



EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS OF PAID ACADEMIC WRITINGS IN PAKISTANI AND FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES

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**Abstract**

*The increasing reliance on paid academic writing services among university students poses significant challenges to academic integrity and educational quality. This thesis investigates the dynamics of these services within Pakistani and Foreign Universities, focusing specifically on the perspectives and experiences of the students who use them. Through in-depth qualitative interviews with students, the research aims to uncover the motivations behind seeking paid academic assistance, the ethical considerations involved, and the perceived impact on their academic development. The study also explores the differences in students' attitudes and behaviors regarding paid writing services across different cultural and educational contexts. By providing a detailed understanding of the factors driving this trend and its consequences, this research seeks to inform policy recommendations for upholding academic standards and fostering a culture of integrity in higher education.*

**Keywords:** Academic integrity, Educational quality, Motivations, Ethical considerations, Higher education

**Background**

Over the past 10 years, article writing has drawn a lot of attention from the educational world. Even though a lot of research indicates that students should write instructional articles, additional study is required to understand how to write high-quality articles. Still, a lot of students want assistance with writing, particularly when they are composing articles (Maharani et al., 2023). Writing is the process of putting thoughts, emotions, or opinions into words that contain specific details (Yovie, 2019). There are several benefits to writing for both the writer and the reader. It will assist pupils in logically communicating their brilliant thoughts (Ecarnot, 2015). They will acquire critical thinking on their own. University-level academic writing is important since it shows students' ability to communicate ideas clearly and succinctly, as well as how to express themselves and create well-written sentences (Asnas et al., 2022).

According to researchers, there might be several challenges when writing. The pupils may encounter internal or external barriers. Furthermore, Lesmana et al. (2020) assert that vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure are connected to students' internal issues. These three items are the essential parts of writing an essay. There is a connection between them. A student's writing will not be flawless if they struggle with any one of the three components because of their contributions to literature. Rofiqoh et al. (2022) & Williams et al. (2019) have drawn attention from the academic community. The claim that pupils cannot write what they do not know has become a prevalent one. As a result, the student must become familiar with a certain subject matter beforehand, whether through technology or printed materials. A student wants to write on ideational meaning, for instance. The pupil then delves more into the subject to learn about its definition, varieties, and other details. The



learner then revises it after analyzing its ideational meaning. Pakistani students have several challenges when it comes to writing for academic reasons and acquiring research literacy. The two most significant issues that students deal with are poor analytical abilities and poor English language proficiency. Many postgraduate students' theses and dissertations reflect this, as do the writers of this chapter, who have many years of experience supervising MPhils and PhDs and teaching at the postgraduate level (Shawan. et al, 2016).

Henry (2000) mentioned a list of micro-skills involved in the improvement of writing skills. Proficiency in mastering the micro-skills assists the writer in having a good command on correct writing without errors. The micro-skills mentioned by Henry are:

1. Use the script, spelling and punctuation correctly.
2. Apply the accurate words to state the right tense, case and gender.
3. Make use of major components such as subject, verb and object etc.
4. Appropriately convey the thought of writer to the reader.
5. Make the text coherent for the reader to understand it easily.
6. Place all parts of speech properly.
7. Apply the vocabulary and terminologies accurately.
8. Use the style of writing suitably to the requirements of the audience.
9. Clarify the central ideas from the sustaining information.
10. Avoid jargon, slang, taboos and keep in mind the standard of language
11. Should be according to the mental level of the reader.
12. Be aware of the prior knowledge of the audience about the subject.

### **Paid Academic Writing Services**

Paid academic writing services is a common term in students pursuing degrees of bachelors and masters in different disciplines across the world. Paid academic writing services refer to providing writing services to students in exchange of money such. The students pay for assignments which is mostly research papers, technical and academic reports and thesis, then publish these or submit these under their own names. This concept is referred to as ghost writing by multiple researchers. Writers having strong grip in research skills, developing research approached, drafting papers and theses, having worked with multiple formatting styles and having the ability to collect and analyze data are backbone of paid academic writing services (Turnitin Blog, 2023)

Using paid academic writing services compromises the educational process and diminishes the value of degrees obtained dishonestly. Bretag et al. (2019) points out that higher education institutions face serious ethical issues due to the rise in contract cheating, which is made possible using hired academic writing services. Academic integrity is difficult to uphold in a setting where students are under pressure to perform well academically and where these services are readily available (Newton, 2020).

### **Pakistani Students**

In higher education, with respect to Pakistani Universities, students come from diverse backgrounds and most of them lack in English grammar and English writing skills, which is why when they are asked to write research papers or thesis, the task becomes an ordeal for them as they do not have the required skill set to do so. Research writing is taught at different levels in universities, but students usually do not focus on such subjects considering them as non-essential or non-technical subjects (Sajid et al, 2015).

The absence of sufficient support mechanisms exacerbates the difficulties Pakistani students encounter in learning academic writing in the English language. Mansoor (2004) claims that a large number of Pakistani



schools do not use English as their primary language of instruction, leaving students insufficiently prepared for the demands of tertiary education, where proficiency in the language is essential.

Another problem which is faced by Pakistani students is that many students are also working part time jobs and cannot make sufficient time to study. In these scenarios, paid academic writing services fill the gap by offering complete assignments with anonymity where students pay for the services and submit them under their name (Asad et al, 2015).

### **Western Students**

In the western world, there is a concept which is considered to be a useful life lesson, that once an individual turns 18, he/she has to look after themselves on their own which is why most students in universities are working part time jobs (Asif et al., 2023; Leyla, 2018). Governments have allowed 20 hours of work but to make ends meet or to pay off debt, students are more likely work extra hours or do freelancing due to which they have less time to concentrate on assignments. For this purpose, they hire freelance content writers who offer paid academic writing services and then these students turn in the assignments under their own name, get better grades, submit tasks before deadlines and have the comfort of not working on the assignments given that they have to look after their jobs too. There is ample documentation on the problem of these students working extra hours to support themselves financially while they are in school. Students frequently juggle work and study, according to Curtis et al. (2001), which might result in a dependency on outside assistance for schoolwork. Furthermore, Robotham's (2012) survey revealed that many students encounter considerable stress while attempting to balance their obligations to their jobs and their studies, which prompts them to look for ghostwriting services in order to better manage their workload.

### **Pakistani VS Western Universities**

University-level academic writing is crucial because it shows how capable students are at expressing their thoughts precisely. It provides more for students than only imparting knowledge; it allows them to demonstrate their ability to articulate concepts in concise, convincing sentences. Students develop their analytical, synthesis, and problem-solving skills as well as their capacity to communicate complex ideas and theories in a logical and orderly manner via academic writing. The development of scholarly norm adherence, intellectual rigor, and attention to detail via academic writing is also beneficial. These skills are essential for success in higher education and beyond. Both Pakistani and Western Universities focus on research skills and promote research projects but have certainly failed to make students understand the importance of research itself which is why students think of research projects as a burden, hence they hire a professional writer to get paid academic writing services. A vital component of higher education is academic writing, which gives students the tools they need to communicate their ideas succinctly and persuasively. Lea et al. (1998) contend that academic writing is a social practice that students need to learn how to critically participate with, rather than just a technical ability. Hyland (2004) also highlights how academic writing helps students participate in disciplinary discourses, which helps them build their knowledge and interact with academic communities. The integrity of academic credentials is jeopardized, and the educational process is undermined by the use of hired academic writing services. Contract cheating poses serious threats to academic integrity and the veracity of students' learning experiences, as Bretag et al. (2018) points out.

Furthermore, using these services can take away from the development of fundamental abilities that are necessary for success in settings both academic and professional.

### **Academic Performance**

Using paid academic writing services has been impacting the academic performance of students as



students fail to realize the potential of research skills and research projects. When a student pays for an assignment to be completed by a third person, he/she fails to learn from the task. Since colleges and universities design the curriculum specifically to make the student capable enough in terms of academics, students using such services lack many skills that can lead to finding it difficult to be employed in the future. Students lose out on the chance to acquire critical academic abilities when they depend too much on compensated academic writing services. Students who contract cheat lose out on important learning opportunities that are essential to their academic and psychological growth, claims Bretag et al. (2018).

### **Demand for Paid Academic Writing Services**

Since many students around the globe have now been relying on professional academic writers for their tasks, the demand of paid academic writing services has been increasing day by day. As students come to know about such a service existing where they can pay a certain amount of money to get their tasks done on time, they rush to avail themselves of such a service rather than completing the assigned tasks themselves. This has increased the demand for academic writers. Many people now consider learning skills related to research, data collection, data analysis and word document formatting to work as a writer and provide paid academic writing services. There is a sizable market for independent academic writers because of the increased reliance on hired writing services. Lancaster et al. (2016) claims that the need for qualified writers who can generate excellent academic work on behalf of students has increased due to the growing incidence of contract cheating. Additionally, as Lines (2016) points out, the market's great profitability has drawn a lot of people to improve their writing and research abilities to match the need for these services.

Medway et al. (2018) have also recorded the rise of outsourcing academic work, finding that students are more likely to choose to forego the effort of completing projects themselves due to the availability of access to online writing services. As a result, there is now a thriving market for academic writers who specialize in offering these services.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There is an ongoing debate over the difficulties that come with academic writing, several studies have even recognized these difficulties. According to Roxas, (2020) and Sajjad et al., (2021), grammar is the most difficult aspect of academic writing. However, other earlier studies (Mumtaz, 2021), punctuation and structure (Ahmed, 2019), and translation (Ma, 2021) assert that vocabulary is the most difficult aspect. Nevertheless, Pakistani students have several challenges when it comes to writing for academic reasons and acquiring research literacy. The two most significant issues that students deal with are poor analytical abilities and poor English language proficiency. (Shawana et al., 2016).

Since thesis and research paper writing is made a part of the degree award, many students struggle to write reports due to lack of knowledge about the thesis structure, lack of research capabilities, grammar issues and inefficient English writing. Under such circumstances, students often pay a freelance content writer to write a thesis for them which they present as their own work in order to meet the degree awarding criteria. The problem at hand is to explore the challenges and circumstances under which students decide to hire an external person to write for them and how this impacts their studies and professional lives. Along with that, there is a dire need to explore the dynamics of paid writing services being secretly employed in universities in Pakistan and across the globe.

### **Research Questions**

- 1- What are the challenges observed by students while performing academic writing?
- 2- Why do students at undergraduate and graduate levels look out for paid writing services?





3- What are the impacts of paid writing services?

#### **Research Objectives**

1. To explore the challenges faced by students while drafting research papers, thesis and dissertations.
2. To highlight the reasons why students are encouraged to look out for paid writing services.
3. To explore the dynamics including impacts of paid writing services.

#### **Significance of the Study**

Paid academic writing has been very common these days as almost every other student enrolled in either bachelors or masters or PHD is looking out for a freelance writer to help them with their thesis. Since thesis is part of the program or degree in which the student is enrolled, anyone else other than the student writing the thesis is considered cheating. Many scholars have highlighted this topic in the past but have failed to highlight the dynamics of paid academic writing services. This study aims to explore the dynamics in context of Pakistan as well as universities around the globe.

This study aims to highlight the challenges observed by students while performing academic tasks such as report writing, research papers and thesis. Along with that this study aims to discover the dynamics of paid academic writings in context to students from both, Pakistani and foreign universities.

#### **Review of the Relevant Literature**

The researcher delved deep into the literature present through the research which has been carried out in past. After studying all the research papers and scholarly articles related to the topic at hand, the researcher is going to carry out a literature review which is given below.

#### **Paid Academic Writing Services**

Paid Academic Writing Services, or PAWS, are a practice in academia where people, usually researchers or students, hire writers to generate academic writing that follows certain guidelines and forms. These resources frequently include a broad range of scholarly writings, from extensive research reports and university assignments to research papers and more. By using these services, people want to increase the breadth and depth of their writing, which raises the overall caliber and intellectual effect of the piece.

According to Lines (2016), within the academic domain, the notion of Paid Academic Writing Services (PAWS) is distinguished by the production of scholarly articles that are carefully customized to satisfy students' academic requirements, but which do not provide credit to the ghostwriter who created the original material. PAWS is the collection of academic writing tasks that clients send to ghostwriters. These clients pay the experts to complete academic requirements on their behalf. Even if it is debatable, this practice highlights how difficult it is to maintain academic integrity and how intellectual endeavors are changing in today's classroom.

Roberts (2009) draws attention to the interesting practice of political figures using professional writers to enhance the caliber and effect of speeches before public delivery. This calculated tactic makes use of the experience of professional writers, who are well-known for their skill in choosing words that elicit strong emotional responses from readers. Political leaders may polish their speeches and make sure they are clear, compelling, and resonate with the target audience by hiring these talented wordsmiths. This practice clarifies the complex relationships between rhetoric, persuasive speechcraft, leadership, and the political sphere. It also emphasizes the significance of effective communication in the political sphere.

Like ghostwriting, paid academic writing services are also often seen as inappropriate in academic settings because of their negative effects on academic misconduct and scholarly integrity. These services, which are similar to ghostwriting, are thought to be contributing to the rise in unethical behavior among



academics. People violate the core values of academic integrity, originality, and responsibility when they contract out the writing of their academic papers to compensated authors. This tendency threatens not just the reputation of academic institutions but also the quest of knowledge and the impartial assessment of intellectual achievement. As a result, maintaining the norms of academic integrity and performance in the classroom is severely hampered by the widespread use of paid academic writing services. Reiterating academic integrity and encouraging ethical behavior among researchers, students, and educational institutions is necessary to address this issue (Singh et al., 2016).

### **Pakistani Students**

Pakistan is facing several development issues in the modern world, which call for complex and nuanced policy responses. The current democratic transition adds to this complexity by enacting new requirements for accountability, openness, and evidence-based decision-making. The devolution movement, which was sparked by the 2010, 18th Constitutional Amendment, has increased the demands for autonomy at the provincial level and increased the diversity of those participating in the policymaking process. As a result, the need for context-specific knowledge to guide policymaking processes has significantly increased in recent years. But even with the growing need for evidence-based policymaking, Pakistan's knowledge supply for public policymaking seems to be insufficient and plagued by serious institutional barriers. The main cause of these problems is the general lack of institutional capacity for research, together with claims of a pervasive culture that values opinion above facts when making decisions. In addition, there are worries about policymakers' declining internal resources for doing research and analysis.

It is critically necessary to change Pakistan's conventional, informal paradigm of writing teaching, according to recent research that look at the country's educational system. These results imply that the main cause of our students' academic underachievement is not their innate shortcomings but rather the shortcomings of our instructional strategies. The urgent need for reform stems from the realization that current methods fall short of developing the skills and competences required of students, impeding both their academic performance and chances for the future. Pakistan may effectively tackle the essential issue of student underperformance in an increasingly competitive global context by implementing current writing education methods. Encouraging a culture of educational excellence and guaranteeing that every student has the chance to reach their full potential require such reforms (Haider, 2012). Furthermore, studies carried out in Baluchistan's girls' schools provide insight into the numerous difficulties experienced by secondary educators in their bilingual classes (Rasheed, 2017). One of the biggest challenges for teachers working in a linguistically heterogeneous area like as Baluchistan is the constant necessity to move between Urdu and English, and vice versa, in addition to using local languages only sometimes. This continual juggling of languages makes teaching more difficult and hinders students' and teachers' ability to communicate and comprehend one another. Therefore, it is critical to address the language complexity present in Baluchistan's educational setting to improve the efficacy of instruction and create inclusive learning environments that support academic achievement.

Several studies carried out at Pakistan's public universities reveal that intermediate students struggle to recognize nouns and verbs, two of the main components of speech. Students in state- run universities have an especially hard time understanding the basic language principles needed for comprehension and successful communication. The incapacity to distinguish between nouns and verbs highlights a more general problem with the caliber of language training and teaching strategies used in these schools. To address this shortcoming, focused interventions that improve teaching strategies and give students the tools and resources



they need to build solid language and grammatical foundations are needed. Enhancing language education should be Pakistan's top priority to enable its kids to thrive academically and communicate effectively in an increasingly competitive world (Imran et al. 2016). The English language stands out as the most powerful instrument for efficient communication when working with the global world. Widespread use of technology not only makes communication easier but also greatly increases the chances of socioeconomic progress, especially for developing countries like Pakistan. Adopting English as the main language of communication has the potential to open new doors for development and progress, giving people and organizations the ability to competently and confidently negotiate the challenges of a globalized world. Pakistan may enhance its competitiveness in the global arena and promote more participation, cooperation, and prosperity on a regional and global level by advocating for the extensive use of English (Shamim, 2017).

There is a strong case for English's incorporation into Pakistan's educational system starting in the early grades, given its critical role in promoting global communication and economic development. Since learning English is essential for managing the complexity of today's world, it makes sense to start English training in the early elementary grades. Early curricular integration of English language instruction will help Pakistan create a solid basis for kids' future development of fluency and competence. In addition to providing pupils with fundamental language abilities, this early exposure helps them develop an attitude that supports linguistic variety and fosters interaction with people from different backgrounds and viewpoints (Panzai et al, 2017).

Research on students' writing in the context of higher education has seen a rise in attention in recent years. This increased focus highlights the understanding that writing is a basic ability required for both professional and academic success. Both academics and teachers have made a concerted effort to comprehend the complexities of students' writing processes, the difficulties they face, and the techniques they use to communicate successfully in a variety of disciplinary contexts. Through exploring the intricacies of student writing, scholars want to provide insights for curriculum design, institutional regulations, and pedagogical practices that improve writing instruction and promote a culture of writing excellence in higher education (Tuck, 2012; Lillis et al., 2007). This is due to the fact that academic writing, which has an impact on both students and faculty members, is at the core of scholarship in teaching and learning at universities.

When written assignments from college students are examined, it is clear that they are not only academic tasks, but also social and cultural behaviors driven by ideology. Academic writing is closely entwined with larger cultural and social forces, rather away from a mechanical obedience to discipline rules. In the context of a university, it involves using a variety of cognitive abilities to negotiate authority systems, traverse intricate power relations, and create individual and group identities. As a result, academic writing becomes more than just following norms of convention or discipline; it becomes a complex literacy activity that is closely related to both scholarly communities and sociocultural settings (Beard et al., 2007; Street 2004).

### **Western Students**

Higher education has changed because of globalization, which has also resulted in a rise in online learning and greater student mobility across national borders. Western universities encounter issues with academic standards, cultural diversity, and the commercialization of education as they draw a varied student body, which includes foreign students from Pakistan and other nations (Marginson, 2016). The proliferation of for-profit academic writing services serves as a stark reminder of the challenges posed by globalization to higher education and the need of ethical issues in academic work.



Using paid academic writing services brings up moral questions about intellectual honesty, plagiarism, and academic integrity. These services undercut the core values of scholarship, critical thinking, and creativity, even if students may believe they are a quick route to academic achievement (Gallant, 2008). According to research, time constraints, academic stress, and the desire for excellent scores are driving Western students' rising inclination to utilize these services (Ellis et al., 2004). However, there can be serious repercussions for academic misconduct, such as long-term effects on job prospects, reputational harm, and disciplinary measures (Bretag et al., 2018).

The use of paid academic writing services by Western students is impacted by institutional practices, educational systems, and cultural norms. Students may experience pressure to perform well academically at all costs in Western societies where individual accomplishment and competitiveness are prized (Devlin et al, 2007). Furthermore, it is now simpler for students to obtain custom-written essays, research papers, and dissertations online, which further blurs the lines between academic integrity and anonymity (Newton et al, 2016). Students' attitudes and actions about academic writing may differ across Pakistani and international colleges due to differences in academic standards, evaluation techniques, and approaches to plagiarism detection (Bhatti et al, 2020).

By implementing academic integrity-promoting policies, academic support services, and preventative measures, educational institutions may effectively tackle the problems caused by paid academic writing services. To discourage students from acting unethically, Western institutions have put in place a number of measures, including academic misconduct regulations, plagiarism detection technologies, and instructional programs. However, tackling the underlying reasons of academic dishonesty necessitates a multidimensional strategy that includes faculty development, curriculum design, assessment procedures, and student support services (Bretag et al., 2019).

### **Pakistani VS Western Universities**

One major lacuna in the scholarly discourse is the paucity of literature on the caliber of research being done by universities, both internationally and particularly in Pakistani academia. This disparity is especially noticeable in the field of higher education research, where there are little thorough assessments of the caliber of the studies. The acknowledged deficiency in this field emphasizes the necessity of devoting more time and resources to evaluating the effectiveness, significance, and caliber of research conducted by colleges, especially those in Pakistan. Scholars and policymakers may learn a great deal about the opportunities, difficulties, and strengths of higher education research by filling in this gap in the literature. This will help them develop ways to improve the quality and relevance of the research (Altbach et al., 2006), but the situation is even worse in a developing nation like Pakistan. For instance, of the 244 Asian institutions that conducted research on higher education between 1980 and 2012, 66% published one paper and 15% published two in research journals (Jung et al., 2013).

Academic writing at the university level is extremely important since it demonstrates students' ability to express ideas clearly and precisely. It does more for pupils than just pass along facts; it gives them a chance to show that they can explain ideas clearly and persuasively through well-written phrases. Through academic writing, students hone their analytical, problem-solving, and synthesis abilities as well as their ability to express complicated ideas and theories in a logical and organized way. Academic writing also develops scholarly norm observance, intellectual rigor, and attention to detail, all of which are critical for success in postsecondary education and beyond (Asif & Shaheen, 2022; Asnas et al., 2022).

Not only does academic writing demonstrates students' ability to communicate ideas clearly and





succinctly, but it also provides a strong indication of their ability to combine, assess, and present arguments from a variety of sources. Students who interact with a variety of academic resources gain analytical acumen and critical thinking abilities that help them evaluate difficult data, identify trends, and generate novel ideas. Additionally, academic writing promotes an evidence-based thinking culture by pushing students to support their claims with in-depth research and real-world examples. Through this process, students not only develop intellectual independence and academic integrity, but they also acquire the problem-solving abilities necessary to successfully navigate today's problems in a variety of academic and professional settings (Asnas, 2022).

#### Impact on Academic Performance

The desire to raise their academic standing and grades is one of the main reasons students employ hired academic writing services. According to research, students frequently turn to these services when they are under time pressure, experiencing academic stress, or having trouble understanding the course topics (Ellis et al., 2004). Although some students could see short-term grade boosts, it's unclear how this will affect their learning and academic development in the long run (Bretag et al., 2018). In addition, students who depend too heavily on paid services may find it more difficult to understand course material, develop their critical thinking and independent research skills, and eventually fail academic courses (Carroll et al., 2001).

Using paid academic writing services makes many worry that students' skills and critical learning outcomes may be compromised. Students may lose out on chances for intellectual development, knowledge synthesis, and interaction with course materials if they outsource their assignments (Devlin et al., 2007). Research, critical analysis, and academic writing are just a few of the abilities that are essential for success in college and beyond. However, using commercial services might encourage a culture of reliance and inactivity in the classroom, depriving students of worthwhile educational opportunities that further their professional and intellectual growth (Gallant, 2008).

Using commercial academic writing services raises moral concerns about intellectual property, honesty, and academic integrity. According to Bretag et al. (2019), students who turn in custom-written essays or papers as their own work transgress academic honesty and integrity standards, which damages the validity of their academic credentials. Furthermore, the frequency of contract cheating undermines confidence in the academic system and puts educational institutions' reputations in jeopardy (Newton et al., 2016). To address these ethical issues, academic staff, administrators, and students must work together to protect ethical norms, encourage academic integrity, and discourage academic misconduct (Marginson, 2016).

When it comes to addressing how paid academic writing services affect academic integrity and performance, educational institutions are essential. Academic integrity guidelines, plagiarism detection software, and educational interventions are a few tactics that can help spread the word about the negative effects of contract cheating and assist students in honing their academic abilities (Bretag et al., 2018). Furthermore, encouraging a culture of academic integrity through mentoring programs, academic advising, and faculty-student interactions can provide students with the tools they need to accept responsibility for their education and defend moral principles.

#### **Demand of Paid Academic Writing Services**

The increasing academic strain that students in Pakistani and international institutions are under is one of the main causes of the increased demand for professional academic writing services. Students frequently experience overload due to demanding curriculum, numerous assignments, and deadlines, and they turn to outside help to manage the burden (Ellis et al., 2004). Students who feel under pressure to do well academically and keep good grades may turn to paid services to complete their assignments within the allotted time (Bretag



et al., 2018).

A major obstacle to academic achievement for international students attending foreign colleges is language and cultural obstacles. Since English is frequently used as the language of teaching at Western colleges, many students from non-English speaking nations, like Pakistan, may find it difficult to write academically in this language (Marginson, 2016). The necessity for language support, help with English competence, and adjustment to new academic customs might be the reasons behind international students' need for professional academic writing services (Newton et al., 2016). Students' growing desire for paid academic writing services might be attributed to their accessibility and ease via internet platforms. Students may access a variety of services that provide custom-written essays, research papers, and dissertations that are personalized to their individual specifications with only a few clicks (Ellis et al., 2004). The ease with which these services may now be accessed by students, irrespective of their academic background or geographic location, is a result of their widespread availability on the internet (Newton et al., 2016).

The prevalent academic standards and performance expectations in Pakistani and international universities also have an impact on the need for professional academic writing services. When faced with strict grading standards or competitive contexts, students may view these services to reach or surpass academic goals (Bretag et al., 2018). Students seek external aid to improve their academic performance and match the expectations of their educational institutions because they want to succeed academically and earn excellent grades.

Nonetheless, questions of academic integrity, plagiarism, and students' moral behavior are brought up by the growing demand for professional academic writing services. Academic integrity, intellectual honesty, and scholarship are all compromised when prewritten papers or articles are used as original works (Gallant, 2008). Considering the increasing demand for paid services, educational institutions have difficulties in addressing the underlying reasons for academic misconduct and encouraging a culture of ethical behavior among students (Marginson, 2016).

### **Assumptions**

Based on the literature review provided above, the following assumptions were drawn:

The increasing academic difficulties encountered by students worldwide, such as short deadlines, hefty workloads, and the need to manage academic obligations with personal and professional commitments, are driving up demand for paid academic writing services (PAWS). Students in Western and Pakistani Universities use these services extensively because of their convenience and accessibility via internet platforms. By enabling students to submit work that is not their own and thereby misrepresenting their abilities and knowledge, the use of PAWS compromises academic integrity.

An increase in academic misconduct, such as plagiarism and contract cheating, is linked to a growing dependence on these services, endangering the legitimacy and good name of educational establishments. The main reasons why students use PAWS are lack of time from work obligations, poor writing and research abilities, language challenges, and the desire to get good scores with little labor. International students who struggle to adapt to the language and intellectual demands of foreign universities—especially those from non-English speaking backgrounds are more prone to turn to PAWS.

Even though a lot of students are aware that utilizing PAWS is unethical, pragmatic factors like time management and the drive to perform well academically frequently take precedence over moral considerations. Although most students agree that utilizing PAWS is cheating and has a negative influence on their academic and personal integrity, this behavior is frequently justified due to its perceived necessity.



To solve the problems that are pushing kids to PAWS, educational reform is desperately needed. These problems include raising the standard of writing and research instruction, enhancing academic support, and easing the burden of too much homework. The promotion of an ethical and morally driven culture among professors and students should be a primary goal of reform initiatives. This can be achieved by offering ongoing education and awareness campaigns.

### **THOERETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Two theories are discussed below along with their applications to the topic of research at hand. Essentially, these theories have focused on the learning pattern of individuals and since the topic at hand is paid academic writing in Pakistani and Foreign Universities, these theories correlated with the topic.

#### **Social Learning Theory**

The fundamental ideas of Social Learning Theory are presented in Bandura's groundbreaking work, which highlights the significance of cognitive processes, reinforcement, and observational learning in determining behavior. Bandura conducted a number of tests to show how people pick up new behaviors by seeing and copying models in their social surroundings (Bandura, 1977).

This well-known study demonstrates how children mimic violent behaviors that they see in adults, therefore illuminating the fundamentals of social learning theory. The results of Bandura and associates offered empirical evidence in favor of the hypothesis that observational learning plays a part in the development of violent behavior (Bandura et al, 1961).

Bandura builds on Social Learning Theory in this seminal work by incorporating cognitive functions like motivation, attention, and memory into the framework. In addition to stressing the significance of self-regulation and self-efficacy in learning and behavior modification, he highlights the reciprocal connection that occurs between individuals and their social environment (Bandura, 1986).

Through the lens of Social Learning Theory, Bandura's investigation of aggressiveness clarifies how violent behaviors are learned and sustained through processes of reinforcement and observation. The processes behind the spread of aggressiveness in social settings are discussed in this article (Bandura, 1971). Akers offers a thorough model that incorporates social, cognitive, and behavioral processes to apply Social Learning Theory to the study of aberrant behavior. Akers explains how social learning mechanisms contribute to the emergence and maintenance of deviant behaviors across the lifetime by drawing on empirical studies (Akers, 1973).

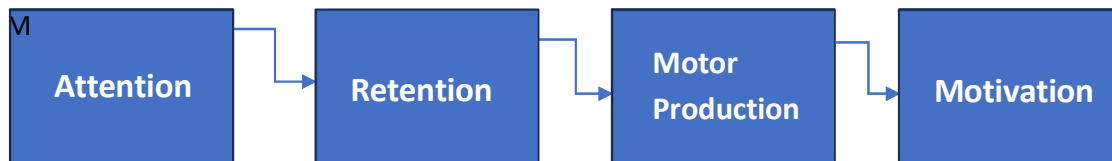
Huesmann's information-processing model explains the cognitive mechanisms behind the emergence of aggressiveness by drawing on Social Learning Theory. This approach highlights how attributional biases, cognitive scripts, and schemas mediate the effects of observational learning on violent behavior (Huesmann, 1988).

The implications of Social Learning Theory for personality formation are examined in Walters' seminal work. Walters clarifies how people learn and internalize social behaviors that mold their personality traits and features by fusing the concepts of modelling, reinforcement, and cognitive processes (Walters, 1959).

#### **Figure1**



### *Social Learning Theory Model*



### **Application of Theory**

According to the Social Learning Theory, people pick up new skills by seeing how others behave. In the case of paid academic writing, students could witness friends or members of their social networks involved in such activities, normalizing and possibly even promoting such behavior. This has the potential to maintain a culture in which academic writing for pay is seen as appropriate, even essential, for success in the classroom. Academic writing firms that charge for their services are frequently transparent and might act as role models for students who need help with their papers. Students may be more likely to copy this behavior when they see the benefits of using these services—such as higher marks or less work—further solidifying its pervasiveness in academic settings. Positive reinforcement increases the likelihood that a behavior will be repeated, according to the Social Learning Theory. When it comes to paid academic writing, students are encouraged to use these services despite ethical issues or academic integrity breaches because they view the benefits, like time savings or better academic performance, to be significant.

The Social Learning Theory emphasizes how cognitive functions like motivation, memory, and attention affect how people behave. Students may downplay the moral ramifications of using paid academic writing services or highlight the practical advantages to defend or excuse their usage of such services. They can reconcile contradictory ideas and behaviors thanks to this cognitive restructuring, which keeps them using these services. The popularity and frequency of paid academic writing might be influenced by the sociocultural background of institutions in Pakistan and other countries. Academic pressure, the battle for scholarships or grades, and cultural views on education might all be contributing factors to the need for these services and the normalization of their usage among students.

### **Theory of Planned Behavior**

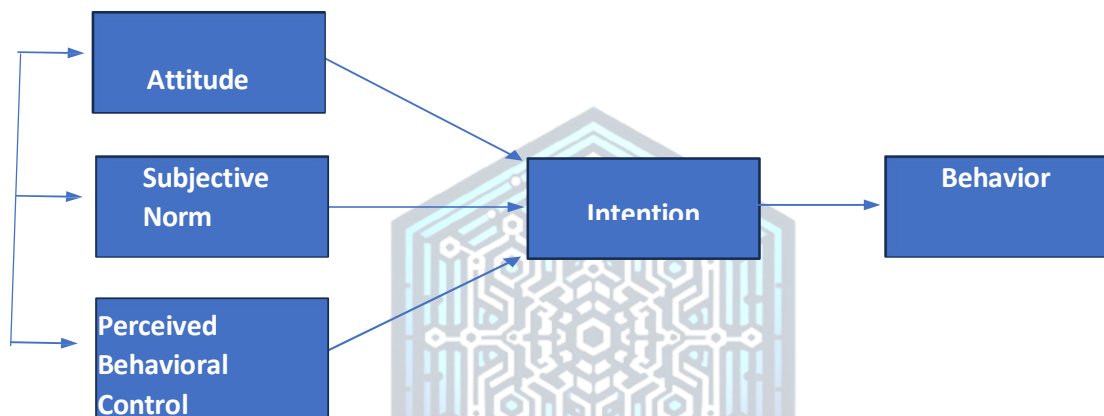
Building on prior research by Fishbein and Ajzen's own Theory of Reasoned Behavior (TRA), Icek Ajzen created the well-known Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) in 1985. TPB considers the impact of attitudes, subjective standards, and perceived behavioral control in an effort to explain and forecast human behavior (Ajzen, 1991). This theory has been widely used in a variety of academic fields, such as psychology, sociology, the health sciences, marketing, and education. It provides insightful knowledge about how people make decisions and behave. Essential to TPB are attitudes, which are people's general assessments or convictions towards engaging in a certain behavior. TPB states that positive attitudes about a behavior boost its chance of adoption whereas negative attitudes have the opposite effect (Ajzen, 1991). Research by (Albarracin et al., 2001; Kim et al., 2014; Tarrant et al., 2018) have shown the important role attitudes play in determining a variety of behaviors, including health-related behaviors (e.g., exercise, quitting smoking), environmental conservation practices, and consumer decisions. Subjective norms are people's opinions about the expectations or social pressure from significant people (family, friends, peers, etc.) to engage in a specific behavior. Stronger subjective standards conveying societal acceptance or disapproval, according to TPB, have an impact on people's intents and behaviors (Ajzen, 1991). Studies have demonstrated how subjective norms influence a range of behaviors, such as those related to academics (cheating, study habits), health (vaccination,





etc.), and the environment (recycling, energy conservation), among other behaviors (Hagger et al., 2015; Terry et al, 1995; Linden et al., 2015).

The term "perceived behavioral control" describes people's perceptions of their own capacity to carry out an action effectively, accounting for both internal and external elements that might support or contradict the behavior. Higher perceived behavioral control, according to TPB, improves people's intents and behaviors, especially when they believe they can overcome difficulties or problems (Ajzen, 1991). According to studies (Armitage et al, 2001; Godin et al., 2008; Scholz et al., 2008), perceived behavioral control is important in predicting a variety of behaviors, including academic performance, health behaviors (e.g., medication adherence, dietary habits), and career-related decisions (e.g., job seeking, entrepreneurial intentions). Many different areas have made substantial use of the Theory of Planned Behavior to comprehend and forecast a broad variety of behaviors. According to Chapman et al. (2017), Jones et al. (2016), Kanten et el. (2020), and others, TPB has been used in education to investigate students' academic behaviors (e.g., attendance, studying,



cheating), career choices, and technology adoption (e.g., e-learning platforms, educational applications). TPB has played a key role in health psychology programs that aim to increase patient compliance with medical treatments and encourage health behaviors (e.g., safe sex practices, physical activity, dietary modifications) (McEachan et al., 2016; Sheeran et al., 2016; Webb, 2006).

**Figure 2**

*Theory of Planned Behavior Model*

### Application of Theory

When it comes to using professional academic writing services, people's opinions could be shaped by how they view their own academic aptitude and the difficulties they have in completing projects. These services may be viewed as a practical way for students who struggle with research, academic writing, and English grammar to close apparent skill gaps and improve their grades. The idea that such services provide a quick route to academic achievement and reduce the burden of academic work may influence how people feel about utilizing them.

Subjective norms in TPB pertain to how people see expectations from significant others or social pressures. When it comes to paying for academic writing services, students might feel that their classmates are normalizing the practice of looking for outside help, especially if they witness others going through similar struggles in school or making use of these services. The legitimacy of utilizing professional writing services



may be further supported by the impact of academic advisers, classmates, and even cultural attitudes towards academic success.

Beliefs about one's capacity to carry out an action and get beyond challenges are at the heart of perceived behavioral control. The availability of commercial writing services gives students who are insecure about their academic abilities a sense of control over their academic performance. These services reduce the perceived obstacles related to academic projects by offering a dependable way to fulfil assignment deadlines and guarantee the submission of high-quality work. Recurring usage of professional academic writing services over time can result in the formation of behavioral patterns where people depend more on outside help than on trying to advance their academic abilities. When people get favorable results, like better grades and less academic stress, this behavioral inclination becomes reinforced, which strengthens the idea that outsourcing projects is a good way to succeed academically.

But over time, depending too much on hired writing services can limit students' chances to advance their academic careers and acquire new skills. Through avoiding research, writing, and critical thinking, students lose out on important learning opportunities that are crucial to their growth as individuals and as professionals. Additionally, the practice of contracting out academic work might prolong a cycle of reliance on outside help, hindering students' capacity to develop the abilities required for success in both their academic and professional endeavors.

### **Propositions**

More on the trend of students, especially at the undergraduate and graduate levels, depending more and more on paid academic writers for their assignments: this indicates a dramatic change in academic practices and presents important issues regarding the effects on students' education and future career aspirations. Due to this phenomenon, there is a growing demand for paid academic writing services, which helps to close the gap between the expectations of academic assignments and students' perceived shortcomings in research and writing abilities.

The market's formation may be ascribed to several variables, such as the increasing demand on students to achieve academic excellence, the growth in the quantity of students juggling their studies with employment obligations, and the availability of these services via internet platforms. Students may use these services to save time and get higher scores, which will reduce the stress that comes with academic projects. This is especially true for those who are studying abroad and have limited funds. Furthermore, students who struggle with academic writing or lack confidence in their research skills may view professional academic writing services as a practical way to complete coursework requirements.

However, the dependence on paid academic writing services raises questions regarding how well students are developing critical writing and research abilities. Students risk missing out on important learning opportunities that are essential to their academic and professional development if they outsource their assignments. In today's knowledge-based economy, abilities like critical thinking, information literacy, and effective communication are crucial, and failing to develop these skills may prevent students from succeeding in their employment in the long run. Moreover, it is impossible to ignore the moral ramifications of utilizing such services, which include concerns about academic integrity and plagiarism.

In order to solve this issue, educational institutions must encourage students in developing their research and writing abilities, uphold academic integrity, and cultivate an ethical culture. Academic writing workshops, mentoring programs, and coursework emphasizing research methodology are some of the strategies that might enable students to take responsibility for their academic work and acquire the skills they



need to thrive in both their academic and professional endeavors. Furthermore, encouraging a culture of academic integrity by explicit guidelines, public awareness campaigns, and sanctions for plagiarism can assist in discouraging students from engaging in unethical behavior.

### **Conceptualization and Operationalization**

The conceptualization and operationalization aspects of the research are discussed in this chapter. To lay down the foundation of the study, the researcher has incorporated specific ideas while considering the body of literature already written on the subject matter. In addition, the researcher has addressed the operationalization of the topics covered in this chapter considering prior research.

### **Conceptualization**

Conceptualization is the process of creating definitions of concepts for abstract ideas (Neuman, 2014: 2024). Conceptualization is the process of identifying and making sense of abstract concepts to create a shared knowledge that may guide discussion and further research. This entails identifying and defining important terms associated with higher education in the context of institutions. This procedure aids in providing exact definitions for terms that are essential to the study.

Since the topic of research at hand is “Exploring the dynamics of paid academic writing services in Pakistani and Foreign universities”, the researcher has carefully introduced two concepts in this chapter which go by paid academic writing and universities.

### **Paid Academic Writing Services**

In context of higher education, particularly undergraduate and graduate students pursuing bachelors or masters in diverse disciplines, paid academic writing service refers to an individual or a group of people who have excellent research and writing skills offering research reports, thesis, research papers and assignments in exchange of payment. Graduates with poor academic performance can easily access academic publications through paid services (Lin, 2023). These service providers keep their identity discrete and are available for help online. They write for the student, get paid and then step back in addition to leaving no trace as the student publishes the content in his/her own name. Most students are finding this service helpful as the majority of students are either lacking in research writing skills or are not capable enough to meet tight deadlines for projects. Apart from that, another issue which often rises is that students have jobs or are part of money earning activities whether it be odd jobs or freelancing due to which they cannot spare time for projects related to research which often require considerable time, instead they hire writers who write for them and the students turn in assignments, publish research papers, submit thesis as a part of their degree completion in their own name defying the academic integrity and not realizing the effect of using the paid academic writing services on their career in the longer run.

In academic circles, the term Paid Academic Writing Services (PAWS) is a process wherein authors or students hire professional writers to create scholarly work in a predetermined style, such as research papers, university assignments, research reports, and so forth (Sarwar et al., 2018). These expert ghostwriters have demonstrated their ability to be trustworthy partners for those seeking to enhance their public image and message by delivering polished and persuasive written material. This enduring tradition underscores the complex interrelationships between popular opinion, political discourse, and the clandestine collaboration of skilled authors and influential figures. The growth of academic writing services that charge for work has been well-documented. An extensive examination of contract cheating and its effects on academic integrity is given by Bretag et al. (2018), who emphasize how these services allow students to evade the learning process and jeopardize the validity of their academic accomplishments. In a similar vein, Clarke et al., (2013) address the



expansion of the contract cheating market and point out that students can now participate in this type of academic dishonesty more easily due to the anonymity and accessibility of online writing services.

Additionally, Medway et al. (2018) address the effects of students' dependence on paid academic writing services, focusing on how academic work outsourcing compromises learning and the acquisition of critical skills. The authors stress that students who make use of these services forfeit important educational possibilities, which may have a detrimental impact on their careers in the long run.

The increasing academic strain that students in Pakistani and international institutions are under is one of the main causes of the increased demand for professional academic writing services. Students frequently experience overload due to demanding curriculum, numerous assignments, and deadlines, and they turn to outside help to manage the burden (Ellis et al., 2004).

### **Universities**

Academic performance is the term used to describe the quantifiable results of a student's academic work, including grades, test scores, and other evaluations that show their comprehension and command of the subject matter (Adams et al., 2008).

Student engagement is the sum of a student's focus, curiosity, enthusiasm, optimism, and passion during a lesson or while receiving instruction, as well as their drive to learn and advance (Kuh, 2009). Faculty effectiveness is concerned with the caliber and significance of instruction as well as other academic contributions given by university professors, such as their research output, teaching abilities, and participation in scholarly communities (Centra, 1993). The physical and mental environments in which students learn, such as classrooms, libraries, internet resources, and the general campus vibe, are referred to as the "learning environment" (Fraser, 1998). The use of digital resources and technologies, such as learning management systems (LMS), online learning, and instructional software, to improve teaching and learning processes is known as technological integration (Laurillard, 2012).

### **Operationalization**

Operationalization is the process of shifting from the conceptual definition of a construct to operations or actions that enable a scientist to empirically observe it (Neuman: 207). In this section of the research study, the researcher develops ideas based on the literature and concepts presented above which serve as the basis or construct of the research.

### **Paid Academic Writing Services**

After the invention of the internet, many professions have developed and the concepts of freelancing and working from home have initiated multiple diverse job roles. One of such roles is paid academic writing. Paid academic writing refers to writing a piece of content related to academics, whether it is a research paper, an article or a full-length thesis, a professional writer researches about a topic thoroughly and then collects the necessary data and performs data analysis and finally writes a thesis which is then provided to the client who is enrolled in a bachelors or master's program. The client pays the writer the required amount of money and publishes the document whether it may be a research paper or thesis under their own name. This concept is widely used by students around the globe. Various factors are involved in the adaption of this concept among students, which include, lack of research skills, lack of English grammar education, lack of technical and academic writing skills, lack of data collection tools education, short deadlines, fear of getting bad grades, not being able to give time to studies due to multiple factors such as jobs, home responsibilities etc. The researcher has chosen this concept as it serves to be the basis of the research such that the researcher intends to analyze the dynamics, whether it may be positive or negative, related to use of paid academic writing services in higher





education in context to Pakistani and Foreign Universities.

To collect data for paid academic writing services the following questions would be asked in the interview to grasp most of the knowledge about the topic of research at hand.

Q5: Have you ever heard of paid academic writing services?

Q6: Have you ever thought about using paid academic writing services?

Q8: What factors influenced your decision to use paid academic writing services? Q9: Were you satisfied with the quality of work delivered by such services?

Q10: What challenges did you face, if any, while using paid academic writing services?

### **Universities**

The main measures of academic performance will be students' grades and overall Grade Point Averages (GPAs). Through monitoring the distribution of grades and computing GPAs throughout various courses and semesters, we are able to evaluate the overall academic performance of the student population. With the use of these measures, academic success trends and patterns may be found, facilitating a thorough assessment of the institution's educational results. The administration and assessment of standardized tests unique to a university or program will be used to gauge students' understanding and competency in important academic areas. These tests will offer a common baseline by which student performance from various cohorts and disciplines can be compared, guaranteeing uniformity in academic standards and pointing out areas that might require further assistance. The percentage of students who successfully complete their courses each semester will be ascertained through the calculation of course completion rates. This indicator will show the institution's retention and progression rates, providing information about possible obstacles to course completion and guiding the development of policies to increase student success and perseverance. To evaluate student engagement and discipline, behavioral measures including late assignment submission, participation in online forums, and attendance rates will be tracked. By identifying patterns of behavior that may affect engagement and academic performance, these metrics will aid in the development of interventions that will promote the success of students.

Through direct observation, the degrees of student involvement and engagement in the classroom will be tracked. This qualitative technique will improve our comprehension of the learning environment and student dynamics by offering in-depth insights on the interactions, engagement, and responsiveness of students during lectures and debates. Student input on general satisfaction, course content, and teaching effectiveness will be gathered and analyzed through course evaluations. The identification of instructional practice strengths and areas for improvement, as well as faculty development and curricular changes, will be greatly aided by this input. To ensure that classrooms, labs, and libraries meet educational requirements, regular audits will be carried out. These audits will make sure that the physical learning environment satisfies accessibility and safety requirements while also meeting the needs of the students. To support ongoing development, input on the effectiveness and utility of technological tools from educators and students will be collected. By ensuring that technology resources are tailored to the requirements of users, these feedback systems will improve the quality of education overall and facilitate the implementation of successful teaching and learning strategies.

To look collect data for universities the following questions would be asked in the interview to grasp most of the knowledge about the topic of research at hand.

Q11: Do you believe that using paid academic writing services is ethical?

Q12: What are your opinions on the prevalence of paid academic writing services in Pakistan and foreign



universities?

Q13: Do you think that the use of paid academic writing services affects academic integrity?

Q14: How prevalent do you think paid academic writing services are in Pakistani universities as compared to foreign universities?

Q15: What measures, if any, do you think should be taken to address the issue of paid academic writing services?

Q16: Do you think that using paid academic writing services has any impact on your academic performance?

Q17: Have you faced any consequences (positive or negative) because of using paid academic writing services?

Q20: Are there any mechanisms present in the university which can detect the originality of the homework or assignment that you submit?

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

For the topic at hand, the researcher used qualitative research as the research design since the data was collected through interviews. The nature of this topic is delicate and requires special attention to multiple factors such as impact of paid academic writing services on Pakistani as well as foreign students, hence, to gather information that is most suited to the topic, the researcher needs to be specific while collecting data which is why the qualitative research approach has been employed.

### **Population**

The data needs to be collected from students of Pakistan as well as students studying in foreign universities, hence the universe of data is diverse in nature. As far as Pakistani students are concerned, the targeted universe is Islamabad. Islamabad is the capital of Pakistan having slot of notable universities providing quality education. The researcher has targeted two well renowned universities from Islamabad which are:

1. Quaid-I-Azam University
2. Allama Iqbal University.

The reason that the researcher has chosen these universities is to easily collect data which is closely related to the topic and for foreign universities, no specific university is targeted, instead data has been collected based on availability.

### **Unit of Analysis**

The unit of analysis is chosen to be the data collected by the students which are currently studying in the first to final years of bachelors as they are most connected to the topic of research at hand.

### **Sampling Technique**

Keeping in mind the diverse nature of this topic, the sampling technique has been chosen to be purposive sampling. In purposive sampling, the respondents for data collection are chosen with respect to a specific purpose. The students of Quaid-I-Azam University and Allama Iqbal

University are chosen on purpose to target the universities of Islamabad specifically to easily collect the data. The students at foreign universities are selected on availability basis to increase the spread of data collection to widen the research. The data collected for this research is diverse in nature as it contains data provided by students of multiple years, from various academic backgrounds, studying at different universities and having diverse range of experiences with paid academic writing services.

### **Sample Size**



A total of 8 interviews have been conducted in the data collection phase as per the availability of resources and time. Out of the eight interviews, two are conducted from students studying in Quaid-I-Azam University, two students from Allama Iqbal University and 4 interviews are conducted from students studying in foreign universities. The transcripts of the interviews have been provided in the annexure at the end of this thesis.

### **Tools for Data Collection**

Data has been collected via conducting interviews after developing the interview questions according to the research questions developed in the first chapter of this thesis. The interview guide contains questions of diverse nature, closely related to the topic of research. By using this tool, it became easy to collect data from students studying in different universities, both in Pakistani and Foreign Universities.

### **Techniques for Data Collection**

For data collection, the technique chosen is collecting data via interview. The reason for choosing this technique was that since the topic of research aims to be studied at a diverse range including input from different students including, students from Pakistani universities, students from foreign universities, students studying in different years of their degree and students coming from different academic backgrounds.

### **Data Analysis**

The tool that has been used for data analysis is NVivo 12. This tool has been purposefully employed to get the most valuable information from the raw data which was collected from the responses to the interview questions. NVivo is a tool for qualitative data analysis which is used worldwide for making valuable results from raw data.

The technique for data analysis is thematic analysis which is based on generating codes that are closely related to the research questions and then developing themes according to the codes and connecting interview extracts with the themes accordingly.

### **Ethical Concerns**

To respect the anonymity of the respondents who agreed to get interviewed and help us collect the data regarding paid academic writing services in Pakistani and Foreign universities, some ethical concerns were taken and those are mentioned below.

1. Informed Consent. Every participant was informed before conducting the interview that the information they provide is going to be used for research purposes and the objective of research was also explained to them. Further, they were guided that if in future they want to not include their response in the research, they are free to do so protecting the user rights. Confidentiality – While conducting the interview it was ensured that the data provided by the participants was kept confidential and stored in a safe place so that the data cannot be stolen or hacked for illegal purposes.
2. Transparency and Integrity. While the entire process of conducting the research, it was made sure to be as transparent as possible and to hold the integrity of results depicted after the analysis of the gathered information. Each piece of literature is mentioned clearly in the reference section for overview.
3. Results. It is made sure that the results which will be concluded from the analysis does not impact any class of people and that the results are free from any bias and are purely generated for independent research purposes and do not intend to produce any kind of harm.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The topic of research at hand is diverse in nature as it covers a large amount of data demographically which is not possible to be collected at this level. The limitations of this study are unavailability of data from



university students from all over Pakistan and on even larger scale all over the world. Paid academic writing is supposed to be used by almost every other student all over the world. A lot of time and manpower is required to collect the data on such a large scale to complete research on this topic. Apart from that there are several other aspects to discover such as where the education system has lacked which has prompted students to use paid academic writing services, how the use of such services can be countered and much more. Researchers in future can take this thesis as their baseline to further carry the research on this topic.

### **Validity and Reliability**

To ensure that the content in this thesis is valid, all of content has been taken from full length research papers from google scholar and those are clearly mentioned with references in the chapter of review of the relevant literature where the findings from those papers are also included. Moreover, the data collected has been taken with consent and ensured to be free from bias and stored at a safe place to avoid any issues related to confidentiality. Apart from that, data analysis has been done through NVivo to get accurate and reliable results of the analysis.

### **RESULTS**

The findings from the interviews were stored in word files which were input into NVivo 12, a software for qualitative analysis. After that codes were developed based on research questions set in chapter 1 of this thesis and then the themes were developed. The results have been displayed according to the codes and interview extracts have also been provided.

### **Challenges Observed by Students While Using Paid Academic Writing Services**

According to my research and the answers of respondents over the interview questions, the major challenges observed by students while using paid academic writing services are related to finding a reliable person who can write good content for them, other issues addressed were about online frauds which were majorly economical frauds or money scams.

### **Interview extracts have been given below.**

“It is hard to find an authentic writer these days due to the presence of ChatGPT and other AI platforms” While having conversation with this interviewee it was found that many paid academic writers use artificial intelligence powered websites and generative AI to write assignments for students. This shows how they scam the students and deliver low quality work.

“There are two major challenges which I have faced while using paid academic writing services, one is to find someone responsible enough to timely deliver the assignment and second that the assignment is good enough to prevent me from failing the course. Apart from that there have been a lot of scams related to payments” Most students are looking for a paid academic writer so that they can manage time and their grades do not get affected. Subsequently, this is why they try to find a person who is reliable enough who can responsibly deliver the assignments on time and the quality of the assignment is exemplary so that the student can achieve good grades.

“It is hard to trust someone when you have not met them in person and due to all of the internet frauds”

It is natural that trusting someone who you do not know personally can be difficult so students who are hiring paid academic writers for their services need to be aware of scammers and careful while hiring a paid academic writer.

“The only challenge I have faced so far is to find the right person for the job as there are many people listed as freelance academic writers on Fiverr and Upwork”

Paid academic writing has been a common freelance type of work in recent years which is why





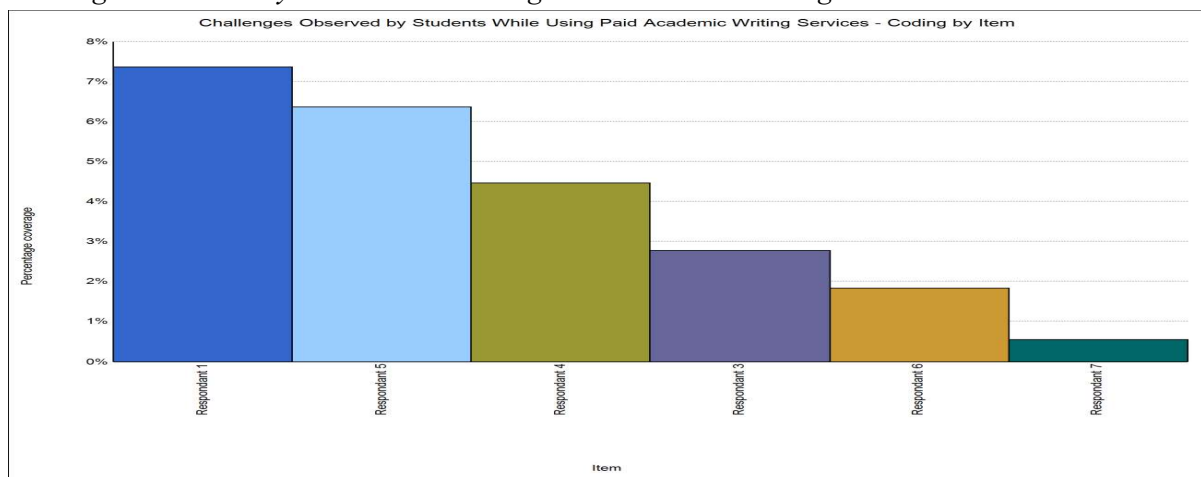
marketplaces like Upwork, and Fiverr have a lot of freelancers listed as content writers, but it is difficult as a client to figure out who to hire and who not to.

“Issues regarding online money frauds and people taking money and then not delivering the task assigned to them”

These findings indicate that on freelance marketplaces such as Upwork and Fiverr, there are many people who claim to be academic writers, but they are scammers who are not professional writers. Rather they earn money by scamming students. Most of the respondents had these concerns. The findings for this theme have been shown in a bar chart provided below.

Figure 3

Challenges Observed by students while using Paid Academic Writing Services



### Why Students Look for Paid Academic Writing Services

After conducting a series of interviews, the findings indicate a diverse nature of reasons the students move towards finding solutions for their issues regarding academic writing, but most of the students have highlighted the concerns of poor time management, lack of proper skills and resources to complete academic tasks, for instance report writing, research papers and thesis. The findings from interviews have been provided below.

“Being an international student, I have to manage time that I could balance my job along with my studies and due to this reason, it becomes difficult to work on assignments which require research and time. This is why I chose to pay academic writers to work on my assignments in exchange for money. Now I can easily manage my job with studies”

While having a discussion with this interviewee, it was found out that most students have this issue in common that they are working on part time jobs to meet their monthly expenses and since education is expensive, most students work more than one job. This leads to them not having enough time to work on their assignments, so they turn to hiring paid academic writers to get good grades and clear the courses or semesters they are enrolled in.

“Time management and short deadlines to submit assignments”

“Lack of research skills”

“Writing a thesis is a difficult task keeping in mind all the research, data collection and data analysis let alone the drafting part”



Another perspective presented by these students highlighted that they did not have the research skills and didn't know how to draft the thesis or collect and analyze data. Since these skills are most essential for a university student as they have to deal with a lot of assignments throughout the university life and since some students lack these basic skills, they hire paid academic writers to complete their assignments out of compulsion.

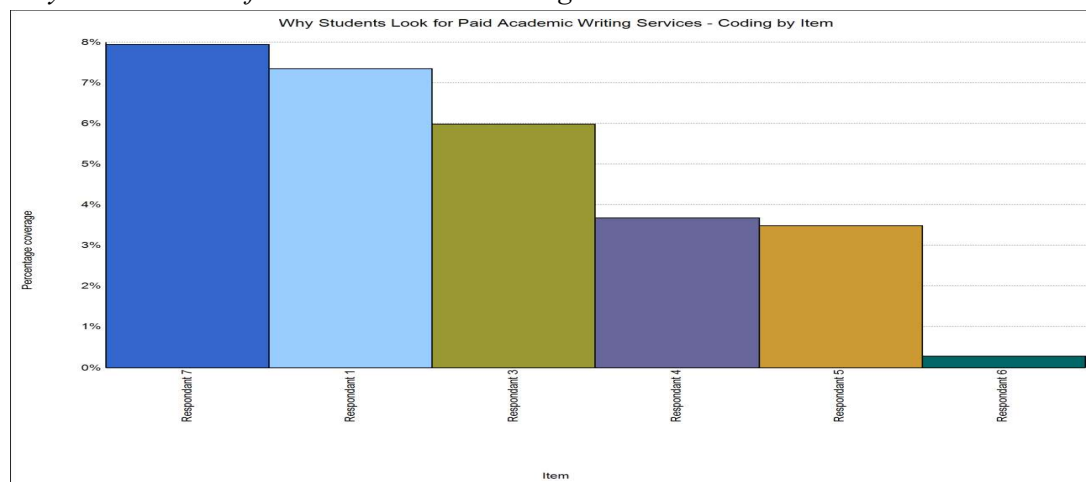
“Easy time management with assignments”

“I don't have the research skills and the drafting skills that are required to write a thesis. Also, I don't know to do data analysis”

The findings from the interviews have been compiled into a bar graph which has been provided below for the visual representations of the results.

**Figure 4**

*Why Students Look for Paid Academic Writing Services*



### Impacts of Paid Academic Writing Services

Surprisingly, none of the students have acknowledged that there are any negative impacts of paid academic writing services. Nonetheless, the students who agreed to respond to the interviews have said that there are positive impacts of using paid academic writing services. The interview extracts have been provided below:

“The only benefit that I have observed after using paid academic writing services is that I get good grades without working on tasks and assignments”

This student made a statement that there was no major negative impact on studies and academic performance and all that mattered were the grades. Upon further discussion, it was found out that some students just worry about the grades and are not inclined towards learning things and developing the skillset. These students do not realize that after university ends and as they enter professional life, they are going to struggle trying to make a career out of the degree they are awarded as they lack the basic skills let alone the knowledge. Apart from this, some students have indicated that the only negative impact of using paid academic writing services has been economical or money related. The interview extracts have been provided below.

“I have faced online money scams”

“Money scams”

“There is no way that a student can be caught. What I do is that before submitting any assignment, I



cross check the file and see if there are any errors, by doing so, I give it a thorough read, consuming all the knowledge it has and then change the name as mine and submit. This way, even if teacher or anyone else from the university asks about the assignment, I have a rough idea what it was about, and I just tell people about what I had read in the assignment. This is how I have never been caught.”

“I haven’t told anyone that I am using paid academic writing service, I meet with my supervisor and ask questions about the drafting making him think that I am actually working on my thesis while I have a person hired who writes the thesis and also tells me what to discuss with the supervisor and what to avoid”

“It’s pretty simple to not get caught as no one really bothers much, all everyone looks at is the name and roll number the file contains and eventually the grades.”

“There is nothing to manage about getting caught as no one keeps a check whether I am working on assignments or not. All teachers care about is that I submit the assignments on time.”

“I regularly read the assignments before submitting so that I have an idea what the assignment is about. This way, if any teacher or someone asks about the content of the assignment, I can answer them and not get caught.”

The visual representation has been provided below. Measures to Address the Issue of Paid Academic Writing Services

**Figure 5**

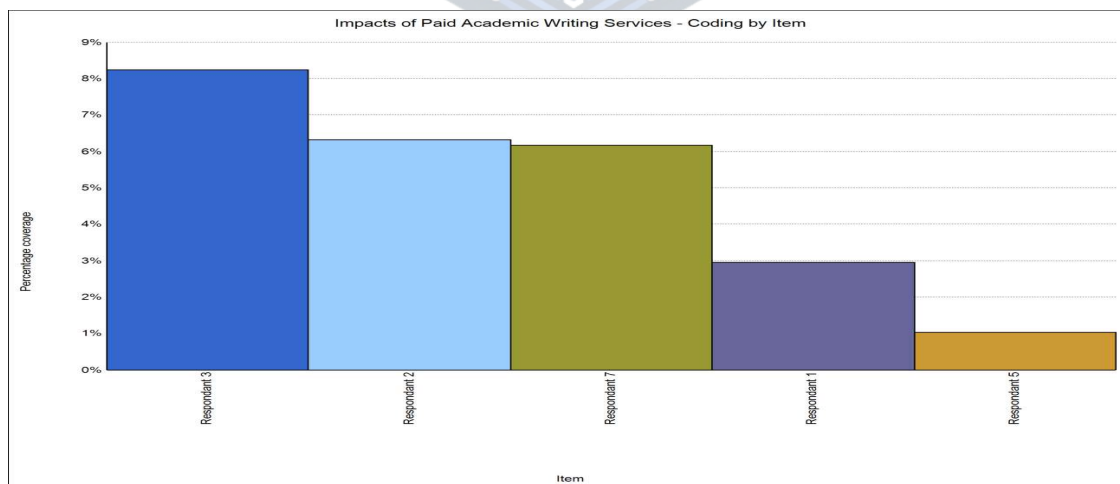
*Impacts of Paid Academic Writing Services*

In the interviews, it was deliberately asked about what measures can be taken to address the issue of usage of paid academic writing services to find out what are the opinions of the students.

The interview extracts are as under.

“Students should be encouraged to work on their assignments and regular quality checks and meetings should be arranged to check whether the students are themselves working on the assignments or not.”

“Teachers and supervisors should properly guide students and give them proper attention so that they



can develop the research skills and drafting skill and then they could work on their own.”

“Students should focus on assignments and universities should design the courses in a manner that students do not feel burdened.”

“Check for originality of the work submitted or conduct a viva for the assignment to check whether



the student has done the assignment himself or not.”

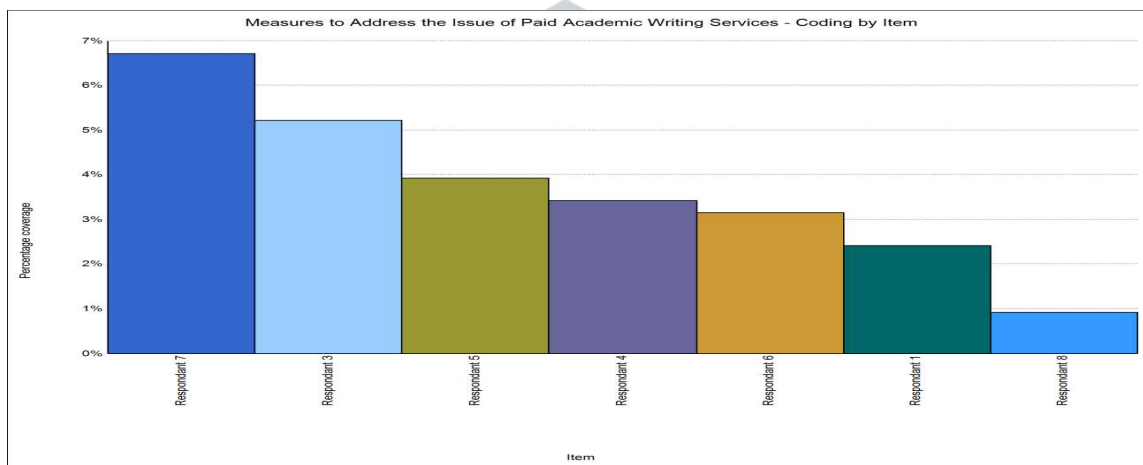
“Strict action should be taken in case any student is found to submit somebody else’s work.”

“Develop the required skillset in students which is necessary to write thesis and research paper. Students will do this on their own if they know how to do it”

The study underscores the importance of a multifaceted approach to academic integrity and student development. To foster independent learning, frequent check-ins and quality assessments are recommended. Additionally, well-structured courses can create a conducive learning environment. Strict measures like viva exams and plagiarism checks are essential to maintain academic standards. By equipping students with essential research and writing skills, we can empower them to excel in their academic pursuits and future careers. In addition, the importance of developing the fundamental abilities needed to write research articles and theses is emphasized. Giving students these abilities will make them more motivated and capable of finishing their assignments on their own, while also helping them to comprehend the importance and methodology of academic work.

Figure 6

Measure to address the issue of Paid Academic Writing Services



**Pakistani VS Foreign Universities**

To find out the comparison between the usage of paid academic writing services in Pakistani and foreign universities, a couple of questions were added to the interview. Most students did not have a clear idea about this as they did not have anyone in common among friends or family whom they have heard of or seen using paid academic writing services. The interview extracts have been provided below.

“I think it is more common in foreign universities to rely on paid academic writing services because most of the students are either working on their jobs or working on some business ideas and no one has the time to do proper research and submit assignments, rather they hire a freelance content writer via Fiverr or Upwork and get things done by some payment.”

“Most of the students use this service in one form or another but I don’t know much about the dynamics of Pakistani universities.”

“No idea.”

These selections from the interviews shed light on how common it is for colleges abroad to rely on hired academic writing services. According to one respondent, this technique is more common in international universities because many students are working jobs or starting their own businesses, which leaves them with



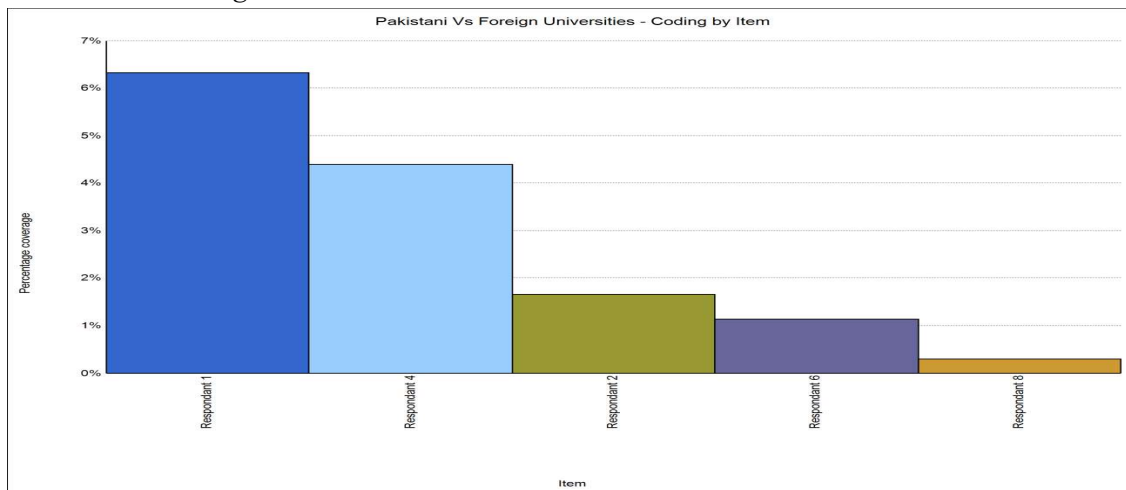


less time for doing thorough research and finishing tasks. Consequently, to complete their academic work for a relatively low cost, many students frequently turn to hiring freelance article writers through websites like Fiverr and Upwork. A different participant stated that students frequently utilize these services, even though they may not be fully aware of the unique dynamics present in Pakistani universities.

This viewpoint draws attention to a larger trend in which students are driven to seek outside assistance due to the stress of balancing work and studies, raising questions about their learning experiences' validity and academic integrity. The last responder said that they knew nothing about the subject, which suggests that there may be a knowledge or comprehension gap on the subject in some school settings. The visual representation of this section is provided below.

**Figure 7**

*Pakistani Vs Foreign Universities*



### Perceptions and Attitudes

This theme was added purposefully, and relative questions have been asked in the interview to shed light on opinion of students regarding impact of paid academic writing services on academic integrity and whether they think that is it ethical to use such services or not. The interview extracts have been provided below.

“I don’t believe that using paid academic writing services is ethical because one is cheating himself and the institution in which he/she is studying by submitting someone else’s work on their own name but then again, who has time to work on all of those assignments?”

“A lot of students these days use paid academic writing services, and everyone has their own reasons for that. Some think that it is just for the grades so why work on it, they would rather pay someone to get those assignments done. On the other hand, there are students who have more important things that they prioritize over working on a mere assignment.”

“It surely does because essentially one is submitting someone else’s work under their own name, which is cheating, and it does affect academic integrity.”

“Using paid academic writing services is unethical by all means.”

“Paid academic writing services do affect academic integrity as the students are publishing someone else’s work under their own name and this is purely cheating.”

“I guess it is unethical to use paid academic services.”



“Students do not have the required skill set to work on research papers or thesis that is why they look for paid academic writers who have command in their subject and can help them pass the subject.”

“I do think that it is unethical but with 2 jobs and studies it is hard to manage time for drafting a thesis.”

“It does affect academic integrity, but students are forced to use such services because they are overly burdened.”

“It is unethical because basically somebody else is working on your assignments and you are getting grades without doing the hard work it requires.”

“It is strictly unethical.” Most respondents saw using paid academic writing services as essentially unethical, according to the interview extracts, which demonstrate a clear consensus on the ethical implications of doing so. They contend that turning in work completed by someone else under one's own name is dishonesty both to the academic institution and to oneself. Academic integrity is compromised by this practice since it calls into question the validity of the institution's assessment procedures as well as the authenticity of the students' learning.

One respondent emphasized the moral problem, admitting that while using these services is immoral, students are driven to seek outside assistance by real-world difficulties like balancing numerous jobs and studies. Others agree, pointing out that students frequently turn to paid academic writing services due to their incapacity to finish challenging projects like thesis and research papers. Although these respondents acknowledge the difficult situations that students find themselves in, they continue to believe that depending on these services for grades compromises the educational process.

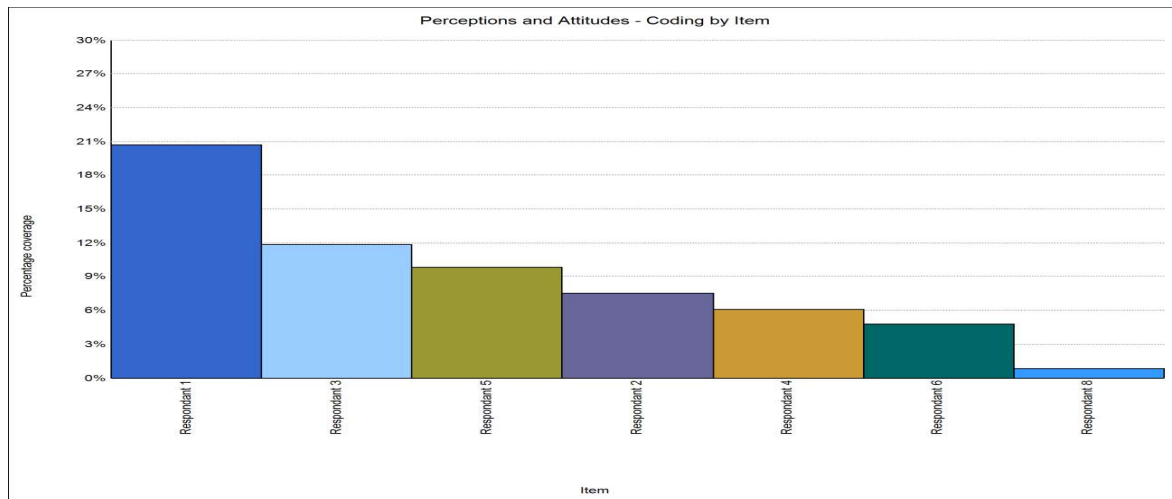
Another viewpoint that is expressed is that many students justify their usage of academic writing services by putting grades ahead of real learning. They think that by paying someone else to finish their tasks, they can concentrate on other things, like job or business endeavors, which they consider to be more important. Nonetheless, this mindset conveys a wider contempt for the academic principles of diligence, morality, and individual growth. Overall, the majority view is still that using commercial academic writing services is unethical and harmful to academic integrity, even though it is acknowledged that students may utilize these services due to outside pressures and ability deficits. It is viewed as a quick cut that eventually compromises the credibility of the school and the learning experience of the students.

From the interview extracts, it is evident that majority of students think that it is unethical to use paid academic writing services and it also affects academic integrity but majority of students use such services out of compulsion as international students have to manage time for their jobs as well and Pakistani students lack the basic skill set which is required for researching about a topic, drafting reports, collecting data, analyzing data and furnishing valuable insights from the data. The visual representation of this section has been provided below.

**Figure 8**



*Perception and Attitude*



**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

**Discussion**

Paid academic writing services have been a boom among students who are enrolled in bachelors or masters programs worldwide and this has been an issue which needs a voice to raise as it has direct connection with academic performance of students and overall academic integrity. Many students worldwide are using paid academic writing services for various reasons. To find out about the dynamics of paid academic writing services, I conducted the research covering the challenges faced by students due to which they chose paid academic writing services over drafting their assignments themselves, impacts of paid academic writing services on academic performance and academic integrity and the overall perception and attitude of students towards paid academic writing services. After conducting a series of interviews with students of different years from different universities, both Pakistani and Foreign, it was found out that a vast majority of students are indulged in using paid academic writing services for their assignment such as academic reports, research papers and thesis. The reason which has come forward after the data analysis is that most students who use such services are not able to manage time for drafting their assignments, conducting proper research and lack the skills required for data collection and data analysis. Some students had to manage jobs along with studies and they were under a tight schedule which is why they paid academic writers a sum of money in exchange of written assignments. The students were also asked about what challenges they faced while using paid academic writing services and it was found that most students faced that difficulty of finding the right person for the job as many people tend to be an academic writer on popular freelance marketplaces such as fiver and Upwork, but they are essentially scammers who scam people for money. After that the students were asked about their opinion on the usage of such services being ethical and did the usage of such services affect academic integrity. It was found that most students had this opinion that using paid academic writing services is unethical as it is basically submitting someone else’s work under their name, and it does affect academic integrity but then again students are under compulsion to use paid academic writing services to get better grades and successfully pass the courses in which they are enrolled. Lastly, while ending the interview it was asked if students had any opinion on addressing the rising issue of using paid academic writing services and the responses were diverse in nature as some students said that they did not have proper skillset and this should be taught to them, others said that there should be a flexible timeline for submitting of assignments and rest of the students said that the



students should be encouraged to write/draft their assignments themselves.

### **Conclusion**

Paid academic writing services have been common among students for a while now as it gives students a shortcut to complete their assignments in exchange for some money. Students are unable to understand the consequences which can occur by using such services as essentially, they are not working on their assignments which are provided in their courses for their learning and overall academic growth. Students have failed to understand the importance of research papers, academic reports and theses and take such assignments as a burden and then hire a freelance academic writer to complete such tasks for them. Students use these services so that they can effortlessly submit their assignments and get better grades and move ahead in their academic journey. Institutions worldwide have tried to address this issue by including multiple checks such as Turnitin plagiarism check, yet they have failed to check whether the student submitting the assignment has actually worked on the assignment or not. A lot of students do jobs along with their studies and they don't have time on a daily basis to work on assignments such as research papers, thesis, business plans etc. For such assignments they use paid academic writing services as they feel it is easier to pay money to some academic writer rather than working on the assignment themselves as they fail to understand the importance of the tasks they are provided with. This research discovers all of these factors related to the use of paid academic writing services in Pakistani and Foreign Universities. The data has been collected via interviews and the interview questions are designed carefully connecting the research questions as shown by the interview extracts that are closely related to the research questions.

### **Recommendations**

The current study has highlighted various issues and challenges related to paid academic writing services such as the impact on students' academic performance and has discovered the reasons due to which students use such services. Yet this study is limited to only two universities in Pakistan and only 4 interviews had been made possible from foreign universities due to unavailability of time and manpower. A lot of work can be carried out but taking this research work as the basis, many aspects of this topic can be discovered in multiple demographical locations such as Pakistani universities, engineering universities, medical universities and this research can be further elaborated for foreign universities. Apart from that this research can be divided into multiple subtopics such as impacts of paid academic writing services, challenges of paid academic writing services, ways to overcome the usage of paid academic writing services and much more. Researchers can work on mitigation techniques for usage of paid academic writing services by considering this study as the basis of their research.

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ANNEXURE

Interview Questions

**Title: Exploring the Dynamics of Paid Academic Writings in Pakistani and Foreign Universities**

We are from Quaid-I-Azam University, Islamabad. We are collecting data for research study which is on exploring the dynamics of paid academic writing services in Pakistani and Foreign Universities. For this, we humbly request you to participate in this interview and promote my research by being a part of it. All the data collected is purely for research purposes and will be kept confidential by all means deemed necessary.

**SECTION 1: Demographic Information**

Q1	Age of Respondent	
Q2	Gender	
Q3	Educational Background	
Q4	Name of University	

**SECTION 2: Awareness and Experience**

Q5: Have you ever heard of paid academic writing services?

Q6: Have you ever thought about using paid academic writing services?

Q7: What types of academic tasks have you completed by using paid academic writing services (e.g., essays, research papers, technical reports, and thesis)?

**SECTION 3: Reasons for using paid academic writing services**

Q8: What factors influenced your decision to use paid academic writing services?

Q9: Were you satisfied with the quality of work delivered by such services?

Q10: What challenges did you face, if any, while using paid academic writing services?

**SECTION 4: Perceptions and Attitudes**

Q11: Do you believe that using paid academic writing services is ethical?

Q12: What are your opinions on the prevalence of paid academic writing services in Pakistani and Foreign Universities?

Q13: Do you think that the use of paid academic writing services affects academic integrity?

**SECTION 5: Academic Environment**

Q14: How prevalent do you think paid academic writing services are in Pakistani universities as compared to foreign universities?

Q15: What measures, if any, do you think should be taken to address the issue of paid academic writing services?

**SECTION 7: Academic Performance and Impact**

Q16: Do you think that using paid academic writing services has any impact on your academic performance?

Q17: Have you faced any consequences (positive or negative) because of using paid academic writing services?

Q18: Would you consider using paid academic writing services again in future?

Q19: What factors would influence your decision to use paid academic writing services in future?

Q20: Are there any mechanisms present in the university which can detect the originality of the homework or assignment that you submit?

Q21: How have you managed to not get caught?