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"I'm not an investigator and I'm not a police officer" - a faculty's view on academic integrity in an undergraduate nursing degree

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Abstract

In nursing, expectations of honesty and integrity are clearly stipulated throughout professional standards and codes of conduct, thus the concept of academic integrity has even more impetus in preparing students for graduate practice. However, a disparity between policy and practice misses the opportunity to instil the principles of academic integrity, and at its core honesty, a pivotal trait in the nursing profession. This study draws upon the experience of the nursing faculty to explore how academic integrity policy of deterrence operate in nursing education. While participants deplored cheating behaviours, they expressed frustration in having to 'police' large numbers of students who had little awareness of the academic standards to meet policy requirements. In addition, they were cynical because of a perceived lack of severity in sanctions for students who repeatedly breached integrity. Participants expressed a moral obligation as educators to meet student learning needs and preferred to engage with students in a more meaningful way to uphold academic integrity. The ambivalence to detect and report breaches in integrity undermines the effectiveness of policy. Therefore, faculty must recognise the importance of their role in detecting and escalating cases of dishonesty and execute deterrence in a more consistent way. To do this, greater support at an institutional level, such as smaller class sizes, inclusion in decision making around sanctions and recognition of additional workload, will enable faculty to uphold policy. Although policing was not their preferred approach, the role of faculty in detecting and reporting cases of misconduct is crucial to increase the certainty of students getting caught, which is essential if policy is to be effective in deterring dishonest behaviour.

Keywords: Academic integrity, Nursing education, Deterrence, Academic misconduct



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Introduction

Integrity is a core expectation of professional nursing practice, with nurses highly regarded for their honesty and high ethical standards (Emmanuel et al. 2021). Globally, nurses are often voted "the" most trusted profession in public confidence surveys, rating higher than doctors, dentists, police officers and schoolteachers (Gallup Inc 2020; Ipsos Reid 2018; Roy Morgan Research Ltd 2017). One may assume that students who choose to study nursing possess a high degree of honesty and this would in some way deter unethical practices, such as cheating whilst at university. However, this is not the case, with evidence reporting that nursing students engage in academic misconduct at similar rates to students in other disciplines (Fontana 2009; Krueger 2014; McCabe 2009; Park et al. 2013). This is concerning to nursing academics and to anyone who may have a health care encounter as nursing students who cheat may have insufficient knowledge levels to support professional practice, which poses a significant risk to patient safety (Birks et al. 2018; Krueger 2014). In addition, dishonest behaviours and practices at university may carry over into professional workplace practices.

Within nursing education, cheating in exams, falsifying documentation, and plagiarism have been described (Krueger 2014; McCrink 2010; Park et al. 2013) with reports of this dishonest behaviour extending into the clinical area, including falsifying patient charts and documenting observations ("radar obs") that have not been undertaken (Balik et al. 2010; Park et al. 2014). Of concern, the high frequency of dishonest behaviour has led to a growing cohort of millennial nursing students that view cheating as acceptable (McCrink 2010; Park et al. 2013; Woith et al. 2012), and therefore the judgement of what constitutes dishonest behaviour now has "a more fluid notion" (Devine and Chin 2018, p. 133). The normalisation of cheating behaviour in nursing education is likely to cause significant reputational damage to graduates and the quality of nursing education. This not only highlights the importance of abating dishonest behaviour during undergraduate education but also presents an opportunity to instil professional values, such as honesty and integrity in nursing students in preparation for graduate practice.

Background

Nursing academics play an important role in a student's professional and moral development (Baldwin et al. 2017). Similar to other health professions, nursing academics often have had extensive clinical experience that provides important contextual insights into the preparation of students for professional practice (Baldwin et al. 2017). Understanding and appreciating the values and experiences of nurse educators, in relation to academic integrity within nursing education, may identify barriers to successful implementation of policy, which is an important part of policy evaluation and redesign.

A key role of the nurse academic in higher education is to enact policies for the prevention and management of transgressions in academic integrity. Central to academic integrity policy, is a deterrence strategy, which includes an increasing effort to detect cases and apply tougher penalties to students who breach academic standards (Sutherland-Smith 2010). However, plagiarism and cheating appear to be unabated (Bretag et al. 2018; Curtis and Popal 2011; Curtis and Vardanega 2016; McCabe 2009), suggesting that "detering students from engaging in acts of plagiarism does not necessarily mean they will take a path of academic integrity" (Sutherland-Smith 2010, p. 1212).

Notably, research examining the effect of deterrence on rule adherence has shown varying effects across sanctioned populations (Piquero et al. 2011). At a population level, different responses to sanctioned threats and punishments used within the judicial system (in its most extreme form capital punishment) has made it difficult to determine if sanctions inhibit unwanted behaviour and foster adherence (Grasmick and Bursik Jr 1990). The ineffectiveness of policy in practice also misses the opportunity to inculcate the principles of academic integrity, and the core value of honesty (Bretag et al. 2011), a trait pivotal in the nursing profession.

The faculty are at the forefront of enacting academic integrity policy as they grade students' work, engage with them in the classroom and invigilate in-class tests (Dawson and Sutherland-Smith 2019). Successful implementation of AI policy depends upon the collective action of the key actors, the faculty, to achieve its desired goals (Althaus et al. 2020). As educators they spend the most time with students, so the way they operationalise AI policy in the classroom is important to inform and influence a student's behaviour (Baldwin et al. 2017). Although there is empirical support to show that sanctions for cheating do act as a deterrent (Nagin and Pogarsky 2003; Whitley 1998), cheating has continued unabated for 40 years (DiPietro 2010). It has been suggested that faculty members prefer not to take formal actions against dishonest students (Fontana 2009), do not use methods available to them to detect cheating (Sattler et al. 2017) and respond to academic misconduct in inconsistent ways (Tennant et al. 2007). This may indicate that educators choose their own punitive and preventative methods, rather than following institutional policy, which could contribute to significant variation between educators (Baran and Jonason 2020; East 2009). Despite these perceived inconsistencies, very little research has been undertaken to explore the experiences of faculty and academic dishonesty. Therefore, exploration of the faculties' experiences may be useful to better understand their views and preferences for managing transgressions in academic integrity. These insights may shed some light on why policies underpinned by deterrence have had a variable effect in reducing cheating and plagiarism in higher education.

Methods

Study design

This study used a qualitative exploratory design (Hunter et al. 2019). One-on-one, face-to-face interviews were conducted to collect data using a semi-structured interview schedule. This study followed the consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ) 32-item checklist (Tong, Sainsbury, & Craig, 2007). Ethical approval was granted by the University's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) (H12280).

Setting and sample

Tenured and sessional faculty teaching in a large, metropolitan university located in the western Sydney region of Australia were the focus of this study. At the time in 2018, this university had approximately 4000 undergraduate nursing students across four campuses.

A stratified purposive sampling technique was used, with particular emphasis on recruiting a representative sample of academics across roles and seniority. The faculty were stratified into groups. Seventeen faculty members were invited, selected because they were considered 'information-rich cases' (Palinkas et al. 2015), due to their heavy

involvement in teaching and learning activities within the school. Of the 17 who were invited to participate in the study, 11 were available during the data collection period and agreed to participate (Table 1). Only faculty who were involved in on-campus nursing education were included in this study.

Theoretical framework

Deterrence theory was the theoretical framework used in this study, and guided the development of the interview schedule and data analysis. This approach has been discussed in detail elsewhere (Lynch et al, 2021). Briefly, deterrence theory has three components; certainty, celerity and severity (Piquero et al. 2011). Certainty refers to the likelihood of being caught; severity refers to the harshness of the penalty if caught; and celerity refers to how quickly the penalty is imposed after being caught. Deterrence theory suggests that individuals weigh up these three tenets when making decisions about whether to participate in delinquent acts. These tenets have underpinned our legal system for over 200 hundred years (Piquero et al. 2011) and during the 1980s became a dominant feature of university academic misconduct policies (Bertram Gallant 2008).

Institutional policy for academic integrity

The university described in this study had a well-written policy called the Student Misconduct Rule. This policy detailed what constitutes student misconduct (academic, research or general), the procedure for handling a case of alleged student misconduct and sanctions for transgressions. For a case deemed not serious enough to be managed under the student misconduct rule (usually a first offence), is to be managed via the Inappropriate Behaviour Guidelines.

The university had several strategies for promoting academic integrity across the university such as an honour code, website pages to raise awareness of academic integrity and an Academic Integrity working party, comprised of students, faculty and administrators.

Data collection

Participants who expressed an interest were contacted via telephone. All interviews were conducted on-campus at their workplace. Only the participant being

Table 1 Profile of Faculty participants

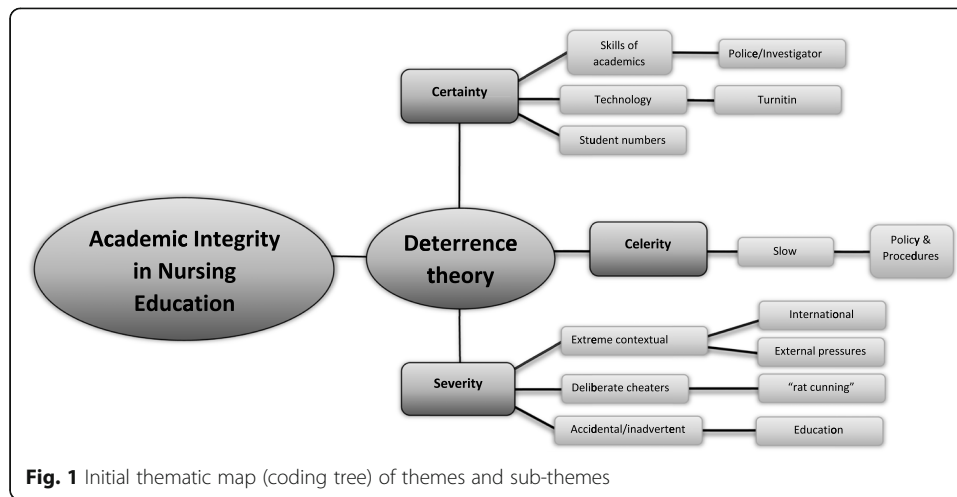
Pseudonym	Role within school	Gender	Years of Teaching
Billy	Senior Governance	Female	30
Amanda	Junior Governance	Female	5
Jayke	Senior Governance	Female	31
Alison	Junior Governance	Female	8
Peta	Junior Governance	Female	8
Kimberley	Senior Governance	Female	20
Sandy	Senior Governance	Female	14
Matti	Junior governance	Female	6
Sydney	Senior Governance	Male	28
Jane	Junior Academic	Female	2
Jo	Sessional Academic	Male	7

interviewed was present during the interviews. A semi-structured interview schedule, which had been reviewed and revised by all authors, guided the interviews, which were digitally recorded with permission. Each participant was interviewed once and the duration of these interviews ranged from 34 to 85 min. Audio-recordings of each interview were transcribed verbatim using a professional transcription company. All data were de-identified during transcription of the recording, and pseudonyms were assigned to each participant. The transcripts were not returned to participants for member checking as this study aimed to capture the human experience in the moment, when recollections with academic integrity were fresh, returning transcripts to participants at a later time may have altered interpretations reducing the richness of the data (Carlson 2010). Although interview transcripts were not returned to participants, trustworthiness was maintained through the use of a rigorous interview technique, where the researcher returned to matters raised and re-phrased questions to confirm findings (Shenton 2004). Further peer scrutiny and critique of findings by the research team were also employed (Anney 2014).

Interviews were conducted by one researcher with experience in undertaking semi-structured interviews. The researcher was an academic known to participants and had worked at the University for 5 years. The prolonged engagement of the researcher within the faculty assisted in establishing rapport and understanding the context and therefore increased the trustworthiness of the data (Guba 1981). Whilst being an insider researcher was beneficial, several challenges identified in the literature (assumed understanding, analytic subjectivity, dealing with emotions and participants' expectations) were addressed by 'participant probing', 'researcher reflexivity', making the aims and use of study outcomes clear, and acknowledging participants' expectations (Blythe et al. 2013).

Data analysis

A deductive approach to thematic analysis was used to analyse the data, where codes and development of themes were driven by existing concepts or ideas; in this case deterrence theory. The explicit integration of the theoretical framework into the structured interview schedule facilitated the condensation of data into codes and categories for deductive analysis. This approach was chosen so that a focus on and specific analysis of the components of deterrence theory in academic integrity policy would occur. This ensured that data analysis not only addressed the research question but was also theoretically coherent and consistent (Braun and Clarke 2006; Braun and Clarke 2019). Deriving the codes and themes from the theoretical framework allowed for the development of a coding tree (Fig. 1) that facilitated anticipatory data condensation during collection (Braun and Clarke 2006). Thematic analysis was used to evaluate and summarize the themes. The data were analysed manually using a spreadsheet to display the subthemes. Quotes from the transcripts were copied verbatim and placed in the relevant subtheme column and pseudonyms were allocated to rows. This method enabled the author to visualise the data across multiple themes. A coding tree was used by two authors (JL, LR) to consider and define clusters and to categorise further into themes and subthemes. After analysis of the 11 interviews, the authors agreed (JL, LR) that data saturation had been achieved as no new clusters were emerging from the data. Secondary analysis found some overlapping concepts within themes, but after



consensus with the third researcher (PG), a decision was made to keep overlapping themes due to their prominence within the data. This additional step of collaborative data analysis reduced subjective bias.

Findings

A total of 11 faculty members participated in this study. Two were male and nine were female. Five held senior governance positions within the school of nursing with responsibility for making decisions regarding workforce, supervision, curriculum, student management and academic misconduct. Four participants held junior governance roles, including teaching and coordinating subjects. As unit coordinators, they escalated academic misconduct cases identified by other academics. One participant held a teaching-focused role and one was a sessional staff member who taught on a contractual basis.

The major theme of deterrence theory with three subthemes, certainty, celerity and severity were determined a priori to encapsulate the participants' experiences with academic integrity.

Theme 1: deterrence theory

Sub theme: certainty

Certainty is a component of deterrence theory and refers to the likelihood of the student being caught for academic dishonesty. The participants doubted that all cases of academic misconduct were being detected, describing "*there's a lot that are flying under the radar*" (Sandy). The participants identified that large student numbers hindered the identification of misconduct cases.

"...I think sheer numbers is our enemy...we have such huge numbers in our school, we can't possibly police every single student and what they're doing. We do place a lot of trust in our students and trust that they're doing the right thing...So our sheer size is against us in terms of being able to capture everybody." (Sandy)

"The class is 'bursting at the seams', I'm just not going to be able to police it." (Joe)

Formal exams with independent exam invigilators, in an appropriate room, were seen to increase the certainty that students who cheated were identified, whereas this was more difficult to do in a standard classroom.

"In exams, so formal exam period, I think that the majority of those [students that cheat] are caught.... [invigilators are] up and walking around and they follow people to the toilet. There's a whole range of things that they're able to implement...Whereas when we have for example in class assessments whatever it might be, you can't sit people apart because the classrooms aren't big enough...Do I think people cheat in there? Yeah probably. Do I catch them? No, rarely." (Matti)

Advancing technology was seen to assist participants in detecting plagiarism due to increased accuracy of detection software, such as Turnitin.

"I think probably a fair proportion of those get caught but that's only to the thanks of Turnitin reports." (Matti)

In addition, participants felt that plagiarism tools were also a deterrent to academic dishonesty by alerting students to the potential risk of academic misconduct.

"I think that the Turnitin tool, while it isn't perfect, has really helped pick up a lot. I think it serves as a warning for a lot of students too...Pre-Turnitin you relied heavily on students reporting other students." (Jayke)

"I think students do worry about Turnitin and getting caught." (Sydney)

Of note, a number of the participants felt ill-suited to "catching" students out. They characterised themselves as neither an investigator or police officer and they believed that they did not possess the skills to identify breaches. They considered this role to be outside their scope without adequate training.

"I also feel very strongly that my role here as an academic encompasses academic integrity and picking it up. But I'm not an investigator and I'm not a police officer...I don't see it as the sole focus of my job - to be investigating and looking everywhere...That's when you feel like, I'm not a trained investigator. It isn't reasonable for me to have to try and dig and dig and dig..." (Jayke)

Sub theme: celerity

Celerity refers to the swiftness or speed at which a punishment or sanction is imposed after a student is caught for academic dishonesty. The participants acknowledged that managing cases of alleged misconduct took too long and by the time the outcome had been decided the details of the transgression had often been forgotten.

"When the feedback finally got back to me I'd actually forgotten what had happened so it was a while. I thought oh jeez, yeah, I remember that now, that was a while ago. That must have taken a while." (Joe)

"I think it takes too long... it does take weeks sometimes for a decision to come back down." (Alison)

However, it was also acknowledged that the process itself was also time sensitive, affected by policy constraints and contextual factors.

"They were a bit slow, but generally they're dealt with within a [timeframe] - and they have to be because of the policy." (Matti)

Participants explained that all cases of alleged misconduct were referred to the Deputy Dean within the school, who determined whether further action was warranted. One participant reported that the institutional policy stipulated that once referred, further action needed to be determined within a two-week timeframe. Most of the participants recognised that the time required to contact students and organise interviews impacted on the speed of the process.

"...probably seems like it stretches out, for the student, waiting for that final interview, but if you look at the different levels of processes, I believe it moves quite quickly, given all the different processes it has to go through." (Sandy)

Paradoxically, one participant identified the time taken and workload associated with managing cases of academic misconduct acted as a deterrent to the academic in following the policy for managing alleged breaches.

"Once it [plagiarism] has been detected is a laborious process for academics and it's a deterrent, quite frankly, when you're spending all your time with the naughty students and not enough time on the high achievers". (Billy)

Sub theme: severity

Severity refers to the gravity of the sanction imposed for a breach in academic integrity. Participants disclosed that there was a three-tiered response to the management of cases of academic misconduct that was depended on the intent of the student: inadvertent, extreme contextual circumstances, and deliberate intent. Very different responses were elicited by participants, not only in what they had to say about academic misconduct but also in the way they spoke about it, including the language used, tone of voice and body language.

Participants acknowledged that most cases of misconduct were accidental transgressions due to lack of academic skills, such as poor paraphrasing skills or an inability to reference. For cases of accidental transgressions, some participants felt an educational response was appropriate as they were usually early in their studies.

"I think that if someone has poor paraphrasing, and I think you can tell that a mile off if you look at their Turnitin, then especially as first year first semester, which is

what we're dealing with, then no. I'm not sure if bringing them in for an interview with a very official looking letter, that's really scary, is appropriate." (Peta)

Participants identified that there were students who experienced extreme contextual circumstances that resulted in them making decisions that would usually be considered out of character for them. Participants described these students as vulnerable; they needed to work to support family or were international students that had extreme financial pressures due to high course fees and living expenses. They expressed that these external pressures contributed to making poor decisions.

"...led students to doing things that they wouldn't normally do and have behaviours that they may not normally have." (Sandy)

For these cases, some participants felt the preferred option was to understand the individual's circumstances and express compassion. They supported the importance of the policy allowing for some 'flexibility' in management decisions.

"What I have learnt is that every student who gets done for a misconduct is desperate. It's not that they mean to do it. Or they have such a lack of skills. They just don't have the skills to write an essay....They're so desperate." (Peta)

Students identified as repeat 'offenders' or the ones who deliberately cheated were considered to be the most severe cases of misconduct; they were referred to in interviews as cheaters and as "rat cunning" (Billy). Participants felt that the severity of sanctions was too lenient for students with deliberate intent to cheat.

"...she was hit with a feather duster. She was made to repeat the unit when the policy dictates that they could have been excluded...because she was deliberately deceitful...How many times do you have to offend to get a holiday and then you can have a 12-month holiday and re-apply?... I think it's about intent I think a lot of the time." (Billy)

Some saw the penalties, no matter how severe, as unable to remediate dishonest behaviour. A few participants also questioned that there should be a point at which nursing students, who repeatedly or deliberately engaged in dishonest behaviour, not be allowed to continue their studies and highlighted this as something the decision makers should exercise more frequently.

"It has to come to a point where they're not worthy of being registered [as nurses]...- Because ...their integrity is not there and nursing is about integrity...Yeah, I think we should be tougher with it." (Amanda)

There was no compassion for students who deliberately cheated; which was supported by the tone of voice, direct language and body language displayed by some participants. These participants became visibly angry in their demeanour as they spoke.

For this group of students, some participants thought the response should be expulsion from the University.

"...shouldn't be allowed to graduate...because they know it's a blatant disregard for university policies and it's akin to pushing drugs as far as I'm concerned..." (Peta)

Along with expulsion, some suggested that serious transgressions in academic integrity should be reported to the nursing registration board and this may be helpful in moderating dishonest behaviour at university.

"AHPRA [Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency] and nursing and midwifery board, you know, certainly want to know serious breaches of misconduct so maybe there could be demand from there to know if there was any form of academic misconduct [at university]...Maybe then students will see that as a barrier to potentially becoming registered." (Sydney)

Discussion

This study explored the experiences of 11 participants from a single nursing faculty and their perceptions of academic integrity, framed and informed by deterrence theory. These participants expressed an unwillingness to take on the role of "investigator" and doubted their ability to identify cheating. The process of detection and gathering evidence they felt was not within their role as educators and engaging with students as detectives rather than educators and mentors was seen to have a negative impact on their relationship with students. Others have reported similar notions in that the overly legalistic and rule-bound nature of academic integrity policy forces educators to take on surveillance roles which interrupt good teaching and learning practices (Bertram Gallant 2017; Sutherland-Smith 2010). Nursing academics often describe their role as doing "two jobs" where "my students want me to be a nurse, the university wants me to be an academic" (Findlow 2012, p. 127). Research by McCabe et al. (2002) reported that students are cognisant of a faculty's reluctance to detect and manage cases of misconduct and for this reason believed they fail to monitor and address academic dishonesty. This is important as the certainty of being caught has been shown to have the greatest deterrent effect when compared to the severity and celerity of punishment (Nagin and Pogarsky 2003; Paternoster et al. 1985). Thus, it is disconcerting that in this study, the faculty described many students as "flying under the radar". When the risk of getting caught is low, the effectiveness of deterrence strategies underpinning academic integrity policy is reduced (Nagin and Pogarsky 2003).

Participants in this study acknowledged that breaches of academic integrity were at times context-dependent, identifying the vulnerability of some students such as international students. The literature reports that international students experience a range of psychological pressures that stem not only from different academic conventions and learning experiences, but also from transitioning to life in a new country, often with a different culture and financial hardship that arise from the cost of living and educational expenses. These pressures can cause tension, confusion, depression, feelings of isolation and powerlessness (Wheeler 2014; Zigunovas 2017), which were acknowledged by the faculty as contributing to poor decision making that was out of character.

Previous studies confirmed that international students are overrepresented in rates of self-reported cheating compared to domestic students, suggesting that they may be more vulnerable (Bretag et al. 2019; Bertram Gallant, Binkin, & Donohue, 2015; Harper et al. 2019). Bretag et al. (2018) emphasises the "moral and educational responsibility" of educators in acknowledging and addressing these students' needs (p. 687). Although the inherent need to provide tailored support were recognised by participants in this study, they were frustrated by the challenges in providing this support due to large student numbers. Greater support from the university, such as preparing students with the academic skills necessary to be successful, knowledge of academic conventions and smaller class sizes, would enable faculty to support the vulnerable students to study with integrity and reach their academic potential (Bretag et al. 2018).

Some faculty felt the severity of penalties for "repeat offenders", were ineffective. Their experiences in the management of these cases left them feeling cynical about the effectiveness of the policy in deterring academic dishonesty. This finding is supported by a review of higher education institutions in the United Kingdom which found sanctioning systems were often weak and inconsistently applied (Tennant et al. 2007). A weak sanctioning system may undermine the original intentions of deterrence. Inconsistently applied sanctions reduce the efficacy of punishment as a deterrent as students tend to lose respect for institutional processes when they perceive management to be unfair (Simola 2017). In addition, if students perceive the sanctioning system to be weak, this might actually perpetuate transgressions as they are seen as 'low-cost' if they get caught (Simola 2017). This underscores the importance of all faculty asserting a clear and consistent approach to the implementation of academic integrity policies.

Finally, the acceptance of significant delays in the management of misconduct cases were defended by citing policy and procedure. This is somewhat perplexing as experimental research identifies that celerity, the time taken to impose punishment after a transgression in academic integrity, has an important deterrent effect on individuals planning to engage in abhorrent behaviour; that is the sooner the punishment is imposed, the greater the cost of undertaking a behaviour and the deterrent potential (Nagin and Pogarsky 2001). It is therefore likely students may devalue the cost of a punishment, if the punishment remains a remote or distant possibility (Nagin and Pogarsky 2001).

Importantly, the prolonged time taken, and workload associated with managing breaches in academic integrity may act as a deterrent to academics in implementing policy rather than as a deterrent to students. Previous studies support these notions. A survey of 450 full-time academic faculty in Johannesburg found that around 22% of participants reported the effort required to deal with cases of academic misconduct was too great to make it worthwhile (Thomas and De Bruin 2012). Similar findings in a survey of 242 faculty in Missouri concur that the amount of time required to pursue suspected incidents appeared to deter them from taking action (Coalter et al. 2007). These findings suggest that there is some opposition or lack of support for deterrence policy from faculty which represents an "implementation barrier" that may impair the policy from achieving its intended results (Health Policy Project 2014). Therefore, addressing barriers to implementation and in this case, time taken to manage breaches, is required to elicit 'buy-in' from key stakeholders, such as educators, to commit to upholding academic integrity policy at its grassroots.

Conclusion

This study has identified important challenges to academic integrity policy that may partially explain why policies underpinned by deterrence have been inconsistent in preventing academic misconduct among university students. The faculty, as key stakeholders in the implementation of policy, suggested that academic integrity breaches of many students were not being detected which undermines certainty, one of the central tenets of deterrence theory. Further, they felt inadequately prepared to detect cheating behaviours, but also identified an unwillingness to take on this role, preferring to engage with students in a more positive and educative way. Sanctions for deliberate cheaters were considered weak, did not dissuade students who were not suitable to become nurses and, also undermined the implementation of policy.

To increase the effectiveness of deterrence policy, a more consistent approach from the nursing faculty is required, inclusive of educators and administrators. At an individual level, educators need to be more vigilant and united in their approach in identifying and escalating cases of misconduct to increase the certainty of students being caught. Although not a desired role, educators are required to fulfil their responsibility to uphold policy. A panel approach for managing cases of deliberate dishonesty, which includes buy-in from educators, in the application of sanctions may reduce aversion for policy from within the faculty. At an institutional level, more support for educators to enact policy, such as additional workload to identify and escalate cases and smaller class sizes is required. The role of clear and transparent academic integrity policy remains vital to maintaining academic integrity standards and upholding the professional values of nursing.

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Authors' contributions

JL, YS & PG were responsible for the study design. JL undertook data collection. JL & LMR were responsible for data analysis. All authors were involved in editing the manuscript. The author(s) read and approved the final manuscript.

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Availability of data and materials

Reasonable requests for data are available from the corresponding author and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Declarations

Competing interests

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