

Levels of plagiarism and use of standards for presentation of work in an undergraduate program in the city of Barranquilla

Niveles de plagio y uso de normas para presentación de trabajos en un programa de pregrado en la ciudad de Barranquilla

Níveis de plágio e uso de padrões para a apresentação de trabalhos em um curso de graduação na cidade de Barranquilla.

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Abstract

Introduction: A research study was conducted related to the accepted undergraduate work to opt for the academic degree at the university studied in the city of Barranquilla, Colombia between 2015 and 2020. **Objective, Method and/or methodology:** This research aimed to characterize the academic production of a program in the city of Barranquilla, emphasizing aspects such as the modality of degree, research methodology, use of standards for submission of papers established by the American Psychological Association (APA) by means of a quantitative methodological design and descriptive-documentary type. **Results and conclusions:** Of the 50 theses evaluated, 64% were monographs, 86% of the works were not presented under APA standards and 44% presented plagiarism levels between 10 and 15%. These results show the lack of rigour in the review of the degree projects, in violation of the criteria established in the grade work regulations of the studied program in terms of their structure, levels of plagiarism and use of APA standards.

Keywords: Degree work; APA standards; Plagiarism.

Resumen

Introducción: Se realizó un estudio de investigación relacionado con los trabajos de grado aceptados para optar por el título académico en la universidad estudiada de la ciudad Barranquilla, Colombia entre los años 2015 y 2020. Objetivo, Método y/o Metodología: Esta investigación tuvo como objetivo caracterizar la producción académica de un programa de la ciudad de Barranquilla, haciendo énfasis en aspectos como la modalidad de grado, metodología de investigación, uso de normas para presentación de trabajos establecidas por la American Psychological Association (APA) por medio de un diseño metodológico cuantitativo y tipo descriptivo-documental. Resultados y conclusiones: De las 50 tesis evaluadas, el 64% fueron monografías, el 86% de los trabajos no fue presentado bajo las normas APA y el 44% presenta niveles de plagio entre el 10 y 15%. Estos resultados dan cuenta de la falta de rigor en la revisión de los proyectos de grado, infringiendo los criterios establecidos en el reglamento de trabajo de grado del programa estudiado en lo que respecta a su estructura, niveles de plagio y uso de normas APA.

Palabras clave: Trabajos de grado; Normas APA; Plagio.

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Resumo

Introdução: Foi realizada uma pesquisa relacionada aos trabalhos de conclusão de curso aceitos para o grau acadêmico na universidade estudada na cidade de Barranquilla, Colômbia, entre 2015 e 2020.

Objetivo, Método e/ou Metodologia: Esta pesquisa teve como objetivo caracterizar a produção acadêmica de um programa na cidade de Barranquilla, enfatizando aspectos como a modalidade de titulação, a metodologia de pesquisa, o uso das normas para apresentação de trabalhos estabelecidas pela American Psychological Association (APA), por meio de um desenho metodológico quantitativo e do tipo descritivo-documental. **Resultados e conclusões:** Das 50 teses avaliadas, 64% eram monografias, 86% dos trabalhos não foram apresentados de acordo com as normas da APA e 44% apresentaram níveis de plágio entre 10 e 15%. Esses resultados demonstram falta de rigor na revisão dos trabalhos de conclusão de curso, violando os critérios estabelecidos no regulamento do projeto de conclusão de curso do programa estudado no que se refere à sua estrutura, aos níveis de plágio e ao uso das normas da APA.

Palavras-chave: *Projetos de graduação; Normas da APA; Plágio.*

Perfil

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Introduction

The review and analysis of academic production in university environments constitutes a contribution to the search for improving the processes of knowledge generation, in order to obtain higher quality and impact in these contexts (Cortés-Trujillo, 2015; Escorcia-Otálora, 2008; Pérez-Jiménez et al., 2020; Pérez-Saavedra et al., 2008; Reguera, 2008; Roig-Villa et al., 2016).

According to Pérez-Jiménez et al. (2020), it is evident, in the realization of graduate work, the lack of knowledge about the research methodology to be selected, due to the existing biases in the teaching of the different existing research designs. That is why this author manifests a prevailing problem, especially in human sciences, on how to explain the methodological procedure of their degree project, for which reason they choose to omit it and it is difficult to read it accurately.

Also, according to Cisneros- Estupiñán (2012), one of the greatest difficulties in the production of undergraduate papers in Latin American university environments is associated with the reproduction of knowledge of specialized authors, due to the inability to interpret, codify and express what is understood through a given study to experts in the subject being addressed. This is also due, according to Venegas et al, (2016), to the lack of knowledge of the standards established by universities for the presentation of papers, with these studies agreeing that the most widely accepted standards have been those established by the American Psychological Association (APA).

The shortcomings in terms of analysis and understanding of texts and the lack of knowledge of the proper form of referencing, has led the pre-grade student to the exposition of ideas of authors without taking into account the respect for intellectual property as well as not knowing -within the text- the source from which it was obtained and properly referenced; this fault, according to Hernandez-Islas (2016), is very common in

the presentation of works by university students, appropriating the intellectual property of others and assuming it as their own, involuntarily and, in most cases, voluntarily.

On the other hand, the misuse of intellectual property in university environments is related to the lack of knowledge of the regulations for the presentation of work, in addition to the fact that many teachers are unaware of the software to identify plagiarism (Merelles, 2017; Murillo, 2011; Ronda-Pérez, et al., 2016; Torres et al, 2013; Timal and Sánchez, 2017). Therefore, universities should be concerned about generating high-impact strategies that induce the professionalization of research and education. In Colombia, according to the Colombian Supreme Court of Justice (2010, cited in Sanabria, 2014), plagiarism can be classified as follows:

(...) one, when the actor attributes to himself the work of another, just as it has been created by the author; and two, when the actor attributes to himself the work of another, not by reproducing it identically, but by imitating it in its essential extremes (...) (p. 88).

The aforementioned aspects are a starting point for this research, which aims to characterize the undergraduate academic production in the program of the University studied in the last 5 years, taking into account basic aspects related to the philosophical current, the mode or typology of degree work and in-depth aspects such as research methodology, the use of standards for presentation of work established by the American Psychological Association (APA), the number of bibliographic references and levels of plagiarism. This is done with the purpose of knowing how the production of degree projects has been carried out in the program of the university studied, in order to serve the decision makers of the Faculty where it is assigned for the strengthening of the Degree Project Chair.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Design

Descriptive study and quantitative approach, taking into account 50 degree works of the program of a university of the city of Barranquilla, Colombia, carried out between 2015 and 2020 and that rest in the library of the mentioned university text, so they are of open access; also, a documentary review of the texts was carried out between March 2019 and April 2020, excluding those theses of other institutions affiliated to the university.

2.2. Instruments

For the collection of information, the guidelines established in the evaluation format for graduate work of the university studied and the program's Graduate Work Regulations (Universidad del Atlántico, 2017) were followed. The criteria to be taken into account in the review of the degree works were the following:

Number of theses by year: theses and articles were identified that were between the range of years 2015-2020 that were approved by the Academic Council Committee of the program studied, and that rested in the library of the same with open access.

Type or modality of degree work: these are the degree work options of the program, accepted as a requirement for the completion of the degree and are: monograph, essay, bibliographic review, translation and published article approved for publication.

Research methodology: the methodological design, approach and phases of the research selected to carry out the degree work.

Use of APA norms: the use of the APA norms of the edition corresponding to the years of the degree works reviewed is taken into account.

evaluated are the format of references, paragraph structure and in-text citation.

Number of bibliographic references: number of sources presented in the bibliography.

Plagiarism level: plagiarism percentages obtained through the Turnitin® program.

The analysis list or form was submitted to a committee of experts from the university studied and approved for application on February 14, 2019.

2.3. Information analysis

The statistical analysis of the results was carried out using IBM SPSS V. 23 for Windows.

10. The interpretation of the data was done by means of univariate analysis, measuring the variables on a nominal scale and describing the data by frequency and percentage, showing the information in tables and figures, presenting the numerical variables by means of averages, maximum value and minimum value.

2.4. Ethical considerations

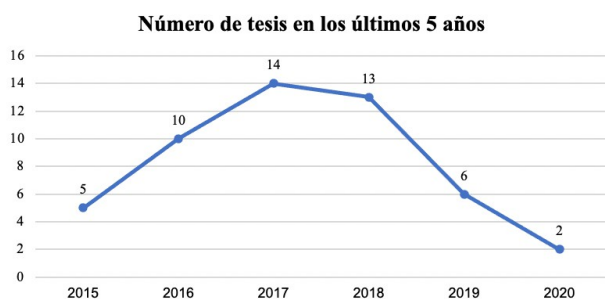
This research was submitted for consideration to the coordination of the program studied in 2020; likewise, taking into account the open access quality of the undergraduate work, no permission was required from the ethics committee of the university where the study was conducted. The legal aspects established in Decree 1377 (2013), referring to identity protection and data processing, were taken into account.

3. RESULTS

According to Figure 1, of the 50 theses produced between the years 2015 and 2020, 14 of them correspond to the year 2017 and the lowest production to 2020 with 2 theses; it is evident that the highest production of degree projects in the program was presented from the year 2016 to 2018, decreasing in the year 2019 to 2020.

Figura 1

Número de trabajos de grado en los últimos 5 años.



In Table 1, in relation to the typology of undergraduate projects, most of them have been monographs (64%) and to a lesser extent scientific articles (2%); as regards research methodology, students do not specify the methodological design or present the phases of the study approach (76%) in the development of their work. Regarding the use of the norms established by the American Psychological Association for the development of papers, 86% of the students in program b do not comply with them. In addition, regarding the number of bibliographic references used in the justification of their undergraduate work, there is a use of less than 25 bibliographic references (74%) and plagiarism levels -mostly- between 10 and 15% (44%).

4. DISCUSSION

The prevalence of the modality or type of degree project monograph (64%), is an interesting data, since, when making a detailed study of the degree projects and, taking into account what is established in the Degree Project Regulations of the Program (Universidad del Atlántico, 2017), with respect to the modality in question, its structure adapts to the criteria established for essay, since all the monographs reviewed do not present sections such as "planning of the problem, justification, objectives, historical framework, theoretical framework, theoretical framework, etc.", its structure adapts to the criteria established for essays, since all of the reviewed monographies do not present sections such as "problem planning, justification, objectives, historical framework, theoretical framework, state of the art, methodology, discussion or results and conclusions and proposals" (Universidad del Atlántico, 2017, pp. 2-3), which are properties that a monograph should contain.

From the results obtained through the research, we can conclude that It is necessary to highlight the tendency of the undergraduate work done in the program in the last 5 years towards considerable levels of plagiarism, evidencing the assumption by the authors of other people's concepts as their own intellectual production, which is consistent with what Cisneros- Estupiñán (2012) stated, considering common the reproduction by Latin American university students of ideas that are the property of specialized authors; It also agrees with Hernández-Islas (2016), who conceives plagiarism practices as common in university contexts, making use of the intellectual property of others and presenting it as their own.

In spite of the fact that most of the degree works are in an acceptable range of plagiarism (10% - 15%) as established by Valderrama (2016), it is possible to appreciate the prevalence of accepted degree works with representative levels of plagiarism higher than 15%, which disagrees with what is established in the Program's Degree Work Rules (University

Tabla 1.*Criterios generales de análisis para los trabajos de grado.*

Criterios de análisis	n	%
Tipología de Trabajo de Grado		
Monografía	32	64%
Artículo Científico	1	2%
Revisión bibliográfica	7	14%
No se describe	10	20%
Metodología de la investigación		
Investigación cualitativa	12	24%
No se especifica	38	76%
Uso de Normas APA		
Si	7	14%
No	43	86%
Número de referencias bibliográficas		
<25	37	74%
25 – 50	6	12%
>50-75	5	10%
>75	2	4%
Nivel de plagio		
<5%	8	16%
5% - 10%	6	12%
10% - 15%	22	44%
<15%	14	28%

del Atlántico, 2017), where it is indicated that the presence of plagiarism in a degree work must be notified by the evaluators assigned to review such work and that, if the use of intellectual property "total or partial, voluntary or involuntary" (p.7) is notified, it will be a pretext for the cancellation or establishment of respective sanctions of the work presented.

The above shows the lack of rigorousness in the review of the degree works carried out in the program, since it is the duty of the teachers who evaluate the assigned degree work, to report with evidence the student's faults related to the use of the intellectual property of others; however, the prevalence of traditionalist models of review of degree projects, have led to the reproduction of degree theses with high plagiarism content, ignoring the use of specialized software for the identification of this (Ronda-Pérez, et al., 2016; Murillo, 2011; Torres et al., 2013; Merelles, 2017), which is reflected in the program in question, since, despite the availability of anti-plagiarism software such as Turnitin, they have not received the respective training on its use.

Another important finding was the use of the APA norms, where 86% of the works carried out and approved between 2015 and 2020 do not duly apply said norm, which disagrees with what is established in the Program's Undergraduate Work Regulations (Universidad del Atlántico, 2017), where it is specified that those undergraduate works that are not presented according to the APA Norms will not be accepted; this is in agreement with what was stated by Venegas et al. (2016) and Hernández-Islas (2016), who attribute the high level of plagiarism in undergraduate works to the lack of knowledge and little instruction in the use of APA norms.

Although plagiarism may be unintentional (Sanabria, 2014), and related to the lack of rigor in the use of the rules for the presentation of work (Venegas, et al., 2016; Hernández-Islas, 2016), the Regulations for Undergraduate Work of the Program (Universidad del Atlántico, 2017), "it is not an argument to ignore the application of the rule, since it is the duty of the student to

review the methodological part of the work" (p. 7), which is different from what is evident in the degree projects evaluated between 2015 and 2020, since these documents have the teacher's endorsement despite violating the aforementioned clause.

It is also worth noting the high percentage of undergraduate papers that present less than 25 references (74%), which allows us to assert, upon exhaustively reviewing the documents, the presence of incomplete bibliography, i.e., references cited in the text but not mentioned in the bibliography; this may be associated with lack of knowledge and lack of use of the APA norms for the presentation of papers.

5. CONCLUSIONS

After the results obtained, it is possible to affirm the great difficulties that are evident in the development of graduate work in the program studied, where there is a lack of rigor on the part of the evaluators of graduate work, especially in the matter of distinguishing between the intellectual property of the student and plagiarism, in violation of the institutional regulations regarding the exhaustive review and manifestation of inconsistencies for the establishment of sanctions.

It is necessary for academics to ensure quality academic production and to induce this research culture in university students, inducing them to follow pre-established guidelines on the presentation of undergraduate papers, the use of APA norms and the search for bibliography in databases, in order to feed their projects with theoretical references in accordance with their subject matter; Therefore, it is pertinent to offer courses related to the use of standards for the presentation of papers and research methodology, so that undergraduates have the knowledge on how to carry out a degree project.

The above, it is a fundamental need the socialization of the guidelines established in the regulations for the presentation of degree work, since the student, not knowing the structure,

This is reflected in the low production of degree projects in the last 5 years in comparison with other academic programs of the university studied.

Finally, it is important that the teachers of the program and, in general, the academics of the faculty to which the program is attached, are trained in the use of software for the detection of plagiarism, in order to perform preliminary reviews of the degree work and induce the student to make the corresponding corrections related to the respect for the intellectual property of others, in addition to speeding up and facilitating the review of the same.

6. LIMITATIONS

The research would have had a greater impact if it had covered the studies carried out from 2010 to 2020, which was not possible because many of the works from years prior to 2015 do not reside in the library of the university studied, which made access to them difficult.

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