Villa College Research Digest

ISSUE 1 (OCTOBER 2020)

VC Research Digest provides updates on current and ongoing research projects of Villa College staff and students, and provides fresh research ideas and snippets to help expand the horizon of research and inquiry.

EDITORIAL

Are you curious? – then read on...

To feel that something needs to be discovered, analysed and understood better requires that inherent element of curiosity in us to be awakened. As researchers, we are naturally full of awe and wonder. We ask all manners of questions; we prod and wonder; we analyse, critique and argue. But all that is geared towards a better understanding, to discover, to uncover and to learn a new truth about a phenomenon. That is what researchers do and that defines who we are – as researchers.

As we try to build a culture of research and inquiry among our staff, students and the wider Maldivian community, it is paramount that we also inculcate a strong ethos of inquisitiveness. There is an urgent need to open our minds to new possibilities of learning, innovative practices and new ways of managing things. Our researchers – academics and research students – must broaden the horizons of research and explore ideas in more meaningful and original manners.

Villa College Research Digest is a platform created with the purpose of sowing the seeds of renewal and enthusiasm, and to bring in structure and cognitive prowess to our researchers. By bringing out short snippets of ongoing research being carried out by our academics and students, and by introducing new ideas and methodological developments in various fields of research, we hope our readers will acquire the impetus required to expand their research interests. Through exposure to different research ideas from around the world, we expect our readers to create the internal drive to be better researchers. The prospect of creating a world-class research culture is not far-fetched only if we try.

Dr. Ahmed Shahid

Editor (VC Research Digest)

Source: https://www.forbes.com/quotes/2284/

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Developing as an Academic Writer: A List of Handy Resources

Dr. Fazeela Ibrahim
Research Associate, IRI, Villa College

Academics juggle three main areas of responsibility: research, teaching, and administration. A lot of academics, specifically Early Career Researchers (ECR) hold the misconception that they cannot write unless they have a big block of time carved out. It was back in the '90s that the first person, namely Robert Boice, a professor of psychology at the **State University of New York at Stony Brook**, who said, "No, this doesn't work. I've studied people, it doesn't work. You've got to have something more moderate, more daily, make it a habit."

Some academics are more suited to "binge writing", but it works because these academics constantly think about their article daily. The people who are the most productive are those who talk about the process with others, which could range from attending conferences, sharing abstracts, talking about it to their students, and teaching classes. All these activities help to shape things and give them connections and citations.

I too am extremely familiar with the many demands of academic life and the struggles are real – not knowing what direction to take, how best to juggle the many responsibilities, which opportunities to grab, and which to leave behind. Becoming a confident writer is something that researchers keep on developing over time and concerning the nature of their research. Well-established researchers can often discover new things about academic writing and being a writer over their careers.

During my doctoral candidacy at La Trobe University, I have attended many lively events with lots of La Trobe colleagues to puzzle through writing questions and conundrums. During these workshops, I noticed what a resource this network and chat archives offered for those who want to grow as academic writers. So, I have compiled my top 4 resources suggested by La Trobe colleagues about academic writing across these workshops, and a few beyond!

1. Shut-Up & Write

One of the things that encourage people to write is to be part of a writing group. The concept is simple: meet with others in a writing conducive environment, and write. These writing groups have had benefits that I could not have anticipated. Here, Thesis Whisperer, Dr. Inger Mewburn highlights how being part of a writing group can turn writing from a solitary to a social experience.

2. The Academic Phrasebank

This is a favourite of mine. The Academic Phrasebank (created by John Morley) is a resource that offers writers useful phrases that we can try on as we write. The website is organised for phrases that might be handy for some of the main sections of a thesis - for example; phrases for introducing, working with sources, methods, findings, conclusions, etc.). It also includes general language functions of academic writing (how to be cautious, critical, how to give examples or write about the past, etc.). If you find yourself lost for words, this would be a good source to explore!

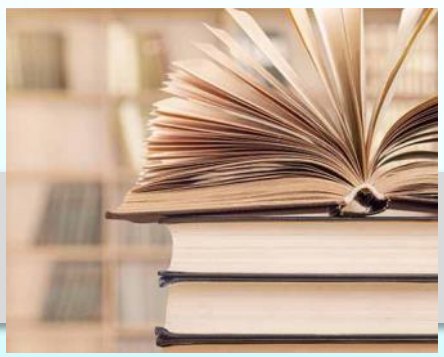
3. Writing with Robert Brown's 8 Questions

What questions should researchers who are thinking of developing a manuscript for publication ask themselves? In this article Brown provides eight questions, or writing prompts, for academics to use before they start writing. His goal is for academics to take more time at the start of the writing process to think carefully about what they want to say so that they will become better writers and more likely to produce high-quality work that is "right the first time." Working through these questions takes time but it helps to clarify the central arguments and develop a strong structure.

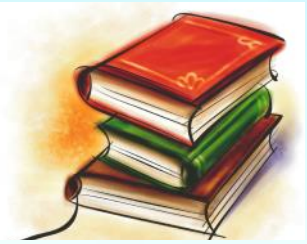
4.Wendy Belcher's "Writing Your Article in 12 Weeks"

This workbook by Wendy Belcher is a best-seller. In her book, Wendy Laura Belcher breaks down the writing process into manageable tasks to help anyone prepare an article for publication in just 12 weeks. This method could be done individually or also as a Belcher Circle, where a group of people gets together (e.g. on Google Meet) to work through the workbook step by step. The idea is that, at the end of 12 weeks, you will send your article to a journal.

Improving writing is more of a journey of self-discovery than the acquisition of a standardised skillset. It is more about finding what works for you, than mastering technique. We do not just write to communicate; we also need to communicate in order to write. It is a process of becoming as specifically *you* as you can, coupled with an effort to relate that specificity to others in ways you hope they understand.



"Improving writing is more of a journey of self-discovery than the acquisition of a standardised skillset."



FROM THE WORLD OF RESEARCH

"It's Not You, It's the Room"—Are the High-Tech, Active Learning Classrooms Worth It?

Sehoya Cotner, Jessica Loper, J. D. Walker and D. Christopher Brooks

ABSTRACT

Several institutions have redesigned traditional learning spaces to better realize the potential of active, experiential learning. We compare student performance in traditional and active learning classrooms in a large, introductory biology course using the same syllabus, course goals, exams, and instructor. Using ACT scores as predictive, we found that students in the active learning classroom outperformed expectations, whereas those in the traditional classroom did not. By replicating initial work, our results provide empirical confirmation that new, technology-enhanced learning environments positively and independently affect student learning. Our data suggest that creating space for active learning can improve student performance in science courses. However, we recognize that such a commitment of resources is impractical for many institutions, and we offer recommendations for applying what we have learned to more traditional spaces.

Cotner, S., Loper, J., Walker, J. D., & Brooks, D. C. (2013). " It's Not You, It's the Room"—Are the High-Tech, Active Learning Classrooms Worth It?. Journal of College Science Teaching, 42(6), 82-88.

Read on...
https://www.jstor.org/stable/43632160

SCAN ME

The Role of Social Media in Blended Mode Courses Offered by Faculty of Educational Studies at Villa College, Maldives

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Research background and problem statement

Villa College being the first private college in the Maldives leads the education scene, establishing new forums and means of providing the service of higher education. One aspect practiced at Villa College is blended learning. In blended learning, we provide lessons through face to face medium and Moodle. The purpose of conducting programmes in this medium is to provide opportunities for students in the islands. If this opportunity is not there, a significant number of potential students would have to leave their jobs as well as families to come to live in Male', which is very expensive. As a result, keeping in touch with students from the college in a formal and nonformal manner is very important. It is also important for students to interact with each other for academic purposes.

For this purpose, social media plays an integral role in the provision of education. Social media is a term that is broadly used to describe any number of technological systems related to collaboration and community (Joosten, 2012). More specifically, Gupta (2015) advocates that social media is about collaborating, networking, sharing, and generating knowledge and content. Thus, all of these features are of great value in the context of higher education. Some of the platforms used by both students and staff include Viber, Facebook, Moodle, and Twitter.

Smith's Honeycomb model is a way of setting out the most important forces behind the social media ecology which all social media marketers, users, and platforms operate within (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, Silvestre, 2011). The model is built upon seven functional blocks: identity, conversation, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups.

Aims and Objectives

The main aim of this study was to investigate the role of social media in the courses conducted in blended mode by the Faculty of Education Studies at Villa College. The main reason for conducting such a study was that many of the programmes at FES are conducted in this blended mode, and it is important to understand the means of communication used by the students and lecturers.

Research question

The main research question for this study was, *'what is the role of social media in the courses conducted by FES?'*. To find out about these two sub-topics were proposed. They were *'what are the preferred social media platforms?'* and *'for what purposes do students use social media as students of FES?'*.

Methodology

A combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches was used in this study. The quantitative data were collected through a closed-ended survey questionnaire and the qualitative data were collected through open-ended questions from 100 students from different campuses currently studying in blended mode courses offered by FES at Villa College. This sample was purposive and the hard copies of the questionnaire were given to campus managers and the filled questionnaires were sent back to FES.

Findings

The findings of this study focused on 4 main areas.

Firstly, the purposes for which the students use social media. The result showed that most students used social media to send and receive information about different aspects of their

programme and modules. Additionally, social media was used to solve student issues, followed by sharing information about schedules and changes in schedule. A few students noted that it was also a means to socialize among class members.

Secondly, responses regarding the most used platform reveal that almost all students used Viber and 40% of students had active profiles on Facebook. However, it was surprising that one student said s/he did not have an account on any of the social media platforms.

Thirdly, the results on the frequency of social media usage were varied; 46% of students used it frequently for communicating with other students and 25% said they used it daily. On the other hand, communication with teachers was rather low; while 30% of students used it frequently and 8% used daily, the majority of the student (43%) said they used it only when required. These results tally with the study of Tratari (2015) who found that 33.9% of the students use social media very often as a learning-study tool; 46% use it often, and 20 % use it very rarely during the study process.

Lastly, responses to difficulties faced in using social media were received in 6 broad categories: connection, expenses, distraction, awareness, ethics, and unavailability of Dhivehi font. Some students did not face any difficulties in using social media, however, this is a small percentage.

Conclusions

The main conclusion in answering the research question is that social media serves in many purposes, therefore, plays a vital role in the smooth communications in conducting the programmes in blended mode, especially since the students are scattered across different islands of Maldives, and with Viber being the most commonly used platform.

A significant finding of this study is that lecturers and faculty should take note of the fact that there may be students who do not use any platform or are not aware of how to use them when including any type of communication or activity using these forums.

Finally, the college should explore ways for collaborating with the IT department and software application programmers to make more apps using Dhivehi language or to make other apps more compatible with Dhivehi, as we do not want to leave out our students who are more familiar with Dhivehi language, especially those doing degree and masters in teaching Dhivehi and Islam.

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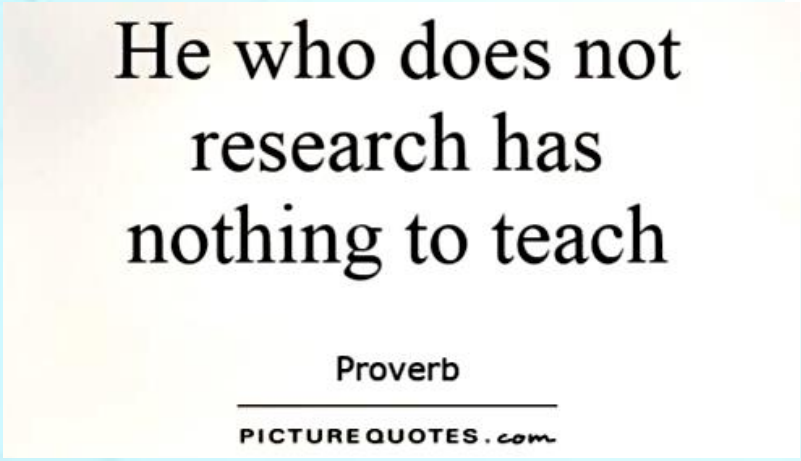

Stories as Academic Research: A Commentary

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This commentary is based on an article published in the International Journal of Qualitative Research (IJQM). The process of crafting a story from interview transcripts emerged as an approach in analysing the interview transcripts as part of my Ph.D. research. My research was about a retrospective reflection into young adults' adolescence and takes into consideration the social influences of the culture, individual values, individual biases, and attribution that were in play during their time in the life skills education program. In the study, individual experiences are classified as the subjective realities of the individual. Hence, one on one interviews were conducted to capture these experiences.

This commentary highlights how the progression of data collected through interviews was methodologically processed into a story. This was particularly pertaining to the data being collected from the participant. The methodological process was an attempt to create a story from interview transcripts instead of breaking down the data into segments and patterns of meaning.

Additionally, this commentary describes my thought process in developing a step-by-step process on how to analyse the narratives from interview transcripts. As I was researching the craftsmanship of stories, I discovered that stories move beyond providing descriptions and thematic developments as found in most qualitative studies. Crafting stories from interview transcripts involves a complex set of analytic processes. I understood that several researchers endeavored on this tedious task of translating interview transcripts into meaningful representations in the form of personal narratives (Hawkins & Saleem, 2012), poems (Clark-McGhee & Castro, 2015), and short stories (Diversi, 1998). While there exist several ways to present narrative data, across different disciplines (see Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Cortazzi, 1994; Lieblich et al., 1998; Riessman, 2000), I proposed that narrative analysis can be utilised with different typologies or a combination of multiple approaches in representing the social reality of individual lived experiences (Czarniawska, 2004; Hyvärinen, 2008). There is no single procedure that can be claimed as 'best' for analysing narratives. Therefore, I began to explore the variety of methodologies that were adopted to retell a story. In this process I adapted a mix and match strategy, making way to a multimethod framework to analyse the narratives I gathered from my participants. I named it "Multimethod Restorying Framework". I hope that this commentary will encourage researchers to explore narrative analysis and become creative in presenting participants' lived experiences in meaningful ways.

How to use a multimethod approach to crafting stories

I used multiple typologies and approaches to narrative analysis such as holistic content reading (Lieblich et al., 1998), elements of the story (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Czarniawska, 2004; Imabuchi & Ogata, 2012), narrative inquiry (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006), and structural analysis (Riessman, 1993, 2001, 2005) to develop a restorying framework (see Nasheeda et al., 2019) to transform transcripts into a story. A step-by-step progression within the framework includes choosing interview participants, transcribing interviews, familiarising oneself with the transcript (elements of holistic-content reading), chronologically plotting (elements of the story), use of follow-up interviews as a way to collaborate (an important procedure in narrative inquiry), and developing the story through structural analysis such as language. Hence, the purpose of the article was to illustrate the narratological process of turning transcripts into stories by presenting the nuances that go into decision-making on the part of the researcher.

Progression through the phases

The progression through the phases was presented in four phases. Phase one included the

decision on choosing the right participant to interview. As qualitative research samples are chosen with a purpose, the right participants with the right kind of experiences are crucial to obtain rich and in-depth data for the study. The primary source of data collection in qualitative research are semi-structured interviews. I described the decisions and thought process of how semi-structured and social media platforms such as Viber, Facebook instant messaging, and emails were utilised to explore participants' lived experiences. Interviews were transcribed in a naturalistic fashion, which included all the verbal cues, extraneous words, and utterances. This process allowed for active reflection on the interview by identifying the participant's mood, tone, and familiarity with the narrative conversation as a whole.

Holistic-content reading through re-reading and listening to an audio recording of the interviews several times were adopted to understand how the participant constructed her uniqueness in the social context and positioned herself within the story that was narrated. Several examples were provided to illustrate this process.

Phase two and three mainly discussed the storying and emplottment of the whole story. Vladamir Propp's structural analysis method was used to understand the elements of the story such as form, function, and phenomenon. Substiles served as the building blocks of the resulting story. Collaboration between participants and the researcher facilitated in establishing a coherent story.

The final phase of the story development was the meaning-making process. The elements of structural analysis such as dichotomies and silences were useful in meaning-making and filling the gaps. The meaning attached to words that were frequently used by the participant in describing her experiences were clarified. These elements revealed the participant's character, relationships with significant others in her life, and the turning points in the participant's story. The use of person shifts signaled important narrative events, peaks, and evaluations giving insight to the story plot. Several examples of shifting pronouns, talking in the second person, and self-evaluation were presented to illustrate the structural analytical process of meaning-making from language and concluded with extracts from the crafted story that was developed using the multimethod restorying framework.

For a comprehensive understanding of the restorying multimethod approach, download the full paper from the link below:

https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919856797

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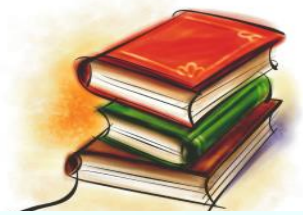

FROM THE WORLD OF RESEARCH

Social Networking Sites as Formal Learning Environments in Business Education

Abida Ellahi

ABSTRACT

The central objective of this study is to investigate the extent to which social networking sites can affect learning effectiveness, and to what amount this technology can be used as supplementary elements for existing pedagogy methods prevailing in a developing country. The study used a teaching case research method to investigate the effects of Social Networking Sites (SNS) usage on learning outcomes of students in higher education setting in Pakistan. The central hypothesis developed in this study was that, using social networking sites in higher education enhance students' interest, which ultimately increases their satisfaction and perceived learning performance. These effects are further boosted in the presence of instructor's support. The results confirmed that Social Networking Sites (SNS) hold a place in teaching and learning in higher education. The study provides a way to maximize the impact of the existing technologies, by providing an understanding of how the different technological tools and learning can impeccably be incorporated in higher education.

Ellahi, A. (2018). Social networking sites as formal learning environments in business education. Journal of Educational Technology & Society, 21 (4), 64-75.

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SCAN ME

Influence of Parenting Styles on Adolescent Resilience Skills

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Research background and problem statement

Parenting practices around the world share three major goals: ensuring children's health and safety, equipping children for life as productive adults, and transmitting cultural values. (APA, 2018). The main influence on children's life comes from their parents, who not only nurture children physically but also their styles of nurturance contribute to children's overall wellbeing and resilience skills. Research findings show that parenting styles produce several positive and negative developmental outcomes in adolescents (Steinberg and Lerner, 2004). In the past few decades, the Maldivian society has faced rapid social changes, which have hugely impacted how children are reared and the support available to them as they grow up. Transition into adulthood makes them undergo tremendous challenges of identity development, including personal, and moral development. Adolescents are more likely to be lured, approached, and even threatened to engage in risky behaviors. A wealth of literature indicates parenting styles and resilience skills are characteristics that can help to mitigate the negative consequences of emotional and behavioral problems of adolescents (Garmezy & Masten, 1991; Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992; & Ritter, 2005).

Aims and Objectives

The aims include examining the impact of parenting style on adolescent resilience skills firstly, by exploring the correlation between the dimension of parenting style and resilience in adolescents, evaluating whether there is a significant difference in resilience among girls and boys, identifying whether the dimension of parenting styles differ based on the gender of adolescents and finally, investigating which among the parenting styles influence resilience most.

Research Hypotheses

H1: There is a significant relationship between the dimension of parenting styles and resilience skills.

H2: There is a significant difference in resilience among girls and boys.

H3: There is a significant difference in the dimensions of parenting style among adolescent boys and girls

H4: Authoritative Parenting Style is correlated with higher resilience.

Methodology

The study aimed to find the relationship between dimensions of parenting styles and resilience skills among adolescents. A quantitative research design was deemed to be most appropriate as it tends to address research problems requiring a description of trends or an explanation of the relationships among variables (Parahoo, 2006 & Philps 2009). Moreover, a quantitative research design was most appropriate to this study as it utilized statistical analysis to prove or disprove the hypothesis (Shuttle worth, 2008).

A cross-sectional survey design was employed in this study. The sample consisted of 120 participants, 70 girls, and 70 boys. The tools that were utilized for the paper were Connor Davidson's Resilience Scale (CD-RISC) and Scales of Parenting Style (Gafoor & Kurukkan). Pearson's correlation coefficient and t-test were used for inferential statistics.

Discussion & Findings

The results revealed a significant positive relationship between two dimensions of parenting styles and resilience skills (Table 1). The correlational values of resilience on parental responsiveness at (0.531**) and parental control at (0.610**).

Table 1: Correlation matrix dimensions of parenting styles and resilience

Variables	Parental responsiveness	Parental control
Resilience	0.531**	0.610**

*. p< 0.05 , **p< 0.01

The study of Werner and Smith (1982) claims that mothers who positively dealt with their children by acceptance, kindness, control, and support showed a high level of resilience.

Also, research findings indicate that adolescents' perceptions of warmth and security in relationships with parents are correlated positively with self-confidence, exploration of issues related to identity, and comfort in interactions with others (Jackson, Dunham, & Kidwell, 1990; Kamptner, 1988). Furthermore, this correlational pattern is evident in research findings relating to the development of autonomy to Baumrind's

(1991) conceptualization of parental patterns of control.

It is evident from the statistics that there is a significant difference in the dimensions of parenting style based on gender. The results of the t-test analysis depicted that the mean score of females (70.470) was significantly greater (70.470) than males (65.910) in resilience skills. (Table 2).

Table 2: The t. test value of resilience in girls and boys

Variable / Samples		Girls	Boys
Resilience	Mean	70.470	65.910

The mean value (70.470) for girls (an increase in almost 5 points) depicts that the parents are highly responsive and controlling in the case of girls compared to the boys.

Adolescents who spend more time with their mothers, are more likely to share their feelings with them. Research suggests that mothers praise and engage with girls more than with boys (Fagot, 1974). Literature suggests that girls emphasize interpersonal relations, communion, and conversation of societal values, human relationships, and expressiveness (Clark, 2011). Besides, girls use resilience factors such as: seeking support and getting support more than boys. On the other hand, adolescents commonly view fathers as relatively distant figures to be consulted primarily for information and material support (Steinberg & Silk, 2002).

The results of this research support the idea that parents are seen as more responsive towards controlling girls than boys. The mean values of dimension in girls and boys for parental control was (157.02) and (141.70), and for parental responsiveness was (155.55) and (141.17) respectively (Table 3).

Table 3: The t.test value of dimensions of parenting style based on gender

Variable / Samples		Girls	Boys
Parental control	Mean	157.020	141.700
Parental responsiveness	Mean	155.550	141.170

It is evident from the statistics that there is a significant difference in the dimension of parenting style among adolescent boys and girls. Parents are highly responsive and controlling in the case of girls than boys. Authoritative parenting style is associated with higher resilience as it is characterized by high responsiveness and demandingness due to clearly defined rules and consistent discipline of the parents. The results of the average resilience obtained in each parenting style depict that the authoritative parenting style (75.428) highly influence resilience in adolescents when compared to the other three parenting styles (Table 4).

Table 4: The average resilience obtained in each parenting style

Parenting styles	Average resilience
Authoritarian	69.857
Authoritative	75.428
Permissive	63.733
Neglectful	61,618

Adolescence is a critical developmental period that requires parents and adolescents to establish an effective relationship. Children of authoritative parents are most apt to excel in school and display the highest levels of prosocial behavior. Research suggests that the authoritative parenting style is associated with higher levels of parent-adolescent cohesion (Nelson et al. 2011) and a lower level of conflict frequency (Smetana, 1995).

Furthermore, adolescents' perceptions of parental acceptance and involvement are correlated positively with self-confidence. Identity exploration and empathic behavior (Jackson. Dunham, & Kidwell, 1990; Kamptner, 1988).

Conclusions

The present study was designed to determine the impact of parenting style on adolescent resilience skills. The results suggest that there is a significant positive relationship between the dimension of parenting styles and resilience. When adolescents are resilient, they cope better during or after difficult situations. They 'bounce back' when things go wrong. One of the significant findings to emerge from this study is that there is a significant difference in resilience among girls and boys. Based on gender, resilience is seen higher in girls than in boys. Girls use resilience factors such as: seeking support and getting support more than boys as they are more likely to build positive connections with parents, teachers, and adults in the community. The findings of this study suggest that there is a significant difference in the dimension of parenting style among adolescent boys. The findings support the idea that parents are seen as more responsive towards controlling girls than boys. To maintain relationships amid rapid and extensive changes of adolescence, relationships must be adapted to the new characteristics of individuals. Therefore, it is recommended that parents need to develop a close relationship with adolescents and model effective communication skills also, believe in themselves as a parent and get opportunities to learn parenting skills.

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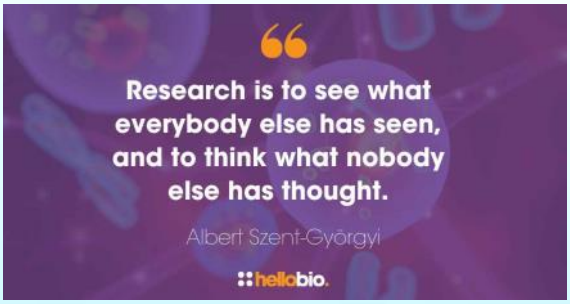

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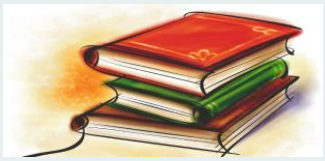

FROM THE WORLD OF RESEARCH

I will pay someone to do my assignment: an analysis of market demand for contract cheating services on twitter

Alexander Amigud and Thomas Lancaster

ABSTRACT

Contract cheating providers exist as businesses with a single shared intention, to profit on a student's inability to fulfil academic requirements for themselves. For contract cheating providers to make money, the correct market conditions are required. First, providers need to be able to offer the expertise that students request. Second, students need to be financially able to pay for specialist support across a diverse range of different areas. If students are unable to meet the price or require expertise that providers do not offer, the transaction is not going to be completed. Therefore, an examination of the demand-side of the contract cheating process in terms of subject matter expertise and the price of offers is important. The research presented in this paper is based on the analysis of 1579 Twitter messages (tweets) that contract cheating providers engaged with. The study aims to examine price variation and the type of assignments students seek to outsource. For typical requests such as essay writing, students are shown to be willing to pay $33.32 per 1000 words. Some services carry a premium, particularly where a student wishes to hire an impersonator to take an examination for them. The student demand for paid help is seen to be highest in the mathematics field, suggesting that students feel under-equipped and under-supported in this area. The paper concludes by discussing further implications of this research and strategies for the minimisation of contract cheating.

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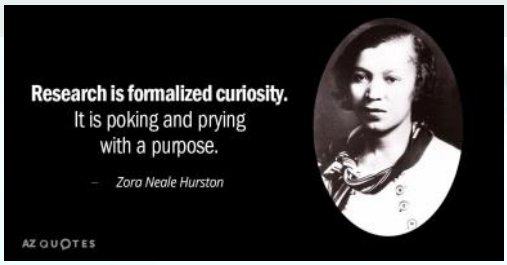

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