



## Unethical Admissions: Academic Integrity in Question

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**Abstract** The increasing unethical practices of graduates' admissions have heightened concerns about the integrity of the academy. This article informs this important subject that affects the students, admission systems, and the entire scientific community, thus, representing an approach against scholarly black market activities including falsified documents and unethical practices by consultants and students' recruitment agencies.

**Keywords** Admissions · Integrity · Consultants · Scientific community · Students' recruitment agency

### Letter to the Editor

Academic integrity is the key not only for progress within the university but also for upholding the trust granted by the community. Unethical admission practices have become an increasing concern for the academy, students, and guardians, alike. These practices comprise of fraudulent documents, unethical behavior of admission consultants or students recruitment agencies. The rise in these unethical activities

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can be attributed to the over-reliance on academic certification in most countries and institutions.

Fraud is when an individual deceives or conspires with others to deceive, another individual or group of individuals into believing that a falsified case made by that individual or group is genuine. Admission Fraud (AF) involves false information provided on an application with respect to experience and qualifications, fake certificates or references in the application process, deliberate omission or non-inclusion of relevant information or criminal convictions, or other acts of deception.

Quite an interesting yet a serious trend is the activities of recruitment consultants and agencies. These consultants and agencies have turned their operations into merchandise. Their only intention is to exploit the system and make money. Their profit originates essentially from specific registration charges, admission requirements classes, consultation fees, visa acquisition charges for overseas admissions, and other educational programs that commit students or guardians to some financial transaction. However, these programs do not necessarily guarantee visa acquisition or an admission into a university. In most cases, failure to meet these financial obligations explicitly means denial to ones' dream school. This is a phenomenon of the scholarly black market reported by Sorooshian (2016b), where individuals seeking to base their dreams in certain institutions, specific courses, and specific countries are cheated.

Similarly, unethical help from professors, members of an admission committee also present a bias in the admission process. This seems grossly unfair for somebody to 'game the admission system' to get personal favorites through coaching, to gain an advantage over others.

Another scenario worth mentioning is when students deceive or conspire to deceive in the application process by using fraudulent documents. Students may also cheat or conspire with officers in entrance examinations. Eventually, these fake students would finesse their way through university education; borrowing papers from others to prepare their class reports, paying for reports writing or even plagiarizing the work of others (Sorooshian 2016a). This undermines the integrity of the universities and puts the entire scientific community in a very tenuous position. These misconducts affect their qualifications and comportment in their future professional careers (Dömeová and Jindrová 2013). Moreover, industries and economies could be adversely affected by fake graduates (Sorooshian 2016a).

Warning the scholarly world of this trend and considering long term feasible measures to control the activities of students, consultants and students recruitment agencies could be the most effective way to secure trust and integrity in the admission systems and the reliability of future graduates. The independence and the reputation of universities rest in the hands of the individuals who are scrupulous in their quest for honesty.

#### **Compliance with Ethical Standards**

**Conflict of interest** None.

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