

# ACADEMIC INTEGRITY OF SCIENTISTS: PROBLEMS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND RESPONSIBILITY IN UKRAINE

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**Annotation.** The article outlines the concept of academic integrity as a component of academic culture and states the academic integrity of researchers is a key aspect in determining the quality and reliability of scientific research, as well as the reputation of the scientific community. Adherence to the principles of academic integrity is the foundation for the development of scientific knowledge and innovation.

It was noted that Ukrainian legislation provides a clear framework for the regulation of academic integrity, establishing fundamental principles, requirements, and sanctions for violations. This contributes to the assurance of the quality of education and research, as well as the enhancement of trust in the outcomes of educational and research activities. A critical assessment of the list of violations of academic integrity is given. Particularly emphasized the shortcomings of the legal regulation of the definition and application of the institute “academic responsibility” as a form of ensuring “academic integrity”. The authors analyze and summarize the basic ethical principles that form the basis of academic integrity.

Conclusions. Thus, academic integrity violations, such as plagiarism, can result in serious consequences, including the revocation of academic degrees and academic titles. At the same time, maintaining academic integrity is a researcher’s moral and professional obligation, as it affects public trust in scientific results. Maintaining academic integrity is essential for the development of a scientific environment that is conducive to intellectual honesty and transparency in scientific research. Furthermore, the culture of academic integrity encourages high standards of ethics and professional behavior among scientists. Consequently, the quality and credibility of research results are contingent upon the research process being conducted in an honest and ethical manner, free from practices that are deemed unacceptable within the scientific community and that compromise academic integrity. In this regard, all the efforts of the scientific community should be aimed at preventing academic dishonesty, hindering and stopping it by creating a responsible and honest scientific environment.

**Key words:** integrity, academic responsibility, measures of responsibility, academic freedom, principles of academic integrity.

## 1. Formulation of the problem.

The academic integrity of researchers is a key aspect in determining the quality and reliability of scientific research, as well as the reputation of the scientific community. Adherence to the principles of academic integrity is the foundation for the development of scientific knowledge and innovation.

Around the world, codes of ethics are based on the understanding that good practice in science promotes trust both among the scientific community and between scientists and society. This is essential for the advancement of science. Scientists must have confidence in the reliability of the work of their colleagues, and society needs to have confidence in the integrity of scientists and the validity of their research results. It is regrettable that this trust has been called into question by serious ethical violations in many countries. Such incidents may potentially erode the authority of

science and public trust in scientists. To prevent similar situations in Ukraine, all scientists would be well-advised to consider the importance of moral conduct and their role in influencing public opinion about science.

**2. The purpose** of the scientific article is to consider the concept of the academic integrity of scientists, problems of implementation and responsibility in Ukraine.

### **3. The state of problem solving.**

Many scientists have devoted their research efforts to exploring ways, methods, and tools to enhance the level of academic integrity within the educational and scientific community. One noteworthy example is the collective scientific research project, "Academic Virtue: Problems of Observance and Priorities for Dissemination Among Young Scientists", which was conducted under the scientific editorship of N. Sorokina, A. Artiukhova, and I. Dehtiarivna [1]. The authors devoted significant attention to the concept of academic integrity within the context of young science, research careers, and the organizational, technical, and legal aspects of academic life. In accordance with the terms of the grant agreement with the U.S.A. Embassy in Ukraine, research was conducted on the subject of academic integrity as a foundation for the sustainable development of the university [2]. The legal framework for combating academic integrity was analyzed in detail by YA. Tytska [3]. The categorical content of academic integrity is studied in the work of O. Chumak [4]. The works of Yu. Malohulko and M. Zatkheii [5], V. Zinchenko [6], O. Semenoh [7], T. Ishchenko, H. Shyshkina, I. Nikolieva [8], A. Kolesnikova [9], and others are also worthy of attention.

**4. Presentation of the research material.** The International Center for Academic Integrity defines academic integrity as adherence to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility, as well as courage to act. It is insufficient to espouse fundamental values. These values must be upheld, even when faced with pressure from others or different views. "And this requires dedication, commitment, and courage" [10].

Academic integrity is a set of ethical principles and rules defined by the laws of Ukraine, including "On Education" and "On Higher Education". These principles and rules should guide the participants of the educational process during learning, teaching, and scientific (creative) activities. Their purpose is to ensure confidence in the results of learning and/or scientific (creative) achievements.

Ukrainian legislation provides a clear framework for the regulation of academic integrity, establishing fundamental principles, requirements, and sanctions for violations. This contributes to the assurance of the quality of education and research, as well as the enhancement of trust in the outcomes of educational and research activities.

Article 6 of the Law of Ukraine "On Education" of September 5, 2017 No. 2145-VIII states that among other principles, such as human-centeredness, the rule of law, ensuring the quality of education, etc., academic integrity occupies a prominent place. Article 42 is fully dedicated to academic integrity, defining its terminology, classification of violations, means of maintaining integrity, and responsibility for non-compliance. Furthermore, Article 54 of this Law requires pedagogical, scientific, and pedagogical and scientific workers to adhere to academic integrity and ensure that students comply with it throughout the educational process and scientific activities.

The Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education," dated July 1, 2014, No. 1556-VII, states the following with regard to intellectual property rights and their protection: "Higher education institutions and research institutions shall implement measures to prevent academic plagiarism, defined as the publication (in part or in full) of scientific (creative) results obtained by other persons as the results of their own research (creativity) and/or the reproduction of published texts (published works of art) of other authors without attribution" [11].

The principles of academic integrity for researchers include the following:

Honesty (this means avoiding any form of deception, lying, fraud, theft, or other forms of dishonest behavior in scientific activities);

Justice (this means maintaining an impartial attitude towards colleagues, objectively evaluating research results, and ensuring transparency and independence in the evaluation process);

Trust (i.e., the existence of an atmosphere of mutual trust in the scientific community that encourages the free exchange of ideas and information, promotes cooperation and creativity, the free production of new ideas, and creates an environment that prevents the misappropriation of the results of others' activities or the undermining of the reputation of scientists);

Respect (this concept is revealed through showing respect both for oneself and for other scientists, regardless of age, gender and status, as well as understanding new, diverse, sometimes opposing opinions and ideas, avoiding abuse of office, etc.);

Partnership (is defined as the focus on cooperation and partnership between scientists and research units, with the objective of improving the quality of research work and research results. It also entails counteracting any forms of discrimination and negative influence, as well as combating shameful acts);

Responsibility (encompasses the fulfillment of obligations in good faith and the ability to take responsibility for the results of one's activities);

Transparency and Information Openness (providing access to any information related to scientific, organizational, research, scientific, technical and financial activities, except for the information restricted by law);

Legality (compliance of researchers with the norms of the current legislation of Ukraine in their activities).

It is of particular importance to highlight the significance of academic integrity violations, including: 1) academic plagiarism is the presentation of publicly (in part or in full) scientific (creative) results obtained by others as the results of one's own research (creativity) and/or reproduction, as well as the publishing of texts (publicized works of art) of other authors without indicating authorship under the name of a person who did not participate in their creation; 2) deception – the act of knowingly providing false information about one's own scientific research or the activities of one's organization, providing feedback or reviews on scientific works or publications without proper examination; 3) academic fraud (falsification or fabrication of information, scientific results, and their further use in the work. It also includes the references to sources that were not used in the work, the provision of data on experiments, empirical studies, measurements, calculations, surveys, and other types of research that were not conducted, as well as the incomplete or distorted information on the testing of research and development results); 4) unauthorized cooperation is defined as intentional or deliberate assistance or attempt to assist another person in committing an act of academic dishonesty, as well as custom-made or sold academic texts; 6) inclusion of individuals in the authorship lists of scientific research papers who were not themselves involved in the research process.

In accordance with Article 42, Part 5 of the Law of Ukraine "On Education" "for violation of academic integrity, pedagogical, scientific-pedagogical and scientific employees of educational institutions may be brought to such academic liability: the refusal to award a degree of educational-scientific or educational-creative level or to confer an academic title; the deprivation of the awarded degree of educational-scientific or educational-creative level or of the conferred academic title; the refusal to award or deprivation of the conferred pedagogical title; the refusal to award a degree of educational-scientific or educational-creative level or of the conferred academic title; the refusal to award or deprivation of the conferred pedagogical title, or deprivation of the conferred academic title" [12].

At the level of academic institutions, researchers, structural units, and specialized academic councils for the defense of dissertations may be held accountable for violations of academic integrity.

A review of the decisions of the Certification Board of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine for the period 2021-2023 reveals that: in 2021, the decisions of specialized academic councils to award the degrees of one Doctor of Technical Sciences and two Candidates of Economic Sciences were overturned due to violations of the requirements of paragraph 14 of the Procedure for Awarding Academic Degrees regarding the identification of textual borrowings and materials of other authors in the dissertation without reference to the source. As a result, the supervisors were also deprived of the right to participate in the training of scientific personnel for a period of two years; in 2022, the decisions of specialized academic councils to award the degree to one candidate of medical sciences and one candidate of technical sciences were canceled due to violations of paragraph 14 of the Procedure for Awarding Academic Degrees regarding the identification of textual borrowings and materials of other authors in the dissertation without reference to the source. Supervisors were deprived of the right to participate in the training of scientific personnel for a period of three years, and members of the expert commission and official opponents for a period of two years; in the year 2023, 1 Doctor of Technical Sciences and 1 Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences were deprived of their academic degrees for violating the requirements of the third paragraph of part two, second paragraph of part four of Article 42 of the Law of Ukraine "On Education" in terms of compliance with the legislation on copyright and related rights, academic plagiarism, and textual borrowings without reference to the source in their dissertations. Consequently, their diplomas were invalidated.

According to Article 28-1, part 7 of the Law of Ukraine "On Scientific and Scientific-Technical Activity", the decision of the dissertation council on awarding the degree of candidate of sciences or doctor of sciences should be canceled in case of established fact of academic plagiarism, forgery or falsification. According to the legislation, the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education is responsible for investigating cases of academic plagiarism, forgery or falsification. These investigations are conducted in accordance with the procedure approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and may be appealed in accordance with the legislation. Paragraph 38 of the Procedure for awarding and depriving the scientific degree of Doctor of Sciences states that a person to whom the diploma of Doctor of Science (candidate) has been issued by the decision of the Ministry of Education and Culture (Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine) may be deprived of the corresponding degree in case of violations of the requirements of the normative legal acts on the attestation of scientific personnel, valid at the time of the decision of the MES (Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine, Higher Attestation Commission) on the issuance of the corresponding diploma or approval of the council's decision on awarding the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Pursuant to Paragraph 39 of the Awarding Procedure, in order to consider the issue of deprivation of a degree, the National Agency submits an application to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine for the deprivation of the relevant degree.

It is, however, important to note that the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine Resolution No. 502 of May 19, 2023 introduced a new Paragraph 50 into the Procedure for awarding, according to which "a person with a scientific degree may voluntarily renounce the relevant scientific degree by submitting a notarised application to the Ministry of Education and Science. Within ten business days of receipt of the application, the MES revokes the decision of the relevant council and declares the diploma to be invalid, as evidenced by an order posted on the official website of the MES" [14].

Issuance of the order of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, canceling the decision of the specialized academic council on awarding a scientific degree and recognizing the diploma awarding a degree as invalid, makes it impossible to implement the application of the National Agency on the deprivation of a scientific degree, since the decision of the specialized academic council on awarding a scientific degree has been canceled, and the diploma awarding a scientific degree has already been declared invalid. Despite the existence of numerous committees within the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, which are specifically tasked with preliminary consideration of issues within the competence of the National Agency, in particular the Ethics Committee, the Committee on the Activities of One-time Specialized Academic Councils and other committees. At the same time, in accordance with the second subparagraph of paragraph 23 of the Procedure for consideration of complaints/reports on the facts of academic plagiarism, fabrication, falsification, approved by the decision of the National Agency of June 21, 2022, which defines the procedure for consideration by the Ethics Committee of complaints/reports regarding the presence of facts of academic plagiarism, fabrication, falsification in dissertations for the degree of Doctor (Candidate) of Sciences, establishes that, based

on the results of the case, the Committee decides to submit to the National Agency a submission on the detection/non-detection of academic plagiarism in the dissertation, upon the defense of which the degree of Doctor (Candidate) of Sciences was awarded and/or scientific publications, which highlighted the scientific results, as well as instances of academic plagiarism, fabrication, and falsification. However, in cases of a voluntary renunciation of the degree and the issuance of an order by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, which cancels the decision of the specialized academic council to confer a degree and invalidates the degree diploma, the dissertation cannot be considered as having been awarded a degree based on the results of its defense, and therefore lacks the essential feature set forth in Paragraph 23 of the Procedure. Consequently, the Ethics Committee is unable to make any decision.

Therefore, raising awareness among researchers of the values, principles, and rules of academic integrity, minimizing the possibility of violating academic integrity, and identifying mechanisms and measures to prevent and resolve conflicts of interest, effective response to violations of academic integrity by researchers, proportionality of the violation and response measures, transparency of procedures for reviewing reports of violations of academic integrity, and determination of response measures for established violations will contribute to the proper maintenance of academic integrity in research institutions.

Each researcher is required to comply with the current legislation in the field of education and science, intellectual property, ethical principles, and the norms of academic integrity as defined by the current legislation. This includes providing reliable information about their research activities, promoting the creation of effective mechanisms for the implementation of the principles of academic integrity in the scientific environment, and reporting cases of violation of academic integrity to the relevant officials and/or authorized bodies of the research institution.

## 5. Conclusions.

In light of the aforementioned, it can be reasonably concluded that Ukrainian legislation clearly defines academic integrity as an integral part of scientific activity and provides for compliance with ethical principles, avoidance of plagiarism, and other forms of scientific dishonesty. Academic integrity violations, such as plagiarism, can result in serious consequences, including the revocation of academic degrees and academic titles. At the same time, maintaining academic integrity is a researcher's moral and professional obligation, as it affects public trust in scientific results. Maintaining academic integrity is essential for the development of a scientific environment that is conducive to intellectual honesty and transparency in scientific research. Furthermore, the culture of academic integrity encourages high standards of ethics and professional behavior among scientists. Consequently, the quality and credibility of research results are contingent upon the research process being conducted in an honest and ethical manner, free from practices that are deemed unacceptable within the scientific community and that compromise academic integrity. In this regard, all the efforts of the scientific community should be aimed at preventing academic dishonesty, hindering and stopping it by creating a responsible and honest scientific environment.

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