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A MODEL FOR PROMOTING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY IN THAI UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

Academic integrity has become increasingly critical in higher education, particularly as new digital technologies—including artificial intelligence—create expanded opportunities for misconduct. This study aims to develop an evidence-based, culturally grounded model to promote academic integrity in Thai universities. Using a qualitative design, data were collected from 274 key informants across 12 universities, including students, faculty, administrators, and international experts. Focus groups and semi-structured interviews were analyzed using content analysis. Findings reveal that Thai universities face three major challenges: cultural norms that normalize minor forms of cheating, inconsistent institutional policies and sanctions, and fragmented national quality assurance systems. Based on these findings, the study proposes a seven-component model that includes leadership and governance, faculty engagement, staff participation, student responsibility, education and communication, policies and procedures, and research and evaluation. The model aligns with international frameworks while addressing Thailand's unique sociocultural context. Implications are provided for national policymakers, university leaders, and quality assurance agencies seeking to strengthen academic integrity ecosystems.

Keywords: academic integrity, higher education, Thailand, policy development, misconduct, qualitative research

INTRODUCTION

Academic integrity has become a focus of debate among educators in recent years due to the increased opportunities for cheating and the adoption of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI) (Sozon et al., 2024; Evangelista, 2024). Pavela (1978) defined academic dishonesty as cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitation of academic dishonesty. Studies have found that factors that lead students to engage in academic dishonesty fall into three categories: the student's personal characteristics, the situation, and the student's reasons for cheating (Kibler, 1993). Specifically, among the many reasons given for academic dishonesty, grade concerns were the most frequently cited (Aluede et al., 2006). Students often lack a clear understanding of academic dishonesty. They generally believe that using old test papers is acceptable, as long as they do not steal them or take shortcuts, such as asking others for help. They also believe that minor forms of plagiarism are acceptable. Key findings include: Many students believe that facilitating academic dishonesty is justifiable when the intent is to help a friend (Sipayung et al., 2025). Educational institutions have a responsibility to model and preserve integrity for future generations. Effective scholarship and learning can only be achieved through a foundation of clear academic integrity and commitment. Universities should implement institutional changes and foster an environment that develops student integrity (Parnther, 2020).

Academic integrity has emerged as a central concern in global higher education, driven by rapidly evolving learning environments and increased access to digital tools that facilitate both legitimate learning and academic misconduct (Sozon et al., 2024; Evangelista, 2024). Academic dishonesty encompasses behaviors such as cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonest acts (Pavela, 1978). Students often engage in these behaviors due to personal factors, grade pressures, or misunderstandings of academic expectations (Kibler, 1993; Aluede et al., 2006). Research shows that many students hold permissive attitudes toward certain forms of misconduct, especially when framed as "helping" peers or avoiding conflict (Sipayung et al., 2025).

Universities play a critical role in preserving academic integrity as a foundation for high-quality education, equitable assessment, and ethical research (Parnther, 2020). Strengthening academic integrity is particularly important for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4, which emphasizes inclusive and high-quality education. However, the approaches and institutional challenges differ significantly across countries and cultures.

In Thailand, academic integrity has received increasing attention, yet systemic challenges persist. This study develops a model for promoting academic integrity tailored to the Thai context, integrating global frameworks with insights from cultural, institutional, and policy contexts.

This article presents the results of a study on developing knowledge and tools to support academic integrity, which can be applied appropriately in Thai universities and meet international standards. This will contribute to understanding and approaches to promoting universities' policy development to enhance students' academic integrity. This helps universities build student capacity in line with Sustainable Development Indicator 4, which aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Cullen (2022) emphasized that this shift stemmed from research findings that situational and environmental factors significantly influence student behavior. Therefore, it makes more sense to approach academic dishonesty from a developmental perspective, a decision that influences the shift away from punishment to a process-based study of the process and response to academic dishonesty. Cullen encourages practitioners to consider the value of educational approaches that align with higher education's mission, namely, teaching students from diverse backgrounds. Considering the possibility that current teaching methods are insufficiently inclusive of this diversity, this will have a profound impact on promoting academic integrity in institutions.

Palazzo (2010) demonstrates that, instead of focusing on students, instructors should improve instruction and the learning environment by modifying instruction to create learning-focused environments, tailoring instruction, and implementing solutions. These efforts can significantly reduce academic dishonesty. Key takeaways include adopting positive teaching approaches and employing strategies that enhance learning will create classrooms where academic dishonesty is the exception and establish a norm of increased academic integrity. (Stoesz & Yudintseva, 2018; Djoković et al., 2022)

Gallant (2018) suggests that a new approach to fostering academic integrity in the 21st century requires educational institutions to establish academic integrity practices by encouraging a learning-focused environment—one that prioritizes mastery over academic performance—within the goal of student learning development and the primary goal of instruction. This essentially shifts educators' focus from preventing student cheating to ensuring that students are genuinely learning. The shift can occur by fostering learning-focused environments, improving instruction, strengthening institutional support for instruction, and reducing institutional constraints on teaching and learning, thereby creating an environment where cheating is the exception and academic integrity is the norm (Eaton, 2022; Zhao & Sbaffi, 2022).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research design to develop a prototype tool to strengthen academic integrity in Thai higher education institutions. The research involved 12 participating universities across Thailand, selected to ensure variation in institutional type, size, and regional representation. The target population comprised individuals with direct experience or responsibilities related to academic integrity, including student representatives, faculty members, university administrators, and international experts.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select key informants who could provide rich, relevant, and diverse insights into academic integrity practices. The participants were categorized into three main groups: university administrators and staff, student leaders, and international experts specializing in academic integrity, higher education governance, or quality assurance.

In total, 274 key informants participated in the study. This sample size was considered adequate to capture a wide range of perspectives and ensure the robustness of the findings.

Data collection was conducted through focus group discussions (FGDs) and semi-structured interviews. Each of the 12 universities hosted 1 FGD, resulting in 12 focus groups involving student leaders, faculty, and administrators. To complement institutional perspectives, additional individual interviews were conducted with international experts to obtain external and comparative insights.

All focus group sessions and interviews were conducted face-to-face. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained prior to data collection. With participants' permission, all sessions were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the qualitative data.

Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. The process involved three key stages:

1. Initial coding: Transcripts were reviewed line-by-line to generate preliminary codes that reflected key ideas, patterns, and recurring issues.

2. Categorization: Codes were clustered into broader thematic categories based on similarity, relationships, and conceptual relevance.

3. Synthesis and model building: Themes derived from each university were compared, integrated, and synthesized across datasets to construct a comprehensive conceptual model for promoting academic integrity in Thai higher education.

To enhance trustworthiness, the study employed triangulation across participant groups and data sources. Researcher reflexivity and peer debriefing were also used to strengthen analytical rigor.

4. RESULTS

1. Overview of Current Challenges Regarding Academic Integrity in Thai Universities
1.1 Cultural Attitudes and Perceptions

Generally, cheating and plagiarism in the Thai education system are not always perceived as severe as in Western academic cultures. Anthropological and educational studies suggest that certain Thai cultural concepts shape perceptions of academic misconduct. For example, the idea of respect (not wanting to cause trouble or inconvenience) may discourage students, faculty, or staff from reporting cases of academic dishonesty. The concept of gratitude may encourage students to help their peers, even when those peers are dishonest. David Young's (2013) study, "Perspectives on Cheating at a Thai University," found that most students and faculty do not consider academic dishonesty a serious offense. He discussed cultural factors, such as fun and a carefree, nonchalant attitude, which may lead to a more flexible view of academic dishonesty. While these cultural traits are not inherently unethical, their misuse can justify dishonest behavior. For example, copying a friend's homework may be perceived as helping or maintaining unity rather than violating academic integrity.

Furthermore, hierarchical norms, such as respect for seniors or superiors, may be perceived as supporting or maintaining unity. This can make students hesitant to challenge or question unethical orders, and may make younger faculty hesitant to report the misconduct of their senior colleagues (Lim & See, 2001). The overall effect of these cultural dimensions is that academic misconduct is more tolerated than it should be (Nagi & John, 2021). As mentioned earlier, even some former university administrators have publicly acknowledged academic dishonesty, dismissing it as "minor" or commonplace. Although attitudes are slowly changing, particularly as Thailand's institutions become more integrated into international standards, overcoming long-standing ambivalence toward academic dishonesty remains a significant challenge.

1.2 Inconsistent or Insufficiently Clear Policies

A key challenge highlighted by this study is the inconsistency of academic policies across Thai higher education institutions. While most universities have some regulations regarding cheating and plagiarism, often in examination codes of conduct, research ethics, or dissertation guidelines, these regulations can be outdated, vague, or inconsistently enforced. Many Thai higher education institutions lack clear and comprehensive policies and frameworks for enforcing academic integrity (Roe, Perkins, Wong, & Chonu, 2024). Even when regulations exist regarding plagiarism management, they vary widely. Some universities have implemented strict rules and consequences, while others have not. This results in ad hoc case handling. For example, one faculty may punish students for plagiarism by failing a course, while another may only issue a warning, even within the same university. This lack of institutional standards leads to a mixed student experience, and some universities may ignore the issue to avoid scandal. Consequently, without consistent policies, systematic data collection is not available. Universities may not track how many cheating cases occur or what punishments are invoked, making it difficult to assess the severity of the problem. Alternatively, to improve operations. Furthermore, there is a lack of external incentives to encourage rigorous implementation, such as quality assurance criteria that do not prioritize academic integrity, but rather focus on systemic inputs such as faculty qualifications or research output.

1.3 Fragmented Responsibility and Quality Assurance

In higher education administration in Thailand, academic integrity has not historically been a key focus of external quality assurance. While numerous criteria exist for institutional assessment, academic integrity is often assessed indirectly (Office of the Higher Education Commission, Thailand, 2020), sometimes through complaints. This means there is little external pressure on university administrators to devote resources to enhancing academic integrity. Therefore, efforts to promote academic integrity often rely on the individual administrator's vision, such as a dedicated dean or occasionally funded projects. These efforts, while valuable, tend to fade if the individual leaves their position or if policy priorities change. The challenge is establishing system-wide accountability, ensuring that all universities meet specific standards for promoting academic integrity, and establishing a body directly responsible for monitoring and overseeing this aspect of educational quality at the ministry or national quality assurance level. The lack of a quality assessment system or national reporting on academic integrity creates a gap, depriving universities of the benefit of knowing how they are performing. To what extent and how are they progressing? This is achieved by comparing existing performance data with various criteria. Such comparisons can stimulate awareness of their own status and guide future improvement and development. Currently, such data is insufficient. What universities know about their efforts to promote academic integrity comes mostly from qualitative studies and surveys conducted within individual universities (Macfarlane, 2018).

In summary, Thai universities face multiple challenges: changing entrenched attitudes to decriminalize corruption; educating students, faculty, and staff on the core principles of academic integrity; establishing and enforcing clear policies; and combating increasingly sophisticated corruption practices. All this, while aligning with international standards and expectations, is crucial. Failure to address these challenges will lead to the questionable quality of degrees from Thai institutions; honest students and researchers facing unfair competition; and a deteriorating learning culture, which could severely impact the nation's human capital development.

Based on the results of the above study, the current challenges in academic integrity in Thai universities can be summarized as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The current challenges in academic integrity in Thai universities

Issues	Output	Outcome	Impact
Cultural Attitudes and Perceptions	Academic dishonesty is not perceived as severely as in Western academic culture	Certain aspects of Thai culture play a role in the acceptance of academic dishonesty	Academic dishonesty is more accepted than it should be
Inconsistent or unclear policies	Outdated, vague, or inconsistently enforced	Difficult to assess the severity of problems or to improve operations	Lack of operational standards
Fragmented Quality Assurance	Academic integrity is not a key focus of external quality assurance	There is little external pressure on university administrators to expend resources to enhance academic integrity.	Awareness of their own status and use of this knowledge to guide operational improvement and development.

2. Creating Change

The study found that, to address the challenges mentioned above, universities need to prioritize fostering a "culture of academic integrity." This will be a proactive condition to prevent future challenges. This study draws on ICAI's (2020) concept, which identifies seven core elements of academic integrity. Each element addresses a different dimension of university operations. These elements must be ensured and embedded in institutional practices, from top leadership policies to daily classroom interactions. The study's findings on approaches to building a culture of academic integrity are categorized by the following core elements:

2.1 Leadership and Administrative Support

This element focuses on the commitment of university leaders —such as the president, board members, and deans — to academic integrity and their support for strengthening it (Atikuzzaman & Yesmin, 2023). Examples include developing a clear and consistent strategic plan and public statement on academic integrity, and allocating adequate resources, such as budget and personnel, to academic integrity programs. There must be a clear governance structure for overseeing academic integrity, such as a specific committee or office reporting directly to senior management. Strong leadership support is the foundation of a sustainable culture of academic integrity. If senior management consistently communicates the importance of academic integrity and supports it through policies, rewards, and other incentives, it can help shape the institution's overall direction. Arguably, academic integrity efforts will fail without the cooperation of senior university leaders (Artyukhov, 2024).

2.2 Faculty Sharing and Support

Faculty play a vital role in maintaining academic integrity. Faculty involvement is crucial in promoting academic integrity (Chirikov et al., 2020). Faculty must integrate academic integrity into their curriculum and teaching, such as teaching students about citations and designing assignments that minimize the likelihood of dishonesty (Guzzardo et al., 2020). Faculty must be able to address instances of student misconduct effectively and fairly. Supporting faculty with tools such as plagiarism-detection software, assignment design guidelines, and recognition of their innovative ideas to promote academic integrity in education must ensure that academic integrity is regularly discussed at faculty meetings (Kier & Ives, 2022).

2.3 Staff **Sharing** and Support

Supporting staff also plays a role in fostering a culture of academic integrity. These personnel must receive ongoing training on academic integrity. To understand their role in preventing or detecting misconduct, university support personnel may promote academic integrity or assist with student disciplinary processes if academic misconduct is detected (Gunton, 2022). Actively involving staff can help create a culture of academic integrity across the university, ensuring everyone —not just faculty and students —is involved (Goff, 2025).

2.4 Student Responsibility and Support

Students are at the heart of academic integrity because they ultimately choose whether to engage in academic integrity (Stone, 2022).Encouraging students to actively participate in maintaining academic integrity and having support

systems in place to help them do so, such as through honor codes or student commitments, encouraging students to participate in university academic integrity organizations, providing academic writing support centers, tutoring services, or mental health counseling, will help students avoid the hopelessness and lack of skills that can lead to cheating arenthetical citation(Campbell & Waddington, 2024)

Another key issue is providing clear channels for students to report misconduct, such as whistleblower protection programs or a hotline directly to the university. Providing students with representation on the university's academic integrity policy committee and encouraging universities to treat students not only as potential offenders but also as partners in building a culture of academic integrity (Cutri et al., 2021).When students take pride in their honest academic community and peer norms change to lessen student disapproval of cheating, this will be crucial for academic integrity to become deeply ingrained in the university's academic culture. Support is also vital. Many students cheat out of panic or poor time management, rather than intentionally. Therefore, universities can organize workshops to enhance academic skills. Including supporting tools to help manage student deadlines, or shifting from a competitive to a compassionate culture may also help reduce corruption. In summary, this component emphasizes enabling universities to operate with a student-centered approach.

2.5 Education and Communication

Communication that raises awareness of academic integrity among all members of the university is essential (Artyukhov, 2024). The university must educate the internal community about academic integrity, its meaning, importance, and how to maintain it (Anohina-Naumeca, Birzniece, & Odiņeca, 2020).This may include organizing an orientation for new students and faculty regarding the Academic Integrity Policy; communicating expectations for academic integrity frequently, such as through posters, email reminders during exams, and organizing Academic Integrity Week; or implementing campaigns and providing resources, such as an Academic Integrity Handbook and online learning resources (Roe, Perkins, Wong, & Chonu, 2024). Furthermore, consideration must be given to whether the message being disseminated is positive, such as promoting academic integrity as a core value and not solely punitive (Tooher & Greene, 2025). This component also includes transparency. Universities provide information on academic integrity performance, for example, by publishing anonymous statistics on misconduct cases and the outcomes of corrective actions, which may signal that policies are being enforced and that potential fraud is being prevented (Curtis et al., 2021). Communication is crucial in Thai universities, where there has historically been little open dialogue about these issues. Many Thai students may learn about the impact of plagiarism only during their final-year projects, which is often too late. Promoting awareness and understanding early on, often to foster a shared understanding among all students, faculty, and staff about the importance of academic integrity and the inherent value of academic integrity throughout the institution. This approach will help reduce unintended violations and foster a culture of academic integrity.

2.6 Policies and Procedures

A key element of university governance is the formal policies and procedures governing academic integrity (Stoesz & Eaton, 2020).These policies must be clear and accessible, with well-documented, easily searchable records. They must clearly define misconduct and its penalties, be fair, and have internal guidelines aligned with external standards, such as national guidelines or professional ethics (Zia et al., 2023; Kier & Ives, 2022). Another challenge in Thailand is the lack of consistent application, a system for tracking and reporting to a central authority, and the establishment of policies. Clear guidelines will deter misconduct because students know how to operate, the likelihood of detection, and the consequences. At the same time, it will strengthen the university's ability to operate effectively as declared in relation to academic integrity. Fundamentally, policies and procedures are the core that support an institution's culture of academic integrity.

Based on the study's findings on approaches to building a culture of academic integrity in universities, the key elements of these operations can be summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Components, Practices, and Indicators of Success in Building Academic Integrity in Thai Universities

Elements	Practice
1. Leadership and Management Support	There is a clear and consistent strategic plan and public statements.
	Adequate and appropriate resources are allocated.
	A practical governance structure is in place.
2. Faculty Accountability and Support	Integrating academic integrity into the curriculum and teaching of all courses
	Ability to handle student misconduct fairly
	Supporting faculty to create and implement innovations
3. Staff participation and support	Continuous academic integrity training
	Participation in decision-making at all stages
4. Student Responsibility and Support	Promote students' roles in the university's academic integrity organization.

	Play a role in the Academic Writing Skills Help Center.
	Partner in building a culture of academic integrity
	Transforming from a culture of empathy to a culture of compassion
5. Education and Communication	Consistently raise awareness about academic integrity
	Disseminate positive content promoting academic integrity
	Create awareness of the impact of transparent implementation
6. Policies and Procedures	Official policies and procedures
	Clearly define misconduct and penalties
	Established internal guidelines for the institution
	A system for tracking and reporting to a central agency

4. Model for promoting academic integrity in Thai universities

Diagram 1: A model for promoting academic integrity in Thai universities
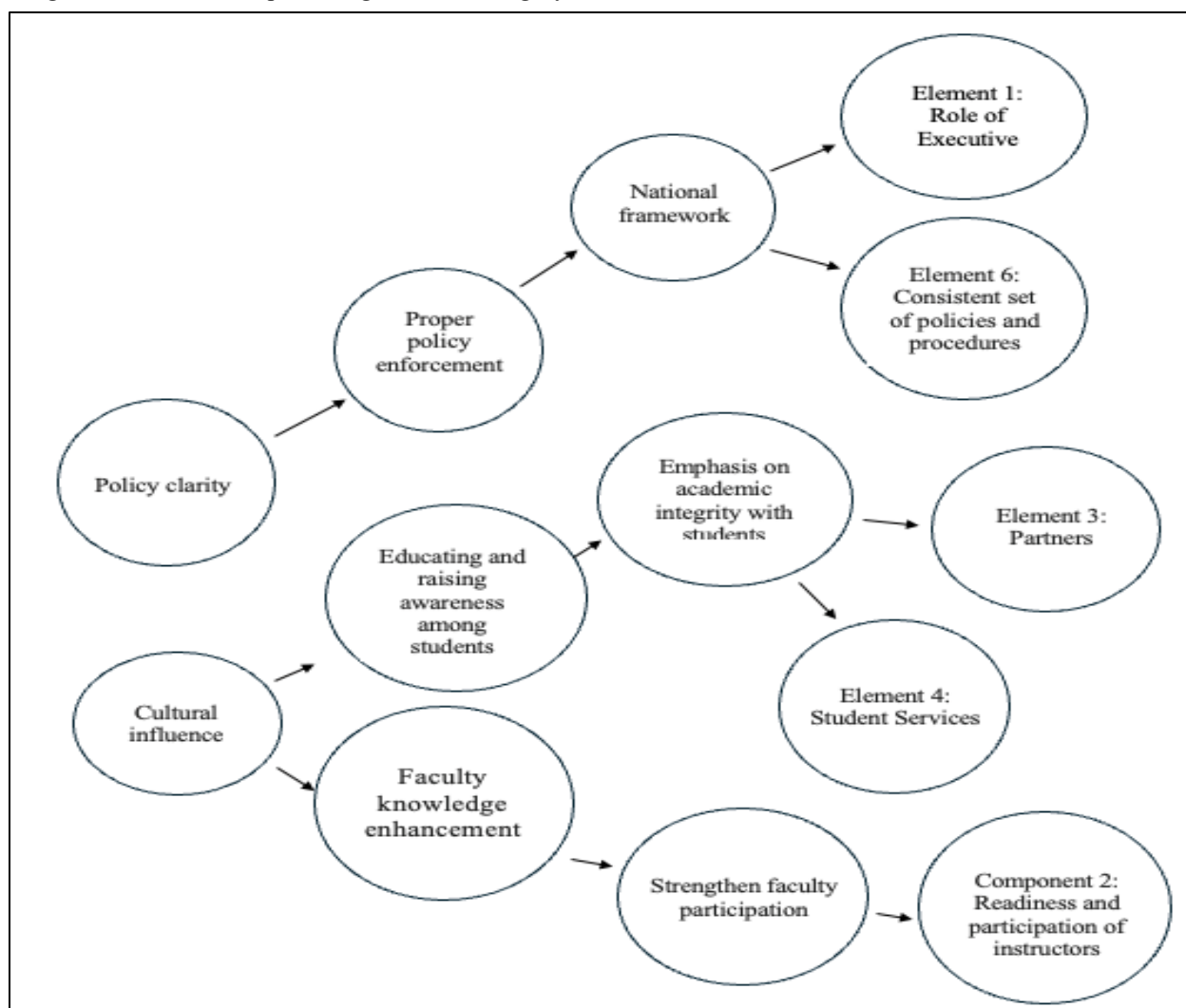
The model demonstrates that promoting academic integrity requires implementation through two key components: the establishment of clear policies at both the national and institutional levels, and the presence of cultural influences on attitudes and perceptions of academic integrity. The model outlines the development, implementation, and application of the components above, demonstrating the interrelationships of all issues categorized by the following components of academic integrity promotion:

Regarding the clarity of institutional and national policies, the model proposes appropriate policy enforcement guidelines by creating a national framework. Successful implementation requires two key components: Component 1, which emphasizes the importance of organizational leadership in fully supporting policy enforcement; and Component

6, which stipulates that policies and procedures must be consistent to ensure clear policy enforcement guidelines and foster understanding among all relevant parties for effective implementation.

Regarding cultural influences on academic integrity, the model proposes two approaches: first, prioritizing student knowledge and awareness, with an emphasis on continuous student education. This will incorporate the sixth element as a mechanism for implementation, namely, empowering students, as stakeholders, to continuously become partners in this area of operations with the university. Furthermore, another approach must be implemented simultaneously: strengthening teachers' capacity, who play a key role in this operation in the classroom. Teacher participation must be promoted by applying the second element, which focuses on encouraging teachers to be ready to participate in operations with the university through various methods.

DISCUSSION

1. Overview of Global and National Alignment

The study confirms that academic integrity is influenced by multiple interacting factors, including institutional processes, cultural norms, teaching and assessment practices, and policy structures. These findings are consistent with global research, which highlights the need for comprehensive institutional strategies rather than approaches that focus solely on student behavior.

International studies (Sozon et al., 2024; Bretag, 2016; Parnther, 2020) report that academic integrity is best supported when institutions adopt integrated strategies combining leadership commitment, effective communication, clear procedures, academic support services, and continuous monitoring. The results of this study show similar requirements within Thai universities, indicating strong alignment with global trends. The development of a model that incorporates leadership, policy clarity, teaching practices, staff roles, student partnerships, and evaluation aligns with recent frameworks suggested by Gallant and Rettinger (2022) and the International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI, 2020).

2. Cultural Factors Affecting Academic Integrity

2.1 Thai Cultural Norms

The study reveals that Thai cultural values significantly influence attitudes toward academic misconduct. Cultural characteristics such as collectivism, and hierarchical respect contribute to a reluctance to report wrongdoing and a perception that certain dishonest acts are acceptable if they maintain social harmony.

These findings correspond with earlier research in Thailand, which found that students often view academic misconduct as minor or socially justified (Young, 2013; Nagi & John, 2021). Students may perceive providing unauthorized assistance as helping friends, and staff may hesitate to confront misconduct due to institutional or hierarchical pressures.

2.2 Regional Comparisons

Similar patterns are observed across ASEAN countries. Research from Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Hong Kong indicates that cultural expectations around authority, loyalty, and conflict avoidance can reduce the likelihood of reporting misconduct and weaken policy enforcement (Ismail et al., 2018; Tian, 2020; ASEAN QA Network, 2020). Compared to these contexts, Thailand demonstrates a particularly strong tolerance for minor dishonest behavior, demonstrating the need for culturally informed institutional strategies.

3. Issues Related to Policies and Institutional Governance

3.1 Policy Inconsistency

The study found significant variation in academic integrity policies, definitions, and sanctions across Thai universities. Even within the same institution, some faculties enforce strict penalties while others apply lenient or no consequences. This inconsistency creates confusion, reduces accountability, and undermines the credibility of academic processes.

This issue is not unique to Thailand. International research from the UK, UAE, and Australia reports similar inconsistencies, even in well-established systems (Morris, 2020; Abu Jadayil, 2021; Bretag, 2016). However, Thailand's lack of national coordination intensifies the problem.

3.2 Lack of Integration With Quality Assurance

Thailand's quality assurance (QA) frameworks currently do not include academic integrity as a core indicator. As a result, universities have limited external motivation to develop or monitor integrity systems. This gap is consistent with findings from regional QA studies showing that ASEAN higher education systems often lack mechanisms linking integrity to accountability (ASEAN QA Network, 2020).

The study's results indicate that national-level policy frameworks and monitoring tools are needed to improve consistency and ensure that academic integrity becomes a standard measure of institutional performance.

4. Roles of Faculty, Staff, and Students in Integrity Promotion

4.1 Faculty Responsibilities

Faculty members are central to promoting academic integrity. The study found that Thai faculty require support in assessment design, instruction on academic writing, and management of integrity cases. International research identifies faculty engagement as a key determinant of institutional integrity (Gallant, 2018; Palazzo, 2010). Without

training and standardized procedures, faculty may choose not to address misconduct or may apply inconsistent sanctions, contributing to unclear expectations for students.

4.2 Staff Roles

Administrative and academic support staff play important roles in prevention, detection, and case management. Findings show that Thai universities underutilize staff in these areas. This aligns with research noting the need to include librarians, advisors, and examination staff in integrity processes to ensure system-wide implementation (Sutherland-Smith, 2019).

4.3 Student Engagement

The study found limited opportunities for Thai students to participate in institutional integrity initiatives. This corresponds with Southeast Asian studies showing that students often lack awareness of academic integrity policies and may misunderstand plagiarism or acceptable academic practices (Macfarlane, 2018; Ismail et al., 2018). Student involvement in integrity education, reporting systems, and policy development is essential.

5. Educational and Communication Strategies

The analysis highlights the importance of universities implementing continuous educational interventions to improve academic literacies. Research shows that programs such as integrity tutorials, plagiarism workshops, and structured orientation activities effectively reduce unintentional misconduct (Stoesz & Yudintseva, 2018; Djoković et al., 2022). The findings indicate that Thai universities often provide integrity instruction late in students' academic careers, leaving gaps in early-stage understanding.

This study supports the need for clear, consistent communication across multiple channels, including faculty briefings, student orientation, learning materials, and digital platforms. Effective communication is a characteristic of institutions with strong integrity cultures internationally.

SUGGESTION AND CONCLUSION

This study provides one of the most comprehensive examinations to date of the state of academic integrity in Thai higher education, revealing a complex interplay of cultural, structural, technological, and policy-driven factors that collectively shape ethical behavior and institutional practices. By drawing on empirical evidence from 12 universities across Thailand—representing diverse institutional types, geographic regions, program offerings, and governance structures—this research demonstrates that academic integrity in the Thai context cannot be understood solely as an issue of individual student conduct. Rather, it must be approached as a systemic phenomenon shaped by interconnected institutional, cultural, pedagogical, and digital conditions.

A major finding of this study is that structural fragmentation and policy inconsistency remain persistent barriers to effective integrity management. Many universities maintain outdated policies that do not reflect contemporary challenges, particularly the rapid emergence of generative artificial intelligence tools capable of producing sophisticated academic content. Policy implementation also varies greatly across faculties, resulting in unequal enforcement, unclear expectations, and limited transparency regarding processes for reporting, investigation, and appeal. These inconsistencies undermine institutional credibility and complicate efforts to cultivate a culture of integrity.

Cultural dynamics further influence integrity practices in unique ways. Thai cultural norms—such as hierarchical relationships, collectivism, and sensitivity to social harmony—affect how students and faculty interpret ethical responsibilities. These norms can lead to reluctance in reporting peers, limited faculty willingness to confront misconduct, and challenges in differentiating between collaboration and collusion. The influence of culture underscores the need for academic integrity models that are not imported wholesale from Western systems but instead integrated with local sociocultural realities that shape decision-making and interpersonal communication within Thai universities.

Pedagogical and assessment-related issues also emerged as significant determinants of integrity. Many assessments remain traditional, text-based, and vulnerable to plagiarism, contract cheating, and AI-enabled misconduct. Faculty often lack sufficient preparation in designing authentic, process-based, or AI-resilient assessments. Furthermore, students exhibit widespread deficits in academic writing, referencing, source synthesis, and critical thinking—skills that are essential for maintaining integrity. These literacy gaps disproportionately affect first-generation students, those studying in English as an additional language, and those entering university with uneven academic preparation.

Digital infrastructure and technological readiness represent another challenge. Universities vary widely in their access to secure learning management systems, plagiarism detection tools, exam proctoring technologies, and analytics. With the rapid acceleration of AI tools capable of generating essays, coding solutions, problem sets, and even citations, Thai universities must invest in digital systems that support both prevention and detection while balancing privacy, ethics, and human-cantered decision-making.

To address these intertwined challenges, this study developed a comprehensive Academic Integrity Development Model aligned with international principles—such as the ICAI Fundamental Values, TEQSA guidelines, QAA

recommendations, OECD AI standards, and UNESCO ethics frameworks—while remaining grounded in the cultural and structural realities of the Thai higher education system.

This model is not intended as a static framework but as a dynamic, iterative system that universities can adapt according to their resources, institutional culture, and readiness level. It recognizes that integrity is not an endpoint but an evolving ecosystem requiring continuous improvement, stakeholder dialogue, and responsiveness to technological change.

Importantly, this study demonstrates that academic integrity must be understood as a collective institutional responsibility supported by strong leadership, cross-unit collaboration, and supportive infrastructure. The model's emphasis on multi-level governance—combining top-down leadership with bottom-up participation—positions universities to create sustainable integrity cultures that extend beyond isolated interventions.

The findings also carry significant implications for national policy. Thailand currently lacks a unified national integrity framework comparable to those in Australia, the UK, or Canada. The development of a national Academic Integrity Framework, integrated with AI governance guidelines, accreditation standards, and professional ethics requirements, would provide consistent expectations and support capacity-building across all institutions. Such a framework could also facilitate benchmarking, transparency, and regional collaboration within ASEAN.

summary, the study contributes a holistic understanding of academic integrity in Thailand and a roadmap for systemic reform. The seven-component model proposed here offers a foundational structure for strengthening academic quality, promoting ethical conduct, and preparing Thai universities to navigate the transformative impact of artificial intelligence. By adopting the model and aligning institutional practices with global standards and local realities, Thai universities can cultivate an enduring culture of integrity that enhances student learning, supports national competitiveness, and reinforces trust in higher education.

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