

Globalizing Academic Dishonesty: Western Media Frames of Contract Cheating by Kenyan Graduates (Got Posho?)

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Abstract

The current meaning of globalization within higher education has gone beyond Global North institutions setting up campuses in the Global South or elsewhere, partnerships and / or expanding distance learning through open access or providing spaces for exchange programs for students and faculty. New opportunities exist due to access to the internet; digitization, online learning, and digitalization and payment platforms. It is in this space that the practice of contract cheating occurs. Academic dishonesty is an age-old part of the academy, with different strategies put in place to curb it; with both students and faculty having been found on the wrong side of the integrity line, when it comes to examinable work. As communication studies scholars and faculty members, this issue presented an opportunity to investigate this emerging space and how the 'academic writer' is framed through media narratives. Media framing theory provided the theoretical lens for the study. Using content analysis, the researchers assess the language in two highly mediatized stories from the Global North. The findings show a negative bias against Kenyan contract writers and reaffirms a power dynamic in higher education as part of a labour industry.

Keywords: *academic writing, cheating, contract labor, employability, internationalization of higher education, media framing*

Introduction

As part of academic dishonesty (AD), plagiarism in academia has been well-documented. In separate stories, in South Africa, Ghana, and Kenya, reasons as to why university students cheated ranged from pressures of deadlines and from parents and peers, prior cheating in lower levels, lack of research and writing skills, confusion as to how to cite, and the desire to excel in life (Finchilescu and Cooper, 2018; Roberts, 2008, p. 2; Saana et al., 2016; Wamuyu et al., 2012). Similar reasons were cited by students in the Global North as to why they also cheated (McCabe et al., 2006). Beyond the reasons as to why students cheat, these same studies give insights into the mechanisms and methods used to cheat. Just as the methods used in the past kept evolving, cheating still persists, within new forms, aided by technology and online payment platforms. As higher education became increasingly globalized, digitized, and commodified, it seems that opportunities for newer forms of plagiarism have also materialized. It is within this space of technological growth, mixed with the push-and-pull of talent, skills, and labor between the Global North and Global South that two stories of Kenyans completing assignments for students in Britain and the United States of America erupted, referred to as “contract cheating.”

The impetus for this study is a combination of academic writing teaching experiences of all the authors and the emergence of the two news stories from the West about Kenyan graduates. This paper, in line with the conference theme, provides the authors a chance to look at the issue of academic dishonesty outside the scope of the classroom, but in the realm for which the students’ time at the university, and their engagement with their lecturers, was preparing them. That is, these stories, and by extension this article, allows academics, industries, stakeholders (students, graduates, parents, and sponsors), and policymakers to review the role of education in society. The aim of this study is for us, as communication lecturers and scholars, to investigate how contract cheating has been framed in the news media and to address if indeed, as the narratives state, the end justifies the means.

Key to this article is the framing of the title itself. The authors include the question ‘Got Posho?’ taking a spin on the decades-old US milk consumption campaign, “got milk?” The question, “got posho?” is intended to highlight the socio-economic complexity around contract cheating. Denotatively, in Kiswahili (spoken in the East African region in several countries), “posho” means “allowance,” for example, “posho ya familia” means “family allowance,” or “posho ya mileage” means “mileage allowance.” In the region, connotatively, a “posho mill” is a communal mill where individuals take whole grains for grinding to make porridge or cornmeal. Thus the intended play on the words ‘posho’ and ‘mill’ (a commercial building where maize-meal is ground or processed into flour) to refer to the contact cheating (mill) dynamic.

Lastly, below, in Figure 1: Research, is an advertisement next to a pizza advert. The image, taken by one of the researchers in 2021, depicts a road-side advert along a major highway, Ngong Road, in Nairobi. The sign is intended to inform those ‘seeking help’ in the listed activities (proposals, data analysis, business plans, and CV writing). All these services are under the wider heading of ‘research.’ The phone number has been covered intentionally by the authors.



Figure 1: Research.

Statement of the Problem

Members of postmodern society rely on the media for information about social life. Global media practice assumes that society has a right to know about the many different facets of social interaction and that the information would be truthful, based on reliable sources, and objective. However, the media’s dual roles in telling ‘the story’ based on news values (such as prominence, timeliness, proximity, and oddity) while also producing the news as entertainment ends up presenting a biased narrative about issues (Altheide, 1997). The research problem addressed in this article is the biased, metaphorical expression of contract cheating as a disease, without providing solutions. Contract cheating in the two highly globalized stories is presented as a type of plagiarism, based on fear via the disease metaphor (Adler-Kassner, Anson, & Howard, 2008; Altheide, 1997) and based on labor (Bound et al, 2021; Forattini, 2021), even though other frames exist. For example, research shows that key issues around contract cheating are legal, linked to the time and costs of going after the student and the websites that facilitate the relationship (Hill et al., 2021; Morris, 2018).

Literature Review

Media Framing

As an extension of agenda setting theory, ‘media framing’ or ‘news framing’ is about how the media’s attention on certain events structures how the public views that event (Carnahan, Hao & yan, 2021; Schuefele, 1999; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Particularly, “a frame emphasizes the salience of different aspects of a topic, and agenda-setting theory deals with the salience of issues” (DeVreese, 2005, p. 53). Carnahan et al. (2021), explain frames as communicative acts, that present a certain interpretation of the world that can change the ways in which people

understand, define, and evaluate issues and events thus emphasizing the media effects on audiences. This reinforces the assumption that the way the audience reacts to texts is directly linked to the way the media presents those texts (DeVreese, 2005; Hallahan, 2008; Iyengar, 1999).

A frame is “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them. The frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue”...” frames imply what, if anything, should be done” (Berinsky & Kinder, 2006, p. 642; DeVreese, 2005). Frames also may be inter-connected, with political and social under-pinnings, for example, “When conceiving of... oil drilling, citizens may be presented with frames such as economic costs of gas prices, unemployment, environment, US dependency on foreign energy sources” (DeVreese, 2005, p. 53). Thus, demonstrating what to pay attention to.

During the process of news creation, gatekeepers of information select the very basis for which the news is packaged and disseminated. In this article, the authors adopt DeVreese’s (2005, p. 51) definition of the framing process: “...that includes production, content, and media use perspectives.” Furthermore, *frame-building* is the interaction between journalist and journalism factors that influence structural qualities of news frames and how they are intertwined with the relationship between the news organization and elites, and external factors such as social movements (DeVreese, 2005, p. 52). Although news stories appear to be objective, following narrative conventions, it is still a schemata that structures the ‘window’ or perspective through which the audience gets to know about the world (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). *Frame-setting*, addresses audience learning, interpretation, and evaluation of issues and events (DeVreese, 2005, p. 52). Frames are thus boundaries that can keep information in or out that could present information as episodic or thematic, or the way the issue is discussed (Altheide, 1997).

Thus, news stories and their accompanying images are typically framed around conflict, human interest, consequence morality, and responsibility. Altheide (1997, p. 647) explains how the electronic news media “geared to entertainment, voyeurism, and the ‘quick fix’ rather than ...understanding and social change...” package issues or fear. The problem frames presented in headlines in 1985, 1992, and 1994, within two words versus ten words, were AIDS, cancer, crime, drugs, environment, and violence (Altheide, 1997, p. 662). Among the findings are how topics of fear changed over time; AIDs was a major topic of headlines within ten words (17 times) in 1985, but not over the next two years, even though the stories themselves increased. Also, the topics of crime (42 times) and violence (25 times) increased in 1994 in the headlines, while AIDS was mentioned 6 times. Altheid (1997, p. 653) further states that the problem frame is a secular alternative to the morality play. It’s characteristics include: Narrative Structure, Universal moral meanings, Specific time and place, Unambiguous, Focus is on disorder, and

Culturally resonant.” Altheide (1997, p. 651), further demonstrates that certain news formats have now become associated with “packages or frames...and accepted by the audience as ‘news’”; for example, investigative journalism and other show formats like a sitcom or talkshow.

Lastly, problem frames, due to their manufactured nature, are not able to transform society as initially intended. Altheide (1997, p. 655) notes that the “driving force of the news coverage, however, can actually distort understanding of the issues, leading politicians, funding agencies, academic disciplines, and even agency personnel who actually deal with the alleged problem to make adjustments that are counter-productive...” According to Chong and Druckman (2007), the strength and repetition of the frame, competitive environment, and individual motivations affect the strength of a frame. It is in line with this that our paper focuses on the frames that are presented in the news stories on contract cheating.

Internationalization of higher education

International (students and staff) in the Global North provide high-skill labor for higher education institutions (HEIs) and industries that rely on research outputs from HEIs. Globalization in higher education typically refers to recruitment and management of international students, expansions of programs via campuses in other countries, availing online programs and exchange programs for staff and students who would like a more diverse career and education experience, and global rankings and reputations of the university (Collins & Park, 2016; Healey, 2008). In the US, international labor in higher education includes funding of programs based on ‘out-of-state fees’ payments (Bound, Braga, Khanna, and Turner, 2021). Present threats to internationalization of higher education point to those related to the pandemic, political issues between the US and China, the growth of quality programs in other parts of the world, low numbers impacting US college-town economies, thus dorm room revenues, projected to cost the sector “... \$1.15 billion in revenue over the next 10 years” (Bound et al, 2021, p. 181-182). Furthermore, internationalization of higher education is often explained using the mass-production metaphor or the business model, linked to lower academic performance. In this model, competition (among institutions and students), service-provision (value-for-money demands by students, and seeing learners are ‘consumers’), and commodification (of education itself) affects the attitude of learners towards individual labor, knowledge and intellectual attainment, and critical thinking in the academy (Hill, Mason, & Dunn, 2021).

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty has been a major concern for institutions of higher learning all over the world. A wide range of acts are considered to fall under AD, including cheating during exams and tests, plagiarism, buying assignment papers, falsifying data, using dishonest excuses, having other people take your exams, misusing resources, and manipulating academic staff (Park, 2003). Baran and Johanson (2020) refer to it as behaviors aimed at giving or receiving information from others, using unauthorized materials, and circumventing the sanctioned assessment process in an

academic context. Although much of the literature focuses on the student's role in AD, the issue has also been placed within the narrative of workplace interpersonal conflicts where a form of workplace bullying or 'mobbing' is effected (Robillard & Presley, 2013). Academic mobbing is a protracted situation in manufacturing scandals, whereby some faculty members demand that a colleague resigns or is fired, has their tenure withdrawn, and in some cases triggering health issues, and even death (Robillard, & Presley, 2013, p. 234). Thus beginning to show part of the problem; a lack of one clear definition of what AD actually means.

Plagiarism research at the undergraduate level shows a focus on policy, honor codes, classroom dynamics, and even accusations to faculty (Robillard & Presley, 2013; Wamuyu, Kwaka-Sumba, & Bitrus-Ojiambo, 2012). Reasons why students cheat include deadlines, pressure from parents and peers, prior cheating in lower levels, lack of research and writing skills, confusion as to how to cite, and desire to excel in life (Finchilescu and Cooper, 2018; Roberts, 2008, p. 2; Saana Ablordeppey, Mensah, & Karikari, 2016; Wamuyu, et. al., 2012). Thus, indicating that academics the world over are dealing with different magnitudes and perceptions of the problem; including the problem of the loose definition of plagiarism, which includes "unauthorized collaboration" (Bertram-Gallant, 2008, p. 29). To illustrate this, in Sweden, Trost (2009) notes that it is prevalent in all disciplines at the university level in the form of lying, cheating and plagiarism; while in Singapore, Lim and See (2011) found students' attitudes toward cheating varied based on whether it was an exam (deemed serious) or plagiarism (seen as less serious).

However, there is a difference between allegations and accusations, as the rhetoric of criminality is then invoked in the discourse on the topic. Plagiarism, framed as theft, is due to issues of ownership and breach of a social norm of attribution (Robillard & Presley, 2013, p. 249). This is based on the history of authorship and publishers 'over the copyright of written work' (Robillard & Presley, 2013, p. 245-246). An accusation of plagiarism is an accusation, then, that:

1) the person claiming to be an original writer is not; 2) this person has violated established social norms designed to benefit writer and society more generally; 3) this person does not respect the values we as a society have determined to be good and true; 4) this person is a thief. The person accused of plagiarism therefore deserves our anger and disrespect.... This line of reasoning posits the *accuser* as the protector of a community's values and social norms. (Robillard & Presley, 2013, p. 249)

Forattini (2021) also highlights the theories of corruption that typically frame the discourse around AD. The anthropological view of corruption explains that those who cheat do so to feel part of society, as means of social exchange, as per a political-economic framework of society. Due to poverty and the state of unemployment in Kenya, many educated Kenyans are turning to online term paper writing to pay their bills. This is often a case of a 'willing seller, willing buyer' for students abroad who do not have time for their term papers but have money which Kenyan graduates do not have.

Paper Mills

Contract cheating is a term that is now well-established in the literature that refers to a student recruiting or outsourcing a third party to do their assignments and tests (Lancaster & Clarke, 2016; Roberts, 2008). It is rapidly increasing and has proved to be a major threat to academic standards and quality. The so-called “essay mill” gives contract cheating a commercial angle; some of the sites are titled, “Schoolsucks.com, Coursework.info, Cheathouse.com, and Essayschool.com” (Roberts, 2008, p. 4). Prior to being referred to as contract cheating, the activity was known as ghost-writing (Hill et. al., 2021). In contract cheating, a third party makes notable contributions to the student’s work raising reasonable doubt as to whom the assignment belongs. Although not always the case, money is paid by the student in return for some form of assignment, thus, “contract” in contract cheating (Clarke & Lancaster, 2013). One of the reasons making contract cheating so attractive to students, and especially when they are under pressure of meeting deadlines, is that contract cheating providers are persuasive, while another reason is that writers have a fast turnaround (Draper & Newton, 2017).

Methodology

In this qualitative study, the researchers assess news frames as antecedents of audience interpretation (DeVreese, 2005, p. 52). The researchers use the deductive approach to identify the framing criteria or codes (Altheide, 1997, p. 651; Bingham & Witkowsky 2022). Research that seeks answers using the deductive approach asks, “what (which components) in a news story constitutes a frame?” The researchers used the issue-specific news frame (DeVreese, 2005, p. 55) on the CBS story; while the other stories used the generic or thematic news frame. The researchers purposefully picked four case stories online to compare with the CBS story. These are both local and international.

The framing criteria used to assess the news stories are based on Altheide’s (1997, p. 651) characteristics; which incorporate both the textual and visual elements, beyond just “core news facts” (DeVreese, 2005. p. 54). The framing criteria are:

1. Narrative Structure: That is, the story-like coherence (with a beginning, middle, and end).
2. Universal moral meanings: here the story is presented with a moral ending; lives are exposed with details and facts that ‘take the audience’ to the location.
3. Specific time and place: Similar to number 2, a temporal-spatial relationship (here or "close by" and "now") makes the story more reliable to the audience.
4. Unambiguous: stories are presented in number 1, with a structure. However, complex social issues are presented pragmatically, with solutions. Ambiguity is not entertaining so the familiar structure and moral meanings help to present this frame.
5. Focus on disorder: stories showing problems in a frame “teaches” the audience the structure and moral meaning of a story.

6. Cultural resonance: here, the story's frame and one's cultural background, social class aid in the acceptability of the story. It also is based on macro-factors such as mass production, industry trends, and owners of media.

The stories were renamed for the purpose of the analysis. Brief synopsis of each story precedes the analysis.

Summary of the Stories

Story 1, CBS, Kenyans paid, YT video

The "Kenyans paid" video clip shows a news anchor in the CBS newsroom in America introducing the story, Debora Patta the Africa correspondent then takes the audience through the rest of the feature, interviewing two Kenyans, one male, one female, about their experiences in contract cheating. This story is interspersed with scenes within the slums and at cafes or rooms where the 'writers' work. The story also claims that Willim and Joan, not their real names, although they show their faces. A US college professor is interviewed, likening the issue to awarding degrees to a doctor who does not have the skill or knowledge to perform on the job. The story ends with the newsroom again, with a brief debrief by three news anchors on the state of higher education today and how contract cheating exists in that space.

Story 2: BBC, "Kenyans are helping"

This audio clip is an interview by Rensa Kansara, produced by Michael Kaloki in *BBC trending*, on April 4, 2021. Rensa speaks to Kennedy, who used to work as a teacher who reveals that what he does is actually academic writing and not cheating. In a month he takes up to 200 exams or theses. Resna says that thousands of Kenyans "help foreign students" fake their academics. They make money by regurgitating knowledge for "lazy foreigners," many based in the U.S. and Eastern Europe. She cites the reason being that Kenya is an English-speaking country with a good education system which churns out graduates whose aspirations are never met by the available opportunities. She refers to a story where *BBC trending* exposed youtubers who were paid to promote the cheating sites and it led to thousands of videos being banned, but that did not solve the problem. Universities came up with stricter measures.; however, with the pandemic, more reports have been made that students isolated at home have been more tempted to pay for assignments.

Story 3: DailyMail, Inside African essay factories

The business side of contract cheating is highlighted, with the statement that one hundred and fifteen thousand assignments are completed for cheating UK students each year. The newspaper is a tabloid and uses that frame to tell the story; using images, showing the owner and some writers, adverts for writers, and even a local university where writing is done inside (the image of the main gate is shown). In this story, the owners of the business state how they are using other applications since PayPal is no longer allowing the use of its platform to transfer monies made through contract essay writing.

Story 4: Kenyans.co.ke "Hotbed of Cheating"

This story is based on the Daily Mail piece. Here, the reader learns that the Kenyan student writes Phd dissertations for UK students and gets paid between Kshs 264,00 and 792,000 or UK£ 1,300-4,4000. A renowned professor is interviewed, Lancaster, who explains the Kenyan context, painting it as having "high unemployment and a job working from home is coveted. They have good English and low overheads." The short story explains how thousands of

Kenyan students write for European and US-based students and are paid a specific rate per page. Lastly is the call by UK proponents who wish to ban advertising for these services along with the websites.

Story 5: Citizen Digital “Students Paying Kenyans”

The media story presents the Kenyans as earning a living from ghostwriting; it is seen as an opportunity for students and other jobless graduates to make a living. The testimonials given by the ghostwriters shows that they earn Kshs 50,000 minimum for what they produce and that when it is masters and Phd work, they are able to make enough money in an environment where there are no jobs. At the end of the story, are two points, first that no laws are in place to address this practice, and second, that the “global market for academic writing is estimated to be worth \$1 billion (Shs 100 billion annually.”

Analysis

Analysis of Story 1: The clip has a narrative structure to it, with an opening shot in the studio, the middle in Kenya with interviews of William and Joan, and a closing, based on closing remarks by William and Joan and then return to the studio. Here, the universal morality is that real ‘writers’ are interviewed, and they give their ‘testimonials.’ Although the story does not show a repeated scenario, other than both young people are engaged in the act. In the opening statement, the reporter Patta, frames the issue based on disorder: that young graduates here (Nairobi), have “Dreams of escaping life’s grinding hardships often go up in smoke here; education is seen as the only way out and many Kenyans go hungry in order to pay for it. But even with a good degree it is hard to find work.” The story opens with the frame of ‘poverty’ and ‘lack of jobs.’ Both narrative and disorder structures: Joan says, “I’ve been searching for work since I finished high school,” (Patta says, “Joan’s tuition fees were due...”) and William’s “You can’t steal, you have to find something to for yourself” (Patta says, “Willim was battling to pay his rent...and so they turned to the global essay for hire industry”).

Analysis of Story 2: The story unfolds through the narrative structure of the problem, that ‘lazy foreign’ students pay Kenyan graduates to write their tests and essays for them. As part of the entertainment side of the story, the profile pictures are fake, people who do the cheating see it as ‘service’ or means to make a living, not harming anyone; other social media sites create a culture or group that keeps the problem alive. As a job, “It is a competition against poverty” and “David, 23 year old University student. He had to sustain himself in school and help out his family...Getting an account is not easy. The accounts are bought and sold on social media for 200k.” The universal moral meaning points to the universities and what they tried to do, but due to the pandemic, it seems that the problem still persists. A Kenyan lecturers’ interview points out that technology has its advantages and disadvantages. According to her, “We should blame technology. Cheating is unethical. It is the only way they can make a living. It is a dilemma, as it is a means of survival. It is not illegal to sell essays in Kenya”. The issue is presented as a business frame of demand and supply. Frames in this story are: “ban essay selling,” “lazy foreign students,” “pandemic,” “here to stay.”

Analysis of Story 3: the story uses 16 images; first is the image of the building where the business is operated from, with a shiny, attractive reception area where the staff and owner of “Mambo Microsystems,” its owner and staff are pictured at their reception, including images of shared workspaces where staff are working on laptops, the owner at his desk, and another open workstations. Images of the high-end neighborhood where the owner lives and the car he drives are further provided. An image of an advert for writers is posted as “Job vacancy” and different tiers of writers (from four leavers, certificate holders, diploma holders, degree holders, Phd holders, and drivers). Lastly, an image of a public university’s main gate is shown with the caption “where the vast majority of students work for essay factories on the side.” The story is framed using the business angle, with the images showing the wealth accumulated by its owner, while the workers, though making a good living, do not make as much. The business frame is continued with the second image of the business owner who explains how he and his friends had to buy access to a portal to the amount of \$4,000 (four thousand US dollars). The universal moral meaning presented is that it is an industry, a web of deceit, even though the owners rake in millions, the workers are not paid well. The language used is that the writers ‘slave away’ in shifts, ‘essay factories,’ lack of legislation, and UK politicians framing it as “a cancer that is undermining our universities.”

Analysis of Story 4

The story unfolds as an expose, revealing the nature of higher education in the West, where students are paying others to do their work for them. Kenya is highlighted as the main country where the writers are based, due to high unemployment, low overhead costs, preference for working from home, and that the writers speak good English. Vice chancellors in the UK are trying to speak to their education secretary to see how it can be halted. The frame of the story is economic and legal.

Analysis of Story 5

The media story presents the Kenyans as earning a living from ghostwriting; it is seen as an opportunity for students and other jobless graduates to make a living. The testimonials given by the ghostwriters shows that they earn Kshs 50,000 minimum for what they produce and that when it is masters and Phd work, they are able to make enough money in an environment where there are no jobs. At the end of the story, are two points, first that no laws are in place to address this practice, and second, that the “global market for academic writing is estimated to be worth \$1 billion (Shs 100 billion annually.”

Findings

The four guiding research questions provide the structure for this section. They are: 1) What are the headlines telling us about the news frame of the story? 2) How are the Kenyan writers framed? 3) How are the American students framed? and 4) How is the story told based on Atheide’s (1997) frame of fear?

1) What do the headlines tell us about news frames about contract cheating?

The headlines for the stories tell us something about the stories. The titles were shortened for the analysis above, however they are:

- CBS News *investigation* finds Kenyans *paid* by American students to *cheat*.
- BBC: The Kenyans who are *helping the world* to *cheat*.
- DailyMail: *uses a subhead; EXCLUSIVE: Inside the African essay factories that churn out university coursework for 115,000 cheating British students every year*
- Citizendigital: *University Students* in Europe, US *Paying Kenyans To Do Their Academic Work* For Them
- Kenyans.co.ke: Kenya *Dubbed Hotbed* of *Global Varsity Cheating Syndicate*

From the headlines, the CBS story. The verbs “investigation finds” primes the reader to expect factual, hard news content. The Daily Mail states it as an “exclusive” putting the story more in line with entertainment (tabloid); “Inside” connotes depth, and access to a view on the issue.” The Western stories state that the Kenyans are being “paid...to cheat by American students,” “helping the world to cheat,” and “essay factories that churn out university course work.” While the Americans/British students’ roles are the ones who “paid” (although the word Kenyan comes first), the second story calls them “the world” (names the “Kenyan” but is silent on who is doing the paying using a generic reference), and lastly the “African essay factory...churning out university coursework for 115,000 cheating British students every year” (identifies the players, again beginning with the African context. The headlines are centered around a narrative: who (Kenyans) is hired (doing) the work (cheating) on behalf of whom (Western UK and US student).

The Kenyan news shows the other perspective; that students in the West are paying Kenyans to do their work; and “Kenya 'dubbed' hotbed’ of global cheating syndicate, though giving it a captivating heading, they both frame the issue within a context. That the University students / Global Varsity syndicate is using the Kenyan writer. One story leads with the foreign institutions, while the other begins with the Kenyan context.

2) How are Kenyan writers framed?

Within the titles, Kenyan writers are framed in the Western stories as: a worker, someone who is ‘paid,’ conspirators ‘helping (to cheat),’ producers of work ‘factories,’ and ‘churn out.’ While the two Kenyan stories vaguely describe the person as a ‘Kenyans’ and the second one does not typify them.

Within the CBS story, looking at the content themes, the findings show that:

First, themes driven by poverty (9 times), need for work (8 times) and to complete work for others (8) times, and that the location of the writers is in Kenya (7) times. Although the story took place within a pandemic, it is mentioned only once. That it may have a criminal, legal side is not addressed much.

Issue/ Theme/ Code	Pandemic cheating	Industry in Kenya	Amer. students/ pay to cheat	Kenyan writers/ paid to cheat	Complete college level assig.	Contract cheating	Crime/ illegal	Normal /not new/ won't end	Poverty/ driven by needs	It's a job
Freq.	1	7	3	4	8	5	3	3	9	8
Co-Theme				Attitude (1)		Outcomes (1)				

3) *How are the American / British students framed?*

Based on the headlines, in the Western stories, the students are ‘American students,’ ‘world’ and British students’ (two are specific, and one is vague, ‘world’). Within the African stories, they are referred to as “University students in Europe, US” or ‘Global varsity cheating syndicate’ (higher than just the university).

In the CBS story, the Americans are rich, busy or lazy, thus hiring out labor; while providing opportunity for the Kenyan writer. This presents a patriarchal narrative, with the power given to the one who is doing the hiring, although those who do the writing are hired because they earn the writer “As” or “Phd” (this being a paradox).

4) How is the story told based on Atheide’s (1997) frame of fear?

The Western media frame the title in two out of the three stories as a crime “cheat” is used in the title; while the Kenyan media frames the title as labor/industry “academic work” and crime “syndicate”.

The CBS clip has a narrative structure to it, with an opening shot in the studio, the middle in Kenya with interviews of William and Joan, and a closing, based on closing remarks by William and Joan and then return to the studio. Here, the universal morality is that real ‘writers’ are interviewed, and they give their ‘testimonials.’ Although the story does not show a repeated scenario, other than both young people are engaged in the act. In the opening statement, the reporter Patta, frames the issue based on *disorder*: that young graduates here (Nairobi), have “Dreams of escaping life’s grinding hardships often go up in smoke here; education is seen as the only way out and many Kenyans go hungry in order to pay for it. But even with a good degree it is hard to find work.”

The story opens with the frames of ‘poverty’ and ‘lack of jobs.’ Both *narrative and disorder structures*: Joan says, “I’ve been searching for work since I finished high school,” (Patta says,

“Joan’s tuition fees were due...” and William’s “You can’t steal, you have to find something to for yourself” (Patta says, “William was battling to pay his rent...and so they turned to the **global essay for hire industry**”). Due to the **entertainment factor**, Patta injects the reasons why they began contract cheating. The **temporal nature** and **cultural experiences** linked to the issue are presented thus: as **temporal**, the opening statement “Cheating in college is nothing new” while **cultural**, the Kenyan audience members who reacted in the chats shows that this angle did not go well with the Kenyan viewers. Also, the ethics professor who is interviewed is quoted, using the 1) **fear frame**: “sounding the alarm for years;” 2) **crime frame**: “Cheating leads us to overall social corruption;” and 3) a **skills gap frame**: “...leads to having a cadre of professionals who can't actually do the work that they claim they can do.”

Furthermore, their responses show a **cultural angle** which the story did not delve into deeply: There were over 1,600 YT comments. Only 10 were sampled to allow us to see the gap in the news frame and what the Kenyan news reader/viewer expects.

- **Martin Makau**: Wait, *are the Kenyans the ones cheating* or is it the American students cheating? So why do we have the Kenyan flag displayed instead of the American one?
- **George Kiambuthi**: *Do you have to go to a slum* to report failures of your country?
- **horace gotti**: *CBS News needs to apologize to Kenyans*. Really if you just think about this. It's the US students looking for these services that need to be interviewed instead.
- **Muteti Charles**: This is stupid. *A millionaire in slums????*
- **Freedomm**: *American media only goes to the slums when reporting on Kenya*. They have no shame.
- **Susan Muraguri**: *We have GREAT minds and if the world can't see that, then too bad!....And could you kindly get your facts right* - Kenyan writers live in good houses and estates, not the slums that you portray in the video....*those residing in slums are a small percentage of the TOTAL Kenyan population.....*We have the brains, you don't.....We know a lot about the world and other continents, you don't....need I say more?....
- **JUC**: *Why would they expose their own secrets?* 🙄 (facepalm emoji, and unclear symbol)
- **Jennifer Lalaa**: *Racist reporting CBS*. Shame on you! It doesn't have to be explained what was racist. All of you know. DO BETTER!7
- **SKILLED TO IMPRESS**: *We don't live in slums. We write for lecturers too*. There is

this lecture from USA i have been preparing teaching notes and i am doing his second master's degree

- **Brenda Kathambi: *I will take this opportunity to ask you all to contact me for all your assignments.*** Nothing is impossible in Kenya. Straight A's guaranteed. You get the papers; I get the skills plus payment. Thank you, CBS, *free advertisement ain't bad.*
- From the comments the issue of **uncertainty is not valued by the Kenyan viewers.** The issues / problem frames, based on the Kenyan viewer, in the story are: “skills,” “racist reporting,” “free advertisement,” “secrets,” “doubtful slum-rich,” “who should be blamed?” Thus, pointing out that the cultural angle was not well-framed.

From the comments the issue of uncertainty is not valued by the Kenyan viewers. The issues (themes) in the story are: “skills,” “racist reporting,” “free advertisement,” “secrets,” “doubtful slum-rich,” “who should be blamed?” From this quick review, content analysis of the comments would be beneficial in future to provide a context for such a topic.

Discussion

Western media's frames: it is a **growing industry** that is not ending soon; as a **disease**; and as **work / on contract** basis. **Problem frames** are also used: “Illness,” “Industry/Thriving,” “Pay to cheat,” “Not ending soon,” and “Jobless Kenyans.” Some engage in forms of academic cheating despite its link to social development. What is the role of education and research (Contract cheating as a form of plagiarism/labor that is not acknowledged? What is the place of ethics in research, innovations, and society?)

The title also exposes the socio-economic control and power around contract cheating; even as the authors aim in critiquing the media's role in perpetuating the same dominant narrative in their coverage of an inequitable system that is itself using the very person it is undermining to achieve its ends.

The story appears to be objective, but is a ‘morality play’ (Altheide, 1997). Opening narrative: “...it's illegal in 17 states but not at the federal level and enforcement is rare” (CBS story), addresses the criminal frame, but does not pursue it further. Contract cheating is **actually** framed as an extension of the Western domination over Africans. It depicts Kenyans as being hired due to poverty, and being jobless, despite having degrees. Disorder (Altheide, 1997) is apparent in both contexts: Who is to be held responsible and how?

Areas for further research:

- Foreign students who attend US and UK universities, are skilled, and become part of the labor for research and innovations (during and after their studies) is not emphasized in the

news story. Study the angle: 1) How does this continue to be part of the Global South's brain drain problem? (some have argued this is no more the case) 2) What is the profile of the student considering that there is a large international student population in the universities, from India, China, etc.

- Content analysis of YT channel comments; How do Kenyan audience members frame contract writing?
- Contract writing vs cheating in the Kenyan context and its role in national development, innovations etc.
- The impact of R&D outputs of universities to society.

Indeed, Teodorescu and Andrei's (2009), critique gives us pause: despite the amount of literature available focusing on student academic dishonesty, there appears to be a lack of commitment towards eradicating this behavior on the part of the faculty, institutions, individuals, and society. News stories on plagiarism have framed it based on fear, using the metaphor of an "epidemic," including arguments that it continues to be on the rise, technology facilitates the problem, and that the teachers' function includes thwarting or catching it (Adler-Kassner, Anson, & Howard, 2008). Although many institutions and programs rely on anti-plagiarism programs, honor codes, or even the faculty to deal with it on a case-by-case basis and independently, the 'epidemic' exists (Adler-Kassner et al, 2008; Roberts, 2008; Robillard & Presley, 2013). Anecdotally, the oral citations during public discourse (or the lack of them), have been critiqued by many as plagiarized, fully, or in part (Robillard & Presley, 2013). *Who is to be held responsible for this phenomenon?* Higher education institutions that are concerned about quality assurance of programs are concerned about plagiarism, its forms, reduction and eradication, and the pursuit of academic excellence.

Connected to the theme of this conference, education is still an unattained UN Sustainable Development Goal, SDG, in many parts of the world, with barriers that governments and development agencies continue to work towards mitigating. As higher education (HE) trainers, we rhetorically question the profile of the Kenyan graduate, within an industry: Is this an industry that is "thriving," graduating people with curriculum knowledge, literacy and research skills; while at the same time "ill-equipping" them for the real world? Is there a role for / of value-based education? How do we ensure quality education (are we cognizant of academic honesty/dishonesty) as related to quality assurance? These questions, though pertinent to this paper, are necessary, and perhaps best suited to future works.

Kenya's socio-economic situation, though improving, still has challenges that present opportunities and downturns. First, according to the World Bank (WB) among the working age of 18-64, one million people are set to join the Kenyan workforce annually (WBG, 2021). Second:

Although access to education has increased among younger cohorts, improving the quality of education is important. Workers often lack basic skills such as reading or

writing, and computer skills... A 2013-17 skills survey found that most adults with secondary education are functionally illiterate in English. Also, among individuals with university education less than one quarter are functionally literate in English. (WBG, 2021)

Third, there are more than 50 accredited public and private universities, as well as other forms of higher education institutions (HEIs) (CUE, 2021). Fourth, unemployment is best understood as either cyclical unemployment, pegged on economic downturns, or structural unemployment, which is affected by service sector mobility, urbanization, and economic sector factors (O'Neill, 2021). It is within this social context in *The World*, where Gikandi (2020) notes that contract cheating is a lucrative business in Kenya, with a large industry of academic writers. Talking to Gikandi (Ibid), Thomas Lancaster, a professor at Imperial College London says, "There are incredibly qualified people in Kenya, high levels of English, very able to write essays quickly ... to a high standard." Are we really preparing our graduates and members of society to be independent, constructive, and competent players of the world or are we creating job-seekers without a sense of connection to others and society?

Conclusion

Media information is used to make decisions by citizens; this information is not neutral. News frames present the information in light of 'who' is packaging that information, and towards the interests of its stakeholders (Carnahan, Hao & Yan, 2021; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Media and digital literacy are still required for and by society: 1) to not only consume information but to demand that the information that is packaged goes beyond entertainment value (Altheide, 1997), thus highlighting the frames and presenting some solutions, rather than perpetuating cultural biases and stereotypes; 2) to inculcate the right values in the access, use, and dissemination of information; and 3) Values-based education ensures that excellence (quality, integrity, ethics, and care) is part and parcel of Africa's knowledge-based economy of today and the future.

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