browsing Google, asking another institution to check these out, etc., as there is no licensed plagiarism detection software either in the library or any department or faculty in NSTU. The deans of three faculties acknowledged that there are occasional instances of plagiarism in various departments, but that the severity of the penalties varies from department to department due to the lack of a uniform policy. All Deans agree on the formulation of a common policy; a departmental as well as a central committee on academic integrity; and the continuous updating of existing policies in

response to changing circumstances. They are all concerned with the positive relationship between academic integrity and university ranking success.

### **Findings from the Proctor**

The university's Proctorial Body takes action against students who engage in anti-disciplinary behavior in the examination hall or other issues on campus. The proctor was questioned about the number and type of complaints received on students' AD per semester, the minimum and maximum penalties imposed, whether he receives any complaints about plagiarism issues, his suggestions about the type of penalties for plagiarism, whether he faces any barriers while imposing punishments, whether any unwanted situations arise after the punishment is imposed, whether he believes there is a need for a plagiarism policy, and finally, whether he believes preventing AD can impact university ranking. In response to these inquiries, he stated that the most common AD with a high volume is unfair means in the examination hall rather than plagiarism and data manipulation (falsification, fabrication, etc.) in reports and thesis papers. Though the university has an established policy on students' disciplinary rules focusing on examination guidelines, the minimum penalty is a dropout from a semester and the maximum penalty is the cancellation of studentship from the university; at the same time, students have the opportunity to appeal to academic council (the highest authoritative body) for his/her compassion. The proctor is convinced that making this policy known to students, along with potential punishments, can reduce this type of AD to a bare minimum. In response to the question of any threats or undesirable situations that the proctorial body faces while penalizing students for unfair means, the proctor stated that students' emotional blackmailing is more prominent than political, departmental, or similar pressure.

As there are no established rules and regulations on plagiarism and data manipulation, the proctor suggests the followings:

- Formulating a central policy on plagiarism (as it is a massive AD) that includes the level of plagiarism as well as the penalty; establishing a departmental and central committee on academic integrity mentioning the responsibilities of those committees;
- Creating students' awareness regarding the policy;
- Checking students' reports through plagiarism-checking software;
- And strictly following the suggested penalties as it's a severe crime.

### **Findings from the Director of Student Counselling and Guidance Cell (SGCC)**

As students with personal issues such as depression, confidential matters, low self-esteem, and stress look forward to individual counseling sessions at SGCC, the director of SCGC was also interviewed to learn the true state of students' mental health after being penalized. In response to the question, "Do you deal with students who have mental depression after being punished for academic misconduct?" the director of SCGC described the current situation. A number of cases involving depressed students were handled while they were dropped from semester/year for using unfair means in the exam hall. 'Do you think a representative from your cell should be included in the central academic integrity committee?'

was another question. In response, he stated that, because members of the SGCC closely monitor students' mental health, and serious penalties can have serious consequences in students' lives, the inclusion of a member of the SGCC in the mentioned core committee is highly recommended.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Students of this university are conducting thousands of research projects in their own fields. As plagiarism is considered a serious academic offense worldwide, different countries, as well as universities, have formulated their own policy (Sawant, 2022; Hu & Sun, 2017) to detect plagiarism and AD (Spain & Robles, 2011; Bloomfield et al., 2021) to take actions against all AD-related offenses. Though some universities in Bangladesh have taken initiative to formulate their own plagiarism policy, this type of initiative is still far away from NSTU.

Based on the feedback received from the interviewees, the authors of the present study suggest the following recommendations to uphold academic integrity at NSTU.

1. A compulsory credit-bearing course on Academic Honesty should be included in undergraduate curricula for all disciplines (Arefeen et al., 2020; Naveed & Mahmood, 2021);
2. Awareness should be created among the students about the existing disciplinary rules of the university through training/workshops or any other means (Orr, 2018);
3. An initiative should be taken for the agreement with a licensed plagiarism detection software.
4. A central policy should be formulated on 'Academic Dishonesty' focusing on plagiarism, unfair means in the examination hall, anti-disciplinary actions, and other related activities (Bretag et al., 2010);
5. A Departmental Academic Integrity Committee (DAIC) and a Central Academic Integrity Committee (CAIC) should be formed along with their responsibilities to implement this policy (Hendershott et al., 2000);
6. Clarifications should be given regarding the levels of plagiarism; penalties associated with the levels; penalties for repeated plagiarism; as well as students' appealing privileges for reviewing the complaint within the policy (Stone, 2022);
7. The central policy along with possible penalties should be popularized among the students to keep their academic integrity up.

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**Author contribution** The author contributes to the paper as follows: study conception and design: Shamima Yesmin; data collection: Md. Atikuzzaman and Shamima Yesmin; analysis and interpretation of results: Shamima Yesmin and Md. Atikuzzaman; draft manuscript preparation: Shamima Yesmin and Md. Atikuzzaman. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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**Data Availability** The interview data collected from the heads of the departments have been inputted and saved in a SPSS file. Besides, the interview data collected from the other stakeholders of the university have been saved as recordings in Bengali languages. Data files can be shared upon demand.

## Declarations

**Conflict of interest** The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest in this research.

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