

Social media, "information Fatigue Syndrome" and artificial intelligence: The intersectional complexity of a student's personal environment in relation to academic integrity

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Introduction:

"We are all products of our environment; every person we meet, every new experience or adventure, every book we read, touches and changes us, making us the unique being we are." (C.J Hecks, 2007) As per American philanthropist W. Clemente Stone has said initially, "Analyze your life in terms of its environment. Are the things around you helping you toward success - or are they holding you back?" (Stone, 1962) In a world where technological development and access to knowledge, people, and technology are insurmountably fast-paced and demanding, the consumption of media is misguided and untraceable, as a result of this, our personalities begin to be ever-changing at adolescence. Generation Z has shown that social media plays a pivotal role in shaping identity, social norms, and even the psychological well-being of Gen Z individuals (Lajnef, 2023) As a consequence due to all this said fast-paced untraceable environment, how are we supposed to find - let alone develop our academic integrity as students?

The principle of W. Clementine Stone's saying is that on the occasion of attempting to understand how this current day and age affects any student from their personal life which inevitably will coexist with their academic performance from a humanitarian perspective, it is predominant for their educational environment to be just as honest and true as the student is expected to be. The objective of figuring out how to adopt academic integrity as a student is established in the true key of creating an atmosphere surrounded by the fundamental points of academic integrity.

Any credible educational institute's target is to maintain credibility - academic integrity does not only rely on the student's responsibility to write, maintain, and support their research but also on the institute to foster a strict, honest domain where through mutual respect and sense of responsibility will continue to grow and carried for the rest of the student's education - then shortly career, benefiting both the university for their other students and the students as academics themselves.

Throughout this assignment we will be diving deeper into exploring how our external environment affects a person as a whole; from the way their brain is paced to how they are dressed, and how that will reflect on their academic integrity. Fast-paced thinking leads to unintentional plagiarism, and so consequently boredom from unstimulating activities leads to ineffective honesty or taking the shortcut of having someone else such as a peer write it for them. We will be touching on how both universities and students should create an honest, trustworthy, and responsible environment that encourages integrity.

1. Social media statistics and generational differences in media consumption habits

In an era where everything, everywhere, and everyone is at your disposal for access, disconnection is not particularly an option, social norms at one point in time used to be more

flexible in a way that when for example you leave the house "you are gone for good", you were not expected to respond or "catch up" on updates immediately, it is thus alluding to how gen Z has a subconscious need to be know everything, be everywhere, with everyone all at once, here Adipon Euajarusphan (2021) elucidating what the use of social media has become in a nutshell: "The reason online social media is widely used today is convenience, speed, reduction in communications costs, and having relationships and participation with other people in their network, everyone is easily accessible" (p. 45)

As for the statistical research part from Adipon Euajarusphan (2021) it was concluded that Generation Z was more likely to use the internet on their phones from a whopping roughly 31% increase from Generation X, it can be understood that there is more reliability from Generation Z on their phones to access all unified things other generations would find other mediums for such as newspapers and television, which will inevitably lead to a fast-paced but monotonous personal characteristic. This same study also concluded that Generation Z and found that they used smartphones to access the internet the most (96.8%).

The importance of analyzing generational patterns in social media and information consumption is to realize what the effects of being surrounded constantly by a surplus of quick 10-30 second videos such as Tiktoks and YouTube shorts as well as endless personalities on Twitter (now the platform is known as X) and Instagram leads to from a psychological perspective, in addition to academically and more minuscule, in business.

2. Motivating ethical and safe use of social media

This is where acclaimed universities can come in: when addressing contemporary education, digital literacy programs are essential for schools and universities to equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate the complexities of information technology and social media ethically and most importantly safely for their own well-being and individuality. These programs play a critical role in encouraging responsible digital users who can effectively recognize credible sources, understand the implications of their online actions, and uphold academic integrity.

Digital literacy programs are designed to enhance student's ability to critically evaluate online information and develop a nuanced understanding of the digital landscape. According to Jones and Mitchell (2016), such programs help students identify credible sources and differentiate between reliable information and misinformation, thus reducing the risk of academic dishonesty. These programs enable students to approach digital content with a discerning eye by instilling critical thinking skills, which is crucial for maintaining academic integrity in an age of information overload.

In addition, digital literacy education extends beyond merely identifying credible sources. It also encompasses the ethical use of digital tools and platforms. As Buckingham (2015) highlights, understanding the ethical implications of digital engagement is vital. This includes respecting intellectual property rights, properly citing digital resources, and avoiding plagiarism. By educating students on these ethical considerations, digital literacy programs help create a culture of integrity and respect for original work.

3. “Brain rot” or “Information Fatigue Syndrome” and why is social media important in analyzing personality traits

Due to the ever-changing nature of technology, David Lewis (psychologist) first coined the term "IFS" or “Information fatigue syndrome” (Wikipedia, n.d.), moreover new terms for describing monotonous and aimless digital consumption more popularly now known as "brain rot" where due to overstimulation, the brain, as well as thinking, becomes dull. Recent brain imaging research is showing that they affect the brain’s frontal cortex - which controls executive functioning, including impulse control — in exactly the same way that cocaine does; Technology is so hyper-arousing that it raises dopamine levels. Social media has been classified as a behavioral addiction by the Addiction Center and they have similar brain stimulations as other behavioral addictions like gambling.

Some of the symptoms associated with information fatigue syndrome are more daunting such as emotional traits of apathy and indifference, neurological characteristics of short-term memory failure and mental exhaustion, physical traits such as headaches and along the lines of tension, and perhaps more importantly to academic integrity and student behavior, "Overly multitasking, resulting in incomplete tasks" (Dobrica Savić 2023 p. 97)

More concerningly for the educational establishment and the reason why this specific generation is in more danger of plagiarism and subconscious disobedience of academic integrity is due to where daily knowledge is consumed rather than only research papers, does this student frequently go out of their way to find information through different mediums? A study by Oberlo in 2022 more recently about top internet users has found that 60.1% of them use the internet to find new information.

Figuring out external subconscious factors such as social media usage and “Information Fatigue Syndrome” that affect a student's academic integrity is undoubtedly important, but what about their conscious choices of who they surround themselves with in their circle? Mcgabe in 2005 expressed that “it takes a village to reduce academic dishonesty”. We as humans are born social butterflies, it is often not in our hands who we end up with but rather our environment, however, we

can make the conscious choice to surround ourselves with people whose values align with ours, the answer has to come from within - who are you as an academic person? Who do you want to be? What type of future do you choose for yourself?

4. How to foster the curiosity and determination to explore more than our surface knowledge and keep track of our information

To start with tackling our main target in relation to this assignment which is social media, instead of relying solely on for example Tiktok, YouTube, and Instagram for new knowledge, students should prioritize accessing academic databases, reputable journals, and educational websites and articles to familiarize themselves with how other academic minds think. In the same way we are required to keep a search log, something similar can be created to Keep a tab of books, podcasts, and video essays that are watched or read for entertainment to serve as a valuable resource for credible information. Engaging with well-researched materials enhances cognitive abilities and fosters a habitual instinct to be curious, developing the habit of integrating such resources into daily life can significantly contribute to academic success and personal growth. Research shows that diversifying sources of information can immensely reduce the risks of misinformation and improve critical thinking skills (Oberlo, 2022; Savic, 2023).

“The power to question is the basis of all human progress.” (Gandhi, as cited in BrainyQuote, n.d.) In the same way humans were born to be social butterflies, we were also born to be curious, the same mankind that discovered fire now faces the challenge of discovering themselves. Building a sense of curiosity and individuality can drive students to explore beyond the surface of readily limitless available information. This curiosity encourages students to delve deeper into subjects, seeking out original sources and scholarly materials rather than settling for the convenience of quick, often unreliable, internet searches. By striving to discover more and think independently, students can strengthen their academic integrity and contribute original thoughts to their academic communities. Curiosity-driven learning can lead to the discovery of unique insights and the development of a distinct academic voice (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

We also take inspiration from those around us; another way to individuality is by taking the success of other high-performing students. These A+ students often exhibit strong time management skills, allowing them to allocate sufficient time for research and writing, they prioritize understanding over memorization, engaging deeply with the material to produce original insights, These students frequently use multiple sources, cross-referencing information to ensure accuracy and credibility (Howard, Serviss, & Rodrigue, 2010). They are meticulous about citing sources properly and understanding the importance of academic honesty. In short, these students go the extra mile to

ensure their integrity and take pride in their honesty, one way of going the extra mile is by participating in writing workshops and seeking feedback from peers and instructors.

5.1 Educational institutes and students hand in hand: What can they do to foster academic integrity and encouraging ethical use of artificial intelligence

The sole purpose of mentioning being curious, conscious, prideful, and honest is academic integrity. Whether it is taking your first steps forward or building your academic persona block by block, it is your choices that get you to where you must be. Students can foster a culture of academic integrity by forming study groups focused on collaborative learning rather than shortcuts, encouraging open discussions about the importance of academic honesty and the consequences of plagiarism helps build a supportive community. Utilizing tools like plagiarism checkers and maintaining detailed notes during research can prevent accidental plagiarism.

Going the extra mile is down to the institution itself as well, universities should provide resources and support systems, such as writing centers and academic integrity seminars, to help students understand and uphold ethical standards (Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2002). Both sides have to be advocating for their common goal and participate in initiatives that promote academic integrity, creating a trustworthy and honest academic environment.

One of the many forms of academic dishonesty is plagiarism, and part of the techniques educational institutes used to progress in making plagiarism inaccessible is banning the use of AI platforms such as ChatGPT, Best Colleges as of 2023 have reported 2 international universities banning the use of AI completely, however this method only dilutes the problem and creates another problem of limiting creativity and ethical substantial use of Artificial Intelligence, it is only a matter of time that AI grows, as 250 million users have grown in 2023, and expected to grow past 700 million by 2030 almost tripling from 2020 numbers (statistica, February 2024) This makes AI unavoidable and should be conjugated with education by teaching ethical usage, Chung Kwan Lo in their article titled "What Is the Impact of ChatGPT on Education? A Rapid Review of the Literature" stated that "ChatGPT can serve as an assistant for both instructors and students" by either coming up with exam questions and "providing an outline" and for students with special needs. Instead of being used to write essays or whole papers, it can be used to brainstorm and correct grammar for example.

It is in the university's hands to go above and beyond to sustain their own academic integrity and instill integrity and students, in making efforts to consistently make dishonesty unreachable. As it is standard to use anti-plagiarism sites, it is immensely crucial to also double review a paper by a human, AI has only advanced so much, user Fanhanzy on X platform (formerly known as Twitter)

has expressed their disappointment when they submitted original art and their results came back as plagiarism as google images detected their own art. Plagiarism sites do not detect citations or original work, it simply analyzes similarities in text, even directly cited quotations can be considered plagiarized. Human peer review will always be essential in the present and future of academic integrity so that a student is not flagged for plagiarism for common quotes or common sayings or even their own original work.

5.2: The similarities and significance of integrating academic integrity with the future corporate integrity

Drawing between academic integrity and being ethical professionally in the corporate world highlights the critical importance of these values beyond academia. In both settings, integrity serves as the foundation for trust, credibility, and ethical behavior. Upholding integrity ensures that individuals and institutions maintain their reputations and foster environments where honesty and ethical behavior are paramount.

Academic integrity is the commitment to honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility in academic work. It involves avoiding plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty (Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2002). Similarly, professional ethics in the corporate world demands sticking to ethical principles and standards. These principles include honesty, accountability, transparency, and respect for others (Trevino & Nelson, 2016). Both academic and corporate settings rely on these values to build a culture of trust and respect.

The consequences of compromising integrity are notable and significant in both contexts. In the academic world, violations of integrity can lead to disciplinary actions, loss of reputation, and diminished trust in the educational system. For instance, students found guilty of plagiarism may face suspension or expulsion, which can have long-term impacts on their academic and professional careers (McCabe, 2005). In the corporate world, unethical behavior can result in legal penalties, financial losses, and damage to a company's reputation. High-profile corporate scandals, such as Enron and Volkswagen, underscore the devastating effects of unethical practices on businesses and their stakeholders (Sims & Brinkmann, 2003).

Moreover, the principles of academic integrity lay the foundation for ethical behavior in professional settings. Students who internalize the values of honesty, accountability, and respect are more likely to carry these principles into their careers, contributing to ethical corporate cultures. Ethical training programs in universities can bridge the gap between academia and the corporate world by emphasizing the importance of integrity in all aspects of life (Eaton, 2020).

Conclusion

“We are all products of our environment...” The intersection of environmental influences and academic integrity forms a complex landscape for students today. As C.J. Hecks (2007) remarked, our unique identities are shaped by every person we meet and every experience we encounter. Similarly, W. Clement Stone (1962) emphasized the importance of analyzing our surroundings to determine whether they are conducive to our success or slowing down our progress. In this technologically driven social media world, these platforms play an integral role in shaping newer generations’ identities, social norms, and physiological well-being (Lajnef, 2023) which inevitably includes their academic persona. This generation faces unique never-before challenges in developing academic integrity, as the fast-paced, and mostly untraceable consumption of information can lead to unintentional plagiarism and a fragmented approach to learning. As students navigate this environment, it is important to simply be more aware and conscious of the daily choices we make. From addressing student’s subconscious desire to cheat or plagiarize, to how the university can go the extra mile to create a respectful and responsible academic environment, we can reach a satisfying conclusion: We are all responsible in the future of academic integrity.

Creating such an environment requires mutual effort from both students and institutions. Students must build habits of seeking out credible sources, engaging with scholarly materials, and entertainment through different mediums, and fostering a sense of curiosity and individuality. As noted by various studies, diversifying sources of information and prioritizing credible research can significantly reduce the risks of misinformation and improve critical thinking skills (Oberlo, 2022; Savic, 2023). Furthermore, students can learn from high-performing peers who avoid plagiarism through meticulous research, proper citation practices, and active engagement with academic content (Howard, Serviss, & Rodrigue, 2010).

On the side of educational institutions, universities must provide resources and support systems that promote ethical academic practices. This includes offering workshops on academic integrity, maintaining strict policies on academic dishonesty, and fostering a culture of integrity and respect within the academic community (Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2002). Additionally, as technology evolves, educational institutions must adapt by incorporating ethical guidelines for the use of AI tools like ChatGPT, ensuring that these technologies are used to enhance learning rather than facilitate dishonesty (Chung Kwan Lo, 2023). The parallels between academic integrity and professional ethics underscore the universal importance of these values. Upholding integrity fosters trust, credibility, and ethical behavior, which are essential for the success and reputation of both academic institutions and corporations.

In conclusion, the path to academic integrity in the modern age is paved with conscious choices and collective efforts. By fostering an environment of curiosity, credibility, and mutual respect, students and institutions can work together to uphold the highest standards of academic honesty, ultimately contributing to a more knowledgeable and ethical society.

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