

Exploring Assignment Plagiarism by Students in Private Colleges in China

Lin Chen¹ , Norzihani Saharuddin^{2*} 

¹Language And Humanities Education, Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia.

Email: gs57849@student.upm.edu.my

²Language And Humanities Education, Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia.

Email: norzihani@upm.edu.my

ABSTRACT

This study explored influence factors and solutions to assignment plagiarism among private college students in China. The focus of this study was two: i) To explore the influence factors contributing to assignment plagiarism of Chinese private college students and ii) To explore the solutions to assignment plagiarism of Chinese private college students. This study employed a qualitative method with a case study design and posted a series of one-on-one semi-structured interviews with six graduates from private colleges in China. Twenty-one graduates applied, but only six of them met the criteria. This study adopted thematic analysis to explore participants' responses. This study reported that researchers found ten themes identified in this study of research question one. They are students with weak learning foundations; students expect to receive learning rewards; students hope for better development in the future; students do not judge and understand the standard of assignment plagiarism; lecturers lack guidance and supervision of students; lecturer assignments design is not reasonable; and others. Eight themes were identified in this study of research question two: changing students' learning styles, stimulating interest in learning, and advocating independent learning; improving the quality of teaching and learning and laying a solid foundation for students after graduation; strengthening education on academic integrity and academic norms; improve lecturers' academic advising and supervisory skills; reasonable setting of assignments and establishment of good rules for assignment management and evaluation; and so on.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR (*):

Norzihani Saharuddin
(norzihani@upm.edu.my)

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Contribution/Originality: This study's primary contribution is finding the influence factors contributing to and solutions to assignment plagiarism of Chinese private college students, which has specific reference value and practical significance to purify the academic atmosphere of private colleges, rectify the phenomenon of assignment plagiarism and designate perfect academic norms.

1. Introduction

For higher education institutions, academic integrity is essential (Carmela et al. 2019). The International Center for Academic Integrity (2021) defines academic integrity as the commitment to the six basic values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage (International Centre for Academic Integrity, 2021). Plagiarism seriously infringes on the intellectual property rights of others, which is a kind of bad behavior hated by educators and reflects the disadvantages of education. The phenomenon of assignment plagiarism is more common worldwide, and it is repeatedly banned (Zhang, 2019). In academia, plagiarism should have no place, as it will threaten the authenticity of any discipline. As a standard, effective, and simple way to test students' learning effect and use the knowledge to solve practical problems, course homework is widely used in the teaching process of various courses in colleges and universities. Currently, in the teaching process of Chinese higher education, common assignments include many types, such as classroom tests, post-class exercises, course essays, laboratory report summaries, and course design practices. The assignment is an all-round and multi-angle evaluation of student's learning process, which is a kind of supplement and continuation of classroom teaching and has a vital role in the actual teaching process of colleges and universities (Fang, 2019). However, plagiarism in higher education is common and has plagued higher education for many years (Lou, 2021).

In China, private colleges, as an essential part of higher education, are a significant force in popularizing higher education, the construction of double first-class universities, and the road to a strong education country (Lu, 2023). However, the primary hardware facilities of private colleges are relatively complete, and compared with public universities, they are relatively backward in the construction of campus culture (Zhou, 2023). Compared with public colleges and universities, the students of private colleges have their characteristics. They lack deep thinking about learning, pay more attention to personal interests, lack learning motivation and confidence, and have a strong sense of psychological inferiority (Wang et al., 2020). These characteristics lead to the assignment plagiarism phenomenon of private college students being more severe than public colleges and universities. Therefore, to aid in understanding private college student assignment plagiarism, this study used one-on-one semi-structured interviews to collect participants' data on the influence factors contributing to and solutions to assignment plagiarism. This study proposes two research objectives: i) To explore the influence factors contributing to assignment plagiarism of Chinese private college students and ii) To explore the solutions to assignment plagiarism of Chinese private college students. Then, two research questions: i) What are the influence factors of assignment plagiarism among private college students in China? and ii) What are the solutions to assignment plagiarism among private college students in China?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Academic Integrity

In higher education, plagiarism is in the greater context of academic integrity and deceptive practices (Gullifer & Tyson, 2014; Power, 2009). Therefore, it is essential to understand what is academic integrity first. Educational institutions should address academic integrity as a vital teaching responsibility (Çelik & Razi, 2023). The ultimate goal of an educational institution should be to cultivate academically successful people who accept the fundamental values of academic integrity, namely, honesty, trust,

fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage, proposed by the [International Center for Academic Integrity \(2021\)](#). Scholars attach great importance to academic integrity. As [McCabe et al. \(2012\)](#) stated, academic integrity is essential, especially when seen as a barometer of the general moral tendencies of the emerging generation. Academic integrity is a precursor to the future and a reappearance of the prevailing customs passed from society to the next generation.

The definition of academic integrity is the commitment to the six fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage ([International Centre for Academic Integrity, 2021](#)). These principles and values lay the foundation for guiding the academic behavior of academic members and students and translating written norms and ideals into practice. Academic integrity is the expression of integrity in academic activities. It refers to the sum of the codes of conduct and norms that should be followed in the relationship between individuals and others, individuals and society when engaged in academic activities ([Li et al., 2020](#)).

2.2. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is literary fraud, which is the display of another's works or ideas without praise of the original work ([Ahnaf et al., 2023](#)). Plagiarism is not considered a crime from a legal point of view ([Frye, 2016](#)). Plagiarism, defined as a lack of attribution of external sources, has received disproportionate attention in student manuals, style guides, department websites, and lectures but at the expense of other inappropriate use of external sources ([Sibanda, 2020](#)). However, plagiarism while in college is highly condemned by the academic community and can majorly impact a person's career. Plagiarism has severe consequences. As [Satija and Martínez-Ávila \(2019\)](#) considered, plagiarism leads to reputation, financial fines, and career failure. Student plagiarism can result in punishment, dismissal, degree cancellation, etc.

Based on the literature, there are seven types of plagiarism: rewriting text without proper citation, mosaic plagiarizing text from different sources combined into one, copy-pasting without due citation, incorrect citations, arrogating someone else's entire work, self-plagiarism, a person who submits his/her published work as if it were new and cites a nonexistent work ([Vij et al., 2009](#)).

2.3. Assignment Plagiarism

Assignment plagiarism refers to the process in which students, in order to submit their assignments on time, use visual organs and auditory organs in writing and network channels without independent thinking or only a tiny part of the content and record the obtained information in their assignments ([Zhang, 2021](#)). Assignment plays a crucial role in higher education, including the following positions: ensure students review the course after class and conduct necessary exercises; guide the direction of review after class; help students develop good learning habits, grasp the course knowledge, especially the mistakes; understand the learning attitude; and make the usual results according to the student's assignments ([Shen, 2020](#)).

2.4. Private Colleges and Students in China

As an essential part of Chinese higher education, private colleges are an important growth point in education development and a vital force for promoting education reform,

with an increasingly important role in talent cultivation, social services, and scientific research (Fu & Wang, 2019). By February 2022, there were 417 private undergraduate colleges in China, and private colleges have become an essential part of the Chinese higher education system and have played an important role in the popularization of higher education. In the vigorous development of private higher education, the teaching quality is still in a "depression." Private colleges differ significantly from public colleges and universities, with low admission scores of students and backward teaching and management levels (Wu et al., 2023).

Students of private colleges have their unique characteristics. First, they have a correct attitude but lack deep thinking. They cannot have a deep understanding of some social problems, nor can they use political theories to guide the practical problems encountered in their daily life, so they do not have a strong interest in political study. Second, their value orientation is diversified, but their behavior tendency is utilitarian. Although they show great enthusiasm for participating in various activities, they pay more attention to their interests and are more willing to participate in some highly utilitarian activities. Third, they have a strong desire and motivation to learn but have poor learning persistence. Some students do not have clear learning goals, encounter setbacks or problems because of their own, easily give up, slowly feel the heart is willing but insufficient, and lose confidence in their own. The original goals and ideas are gradually erased, and the enthusiasm for learning is steadily reduced and even affects the students around. Last but not least, their psychological needs tend to be diversified, but their psychological inferiority complex is potent. Some students of private colleges psychologically think that they are inferior to students of public colleges and universities and believe that society marginalized them. Comparison with students of public colleges and universities often causes them to have an inferiority complex. They quickly become psychologically unbalanced, pay less attention to their classes, become addicted to the Internet and games, have lower demands on themselves, and show some states in their behaviors such as being withdrawn, anorexia, being addicted to the Internet, and so on (Wang et al., 2020).

3. Methodology

3.1. The Design of the Study

This study adopted a qualitative methodology with a case study design to explore the influence factors of assignment plagiarism of Chinese private college students and the solutions to assignment plagiarism of Chinese private college students. The case study is a description of a case designed to provide a deeper understanding of the circumstances of a particular case (Tomaszewski et al., 2020). The case study design was chosen to capture private college students' perspectives on the influence factors and solutions to assignment plagiarism to avoid plagiarism. This allows researchers to find out the influencing factors affecting students' assignment plagiarism and thus propose ways to solve their assignment plagiarism to avoid plagiarism different from previous studies. This study used one-on-one semi-structured interviews because the researchers had the advantage of familiarity with a subject but wanted to allow the participants to express new concerns (Wilson, 2014).

3.2. Participants

Researchers posted a call for an interview in a social media group of graduate private college students in China. Twenty-one graduates applied, but only six of them met the criteria. The criteria for choosing the participant are based on the following. First, participants must be students who have already graduated from a private college for no more than a year. They can easily recall their own experiences and those around them in college. Second, participants had no gender, professional, or geographic restrictions, so the selection face for this study will be wider. Third, participants must have been involved in assignment plagiarism, had assignment plagiarism experience, or witnessed it from peers around them during their private lives. Finally, two participants came from Kunming; one was from Chengdu, one was from Chongqing, one was from Shanghai, and the other was from Xi'an.

3.3. Data Collection

A one-on-one semi-structured interview technique was applied in this study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted when some knowledge of the subject or question was available, but more information was needed (Wilson, 2014). Since the participants came from different places in China, they all needed to work on weekdays. All virtual interviews were recorded using the Tencent Meeting application with approval by each participant. The researchers contacted each participant individually and asked about their availability. Each interview ran for about 60 minutes with video recordings, with each participant according to the semi-structured interview protocol.

3.4. Data Analysis

The thematic analysis is the most common data analysis method in qualitative research to explore participants' responses (Clarke et al., 2015; Guest et al., 2011). The researchers transcribed the video files by Iflytek (<https://www.iflyrec.com>) and analyzed them with thematic analysis. The researchers analyzed data from the beginning of the first one-on-one semi-structured interview with the tool NVivo12. Themes are crucial in data based on research questions representing the level or significance of pattern responses in the dataset, while subthemes provide structure for a broader theme (Clarke & Braun, 2013; Braun & Clarke, 2019; Terry et al., 2017). Data analysis identified themes to determine influence factors and solutions to private college students' assignment plagiarism.

3.5. Validity and Reliability

Two experienced researchers reviewed the interview protocol to achieve internal validity. These transcripts were cross-checked three times to validate participants' answers. The researchers conducted discussions on data analysis to eliminate any potential bias in the thematic analysis process. The data were considered reliable or consistent after the results indicated that they were saturated; this was accomplished by running the analysis and data collection simultaneously. This study adopted multiple data sources triangulation with different participants of graduates from different private colleges. Besides, this study used triangulation by the researchers in the data analysis.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

Participants' involvement in this study was completely voluntary, and they were free to stop participating at any time and were not required to give a reason. The anonymity of the participants can be ensured by hiding their personal information such as name, graduation colleges, etc. The participants were named A, B, C, D, E, and F. The informed consent form granted the participants's permissions. All video-recorded interviews had been stored in the first researcher's password-protected computer, and only the first and the second author had direct access to the data. This study strictly followed the approved ethical approvals, placing the participants' well-being, privacy, and safety as a top priority.

4. Results

This section presents the results of this study. [Table 1](#) shows the themes identified in the one-on-one semi-structured interviews based on research questions.

Table 1. Basic Themes of this Study

Research Question	Themes
RQ 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students with weak learning foundations Students expect to receive learning rewards Students hope for better development in the future Students do not judge and understand the standard of assignment plagiarism Lecturers lack guidance and supervision of students Lecturer assignments design is not reasonable College supervision and education are inadequate The adverse effects of the parents The adverse effects of the network Influence of adverse social environment Changing students' learning styles, stimulating interest in learning, and advocating independent learning Improving the quality of teaching and learning and laying a solid foundation for students after graduation Strengthening education on academic integrity and academic norms
RQ 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve lecturers' academic advising and supervisory skills Reasonable setting of assignments and establishment of good rules for assignment management and evaluation Establishment of disciplinary mechanisms for academic misconduct Home-college co-education to help students establish the correct concept of academic integrity Purify the network environment and eliminate the negative impact of the network Give full play to the function of social practice

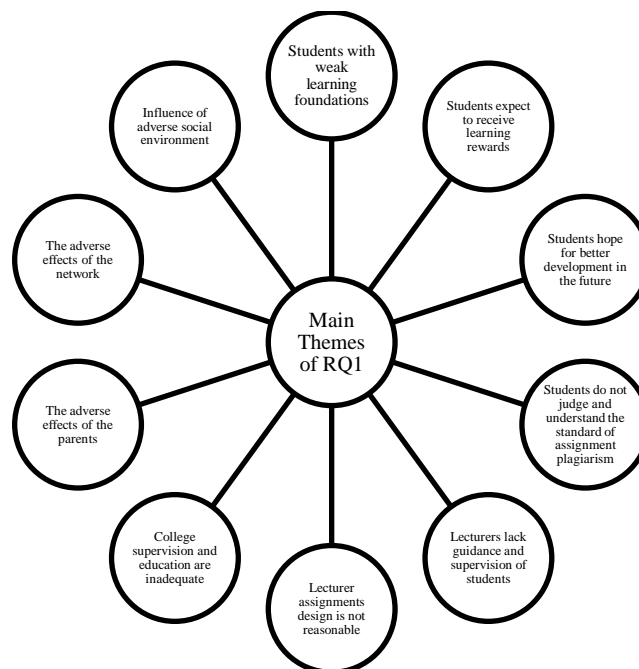
The researchers analyzed all the recorded data from the one-on-one semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants regarding assignment plagiarism, and ten predominant themes emerged based on RQ1. These were: students with weak learning foundations; students expect to receive learning rewards; students hope for better development in the future; students do not judge and understand the standard of assignment plagiarism; lecturers lack guidance and supervision of students; lecturer assignments design is not reasonable; college supervision and education are inadequate;

the adverse effects of the parents; the adverse effects of the network; influence of adverse social environment. Nine predominant themes emerged based on RQ2 were: changing students' learning styles, stimulating interest in learning, and advocating independent learning; improving the quality of teaching and learning and laying a solid foundation for students after graduation; strengthening education on academic integrity and academic norms; improve lecturers' academic advising and supervisory skills; reasonable setting of assignments and establishment of good rules for assignment management and evaluation; establishment of disciplinary mechanisms for academic misconduct; home-college co-education to help students establish the correct concept of academic integrity; purify the network environment and eliminate the negative impact of the network; give full play to the function of social practice.

4.1. Results Related to RQ 1

The main themes under RQ1 can be categorized as follows (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Main Themes of RQ1



4.1.1. Theme 1: Students with weak learning foundations.

Some private college students are not interested in learning or have insufficient interest in learning. They do not pay attention in class and cannot understand what the lecturer says, resulting in a weak foundation for learning. Although they want to study seriously, it is challenging to keep up with the teaching pace of lecturers, and they fail to master the knowledge effectively. As a result, they can only choose to do assignment plagiarism. Otherwise, they will not be able to get the usual assignment score in the course, thus failing to pass the final exam.

4.1.2. Theme 2: Students expect to receive learning rewards.

With the reform and development of Chinese higher education policies, the range and scope of student awards by the state, colleges, and universities have increased. One of

these rewards is their final exam scores, representing a significant proportion of their final grades. Therefore, some private college students plagiarize in their assignments to get high rates and scholarships.

4.1.3. Theme 3: Students hope for better development in the future

China provides a multi-channel and all-round development space and a way for private college students' future development. After the student graduates, the three most important ways are employment, domestic entry for an examination graduate student, and study abroad. All three development approaches require the submission of their undergraduate transcripts. If the score is not high, it will affect the employer's evaluation of graduates and hinder them from applying for domestic graduate students and studying abroad. Therefore, to get high marks, they can only achieve assignment plagiarism in the case of limited ability.

4.1.4. Theme 4: Students do not judge and understand the standard of assignment plagiarism

Many private college students may understand the criteria for cheating in final exams and graduation thesis plagiarism, but the definition and criteria of assignment plagiarism are vague. For example, they know downloading and submitting articles online is considered plagiarism. Still, they think moving other people's research results and explaining them in their thoughts and language is not plagiarism. Some others feel that plagiarism of assignments does not belong to the scope of plagiarism among students because assignments are not part of exams, so plagiarism does not matter.

4.1.5. Theme 5: Lecturers lack guidance and supervision of students

Some lecturers do not pay attention to the instructions of students' assignments and give assignments but do not explain the assignment requirements, resulting in students not paying attention to their assignments. Some lecturers just set and collect assignments but do not give any feedback on the results, resulting in students not knowing whether their assignments are right or wrong and how they should improve. Some lecturers do not pay attention to academic integrity themselves and do not explain to the students the academic integrity they should pay attention to in their assignments and courses, leading to students committing unethical academic behaviors in their assignments. There is also a lack of assignments for plagiarism by lecturers.

4.1.6. Theme 6: Lecturer assignments design is not reasonable

Some lecturers do not consider the differences among students in the assignment design process, and they over-pursued the difficulty of the assignment, which made it difficult for some students with poorer foundations to get started. Some lecturers pursue the design of assignments, and the number of assignments is relatively large, which is difficult for some students to complete under the huge amount of assignments. In addition, some lecturers seek perfection in assignments and demand too much from students, who often copy assignments to cope with the enormous pressure.

4.1.7. Theme 7: College supervision and education are inadequate

Some private colleges have neither guided nor preached academic integrity to their students. This has led to a lack of awareness of plagiarism in assignments and a weak adherence to academic ethics among students, making them feel that plagiarism is normal and not shameful. In addition, the supervision is also insufficient. Although there are regulations on plagiarism punishment, few students have been punished for plagiarism in their assignments.

4.1.8. Theme 8: The adverse effects of the parents.

Family education is crucial to children's growth; parents are the children's teachers. Parents' words and deeds play a subtle influence on children. In real life, some parents do not pay attention to their own words and deeds in front of their children to do some illegal things that invariably promote the child's dishonest behavior. Therefore, when they make assignment plagiarism behavior, they also think it is reasonable behavior.

4.1.9. Theme 9: The adverse effects of the network

Nowadays, the development of the network makes it easier for private college students to obtain the information they want, and assignment information is no exception. No matter what kind of assignments or questions, they can find the answer through the network. At the same time, many commercial websites provide plagiarism services to students, and students can quickly pay to finish their assignments without thinking.

4.1.10. Theme 10: Influence of adverse social environment

At present, the phenomenon of lack of integrity in every field of society, such as counterfeiting and trafficking, deception, false advertising, non-compliance with laws and regulations, etc., dramatically affects the integrity values of private college students in this social environment, leading them to deal with social and personal relationships, everything is self-centered, whether it is conducive to their interests as a yardstick, put their interests in the first place, go with the flow and follow the tide. Eager for quick success and quick profit, and profit-oriented. These are the indirect influences that cause them to plagiarize their assignment.

4.2. Results Related to RQ 2

The main themes under RQ2 can be categorized as follows (Figure 2).

4.2.1. Theme 1: Changing students' learning styles, stimulating interest in learning, and advocating independent learning

Many private college students have adapted to the passive, fill-in-the-blank teaching model from elementary through high school. The college only teaches basic courses, requiring students to take the initiative to learn relevant knowledge of the specialty outside the classroom. Some students want to take the industry but do not know what to learn is more beneficial. On the one hand, private colleges should do an excellent job of guiding students to change their learning styles. Lecturers should teach students to do an excellent job of pre-study before class, classroom learning, and practice after class, and based on this understanding and memorization, to help them build a knowledge network structure in their minds and then memorize the knowledge they have learned. On the other hand, a good environment should be created for students' independent learning.

When students have a strong interest in learning and can learn independently, they can effectively avoid plagiarizing their assignments.

Figure 2: Main Themes of RQ 2



4.2.2. Theme 2: Improving the quality of teaching and learning and laying a solid foundation for students after graduation

Private colleges should do a good job of reforming their teaching programs and adjusting professional training goals to be close to the needs of society. Grasp the quality work of classroom teaching. The teaching effect of teachers is directly related to the results of students' learning, so it is necessary to cultivate and supervise the teaching ability of lecturers. Through the above ways, the quality of teaching will be changed so that students will have more solid professional knowledge, strengthen their social adaptability after graduation, and lay a solid foundation for their future employment and further study.

4.2.3. Theme 3: Strengthening education on academic integrity and academic norms

The most fundamental way to stop students from plagiarizing assignments is to change their thinking so they can realize that plagiarism is a shameful behavior, establish self-discipline, and be subjectively unwilling to plagiarize. First, academic integrity education is carried out so students can grasp the concepts and types of academic dishonesty. Second, private universities can conduct more integrity education activities. Let students gradually deepen their understanding of the ethical code of integrity by participating in integrity education activities. Thirdly, academic integrity education needs to be guided in various aspects, such as the seriousness of plagiarism, legal issues, consequences of

plagiarism, and literature citation education. Fourthly, students are educated about academic norms to understand and understand the definition of plagiarism, the reasons for mistakes, the hazards, and the penalties.

4.2.4. Theme 4: Improve lecturers' academic advising and supervisory skills

First of all, lecturers should give careful guidance to students in every aspect of their work, especially when they find that students have a terrible attitude, fear of difficulties, perfunctory, plagiarism, and other signs must be stopped promptly, and enthusiastically help them to analyze the problems and resolve difficulties, with academic training as the goal, academic standards as the criterion to lead the students to delve into the study of the problem, and rise to the challenge. In this process, the lecturers should be responsible for academic leaders and student gatekeepers. They should correct the academic misconduct in the assignments in time to prevent plagiarism before it occurs. Secondly, lecturers should strengthen students' academic citation standard training in regular courses, help them familiarize themselves with the rules of academic citation, and teach them to learn the method of academic citation.

4.2.5. Theme 5: Reasonable setting of assignments and establishment of good rules for assignment management and evaluation

First of all, the assignments assigned by the lecturer in each class should be not only moderate in quantity but also moderate in difficulty, both in terms of basic knowledge but also in terms of the difficulty of the synthesis type of topics, to be able to make all the students interested in the problem and to enable the students with a weak foundation to put forward their views and opinions, and be enlightened and helped by the lecturer and their classmates. This way cannot only effectively prevent plagiarism but, more importantly, stimulate students' interest in learning so that more students actively participate in the learning process. Secondly, the assignments submitted by students should be corrected and evaluated on time, and there should be different evaluation standards for students at different levels. Do a good job of showing excellent assignments and correcting poor assignments for students.

4.2.6. Theme 6: Establishment of disciplinary mechanisms for academic misconduct

First, the most important is establishing, improving, and strictly enforcing the disciplinary mechanism for private college students' academic misconduct. One is the provision of penalties for academic misconduct, such as severe warnings, expulsion from colleges, etc. The second is the establishment of student integrity files. If a student engages in plagiarism or malpractice, they must report such behavior to the academic board, which then files it. These saved files can be used for free inquiry by social employers. Thirdly, software to prevent plagiarism in thesis will be used in assignments, and lecturers are required to use the software to check the weights and eliminate plagiarism in assignments.

4.2.7. Theme 7: Home-college co-education to help students establish the correct concept of academic integrity

First, most students are not living with their parents after entering college. Parents are not clear about their children's performance during college, and the college is not about the student's parents and family situation. Suppose private colleges establish a close

partnership with students' parents; on the one hand, it will enable parents to keep abreast of their student's performance in college, and parents will educate their students appropriately after receiving the feedback. On the other hand, the college has to understand the student's situation at home and help the student develop good study habits according to the family situation. In this way, they can effectively prevent the emergence of students' plagiarism behavior and promote the formation of good habits. Second, parents should set up correct values, which is the basis of integrity education for children. Parents in children's education, but also to strengthen their moral cultivation so that they have a good moral quality, only their moral level is improved. They have the qualifications and ability to educate children, and children can be more convinced and admired.

4.2.8. Theme 8: Purify the network environment and eliminate the negative impact of the network.

Regulate the network environment and strengthen online academic integrity education. First, it can be popularized to private college students through WeChat, forums, microblogging, and other ways to use network resources correctly. Secondly, the supervision of the network environment should be strengthened, and the relevant departments should remove the information related to online peddling, trading of theses, and trading of assignments, and severely penalize the appropriate people for creating a good network environment for college students. Thirdly, some private college students use various software to plagiarize, and the state should increase the investment, develop new and more advanced checking software systems, and technically support the management of academic misconduct.

4.2.9. Theme 9: Give full play to the function of social practice

On the one hand, all sectors of society should work together to consciously end the lack of integrity behavior, increase the punishment, and create a good social environment for private college students. To this end, we should intensify efforts to crack down on fake and shoddy products, piracy, and infringement, punish corruption, and purify the network environment. On the other hand, set up a model of integrity in the whole society, at the same time, increase publicity efforts, use news media, newspapers and magazines, and network platforms to publicize the concept of integrity and the exemplary deeds of integrity model, through film and television works, literary works to infect and guide college students to enhance the awareness of integrity. To contribute to preventing private college students from assignment plagiarism.

5. Discussion

5.1. Discussion Related to RQ 1

Overall, there appears to be a range of influence factors of assignment plagiarism by private college students in higher education in China. These include students with weak learning foundations; they expect to receive learning rewards; they hope for better development in the future and do not judge and understand the standard of assignment plagiarism. These four influence factors are the participants from the perspective of private college students to determine the factors contributing to assignment plagiarism, which is in line with [Mukasa et al. \(2023\)](#). [Mukasa et al. \(2023\)](#) maintained that a lack of interest or effort in the assignment and understanding of the policy on academic honesty

were influence factors contributing to academic dishonesty. However, this study focused on the perspective of assignment plagiarism. The results focus more on student characteristics at private colleges. For example, private college students are not interested in learning or have insufficient interest in learning; it is difficult to keep up with the teaching pace of lecturers, and they fail to master the knowledge effectively. Two influence factors are lecturers lack guidance and supervision of students and lecturer assignment design not reasonable from the perspective of private college lecturers to determine the factors contributing to assignment plagiarism. This result is entirely new to previous studies. These two points, combined with the faculty and teaching characteristics of private colleges, illustrated that the problem of plagiarism in students' assignments caused by lecturers in private colleges due to their inattention to students' assignment instructions and lack of feedback on the results of students' assignments, coupled with their lack of concern for academic integrity and poorly designed assignments. The influence factor of college supervision and education are inadequate, similar to [Li \(2019\)](#), who mentioned that the plagiarism of students' graduation thesis is related to the poor supervision of the colleges and universities. The fact that some private colleges neither mentor nor preach academic integrity to their students and that there are deficiencies in monitoring students' academic dishonesty is the focus of this study. The parents' adverse effects are an influencing factor in line with [Gutierrez and Padagas \(2019\)](#), who maintained that factor influences students' academic dishonesty related to their parents. Parents' words, deeds, and examples subtly affect their children. The other factor is the adverse effects of the network. The well-developed Internet facilitates plagiarism of students' assignments, which aligns with [Luo and Ji \(2020\)](#). The last influence factor in this study is the influence of adverse social environment. As it was found in the study by [Xu \(2019\)](#), the profit-centered social environment affects students' academic integrity.

5.2. Discussion Related to RQ 2

Based on RQ2, what are the solutions to assignment plagiarism among private college students in China? The participants found nine solutions to assignment plagiarism among private college students in China. The results found that the participants mainly focused on solving the problem of assignment plagiarism of private college students from the perspective of private colleges and lecturers. Changing students' learning styles, stimulating interest in learning, and advocating independent learning, improving the quality of teaching and learning and laying a solid foundation for students after graduation, strengthening education on academic integrity and academic norms, improving lecturers' academic advising and supervisory skills, reasonable setting of assignments and establishment of good rules for assignment management and evaluation, and establishment of disciplinary mechanisms for academic misconduct are from the perspective of private colleges and their lecturers. Among them, the result of changing students' learning styles, stimulating interest in learning, and advocating independent learning aligns with [Zhang \(2019\)](#), who maintained that it needs to guide students to use the correct methods and means to learn. Improving the quality of teaching and learning and laying a solid foundation for students after graduation is similar to [Sun \(2022\)](#). However, the result of this study combined with the characteristics of private colleges in China, how can private colleges lay a solid foundation for students' future employment and further studies when there is a gap between the colleges, lecturers, students, etc., and public colleges and universities? The result of strengthening education on academic integrity and academic norms is in line with [Luo and Ji \(2020\)](#). The two results of improving lecturers' academic advising and

supervisory skills, reasonable setting of assignments and establishment of good rules for assignment management and evaluation are new findings related to private college lecturers' characteristics. The lecturers should give students careful guidance in all aspects of their work and enthusiastically help them analyze problems and solve difficulties, take academic cultivation as the goal and academic norms as the guideline, and lead students to dive into research problems and rise to the challenge. In the usual courses, lecturers strengthen students' academic citation standard training, help students familiarize themselves with academic citation rules, and teach them to master academic citation methods. The assignments assigned by lecturers in each class should be not only moderate in number but also moderate in difficulty, and the assignments submitted by students should be corrected and evaluated promptly, with different evaluation standards for students at different levels. Concerning the result of the establishment of disciplinary mechanisms for academic misconduct, [Gutierrez and Padagas \(2019\)](#), [Sariasih and Tisnawijaya \(2019\)](#), [Javaeed et al. \(2019\)](#) in varying degrees, to monitoring or penalizing students for academic dishonesty. As the solution of home-college co-education to help students establish the correct concept of academic integrity, although home-college co-education was mentioned in [Sun's \(2022\)](#) study, the focus of this study is different. This study emphasizes the fact that parents themselves should develop proper values. Parents should educate their children and strengthen their moral development to have good moral qualities and improve their moral standards. They have the qualifications and ability to educate their children and can be more persuaded and admired. The next solution is purifying the network environment and eliminating the network's negative impact, which aligns with [Luo and Ji \(2020\)](#). However, this study proposes that private colleges should use a variety of software plagiarism and that the state should invest more in developing new and more advanced checking software systems and technological support for managing academic misconduct. The last solution in this study is to give full play to the function of social practice, which is in line with the findings in the study by [Xu \(2019\)](#).

6. Conclusion

Assignment plagiarism was high among the students in private college students. There was a wide range of influence factors on why private college students resort to assignment plagiarism. However, whatever the reason, plagiarism is unacceptable in academia, and drastic measures should be taken to curb it. In some institutions, it is dealt with informally, without reporting, which, unfortunately, is not an effective deterrent measure ([MacLeod & Eaton, 2020](#)). Systematically addressing this challenge, especially among Chinese private college students, is imperative. This study presented the influence factors of assignment plagiarism among private college students in China and the solutions to assignment plagiarism among private college students in China. The overall findings suggest that this study builds on existing research in this area and strongly suggests that private colleges should be open to exploring different strategies to address plagiarism in assignments of private college students and that the solution may not be as simple as copying and pasting.

It is important to emphasize that future research could use a triangulation framework based on surveys, interviews, textual analyses, or other forms of data reflecting the practices and engagement of private college students and should focus on possible reasons for assignment plagiarism. In addition, more research could be conducted to compare plagiarism in homework among private undergraduates across different disciplines, regions, and even countries, and more comprehensive information on

homework plagiarism could be obtained. The study of larger data samples from many students, regions, and countries could contribute to academic progress and transformation to some extent.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

The researchers used the research ethics provided by the Ethic Committee For Research Involving Human Subject of University Putra Malaysia (JKEUPM). All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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