
THE PREVALENCE OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

Mehwish Kamal

Ph.D. Scholar,
Department of Special Education, University of Education Lahore,
Punjab, Pakistan.
Email: mehvish26@live.com

Zahida Parveen

Associate Professor,
Department of Special Education, University of Education Lahore,
Punjab, Pakistan.
Email: zahida.parveen@ue.edu.pk

Tehseen Mushtaq

Lecturer,
Department of Special Education, University of Education Lahore,
Punjab, Pakistan.
Email: tehseen.mushtaq@ue.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

Academic dishonesty poses a significant challenge in educational institutions, compromising the integrity of learning environments. This study endeavors to identify the root causes contributing to the prevalence of academic dishonesty among university students and proposes actionable strategies to address this issue. To get an in-depth insight into the issue, a questionnaire was developed and validated through expert opinions. Suggestions from experts were incorporated and shared again with experts to get final approval for the utilization of the questionnaire. Employing an action research methodology with a descriptive focus, the researcher conducted surveys using this validated questionnaire. 150 university students were purposively selected for data collection. Focus group discussions with 9 students and interviews with 4 teachers were utilized to obtain a comprehensive understanding from both perspectives. The findings are based on the high value of the mean. After the identification of the results, Researcher emphasized the urgent need for concerted efforts to create a sustainable, transparent, and healthy learning environment within the university. Addressing the root causes of academic dishonesty requires

collaborative initiatives to promote academic integrity, foster ethical behavior, and implement preventive measures. By implementing the proposed action plan and strategies derived from this study, universities can effectively combat academic dishonesty and uphold the integrity of their academic programs. In conclusion, this study offers valuable insights into the prevalence and root causes of academic dishonesty among university students.

KEYWORDS

Academic, Dishonesty, University, Students, Teachers, Values, Ethics, Environment

INTRODUCTION

Academic dishonesty encompasses behaviors such as cheating, copying, plagiarism, fabrication, and outsourcing assignments to experts (Comas-Forgas et al., 2010). This longstanding issue has gained national and international attention due to its serious implications and its alarming prevalence at higher education levels (Maramark & Maline, 1993; McCabe & Trevino, 1997). As shared by Rau and Durand (2000) academic ethic is "learned behavior" and those who have learned this behavior "before their studies on leisure activities; work daily; and worked in an intense, focused and sober fashion". While assessments aim to identify talented individuals, the desire for success without genuine effort has contributed to academic dishonesty, challenging the fairness of competitions. Despite some small-scale research efforts in this area, there remains a scarcity of longitudinal studies, making it difficult to fully understand the reasons behind the increasing prevalence of academic dishonesty (Jasper Roe, 2022; Shane & Crown, 1995).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent literature highlights statistics related to academic dishonesty. For instance, a study conducted at a Malaysian university found that 58.8% of students admitted to engaging in academic dishonesty (Khan & Soomro, 2019). Another study from a Turkish university reported that 81.8% of students admitted to academic dishonesty, with copying from others being the most common form (Erdogan et al., 2015). Similarly, a study conducted in Thailand revealed that 78.8% of students engaged in academic dishonesty, primarily through cheating (Thanoon & Hasan, 2017).

A comprehensive analysis of 24 studies on academic dishonesty among undergraduate students in the United States indicated that cheating rates ranged from 20% to 95%, with an overall average of 67% (Whitley Jr., 2017). Moreover, a survey conducted among undergraduate students in Pakistan reported that 83.4% of participants engaged in academic dishonesty (Bukhari et al., 2019). In a study from India, 82.8% of engineering students admitted to academic dishonesty, primarily through copying (Debnath & Thakur, 2019).

Recent research has also explored the factors associated with academic dishonesty. A study conducted among Turkish university students found that the perceived severity of punishment, perceived benefits of cheating, and peer influence significantly influenced students' engagement in academic dishonesty (Bulut, 2017). Another study among undergraduate students in China revealed that academic stress, self-control, and moral disengagement were significant predictors of academic dishonesty (Chen et al., 2019). Considering the significant impact of academic life on future work behavior, it is crucial to address the prevalence of academic dishonesty among university students. A study conducted among Malaysian university students found that academic dishonesty was associated with workplace dishonesty, highlighting the need to tackle the issue at its root (Abu Bakar et al., 2018).

In conclusion, academic dishonesty remains a prevalent issue among students, nationally and internationally. The latest research demonstrates high rates of engagement in academic dishonesty across various countries and disciplines. It is imperative for educational institutions to prioritize the development and implementation of ethical codes and interventions to address this problem effectively.

Academic dishonesty poses a significant challenge for educational institutions worldwide, especially those offering higher education. Such dishonest practices create an inappropriate learning environment, within classrooms and university premises, which can negatively impact academic performance and impede educational achievement. Consequently, it is imperative to explore solutions that can effectively address these negative attitudes among students, thus overcoming these challenges and fostering academic success.

Setting

The research was conducted at a government university located in Lahore, Pakistan. The university premises were well-designed with adequate covered areas, and it had multiple campuses in Lahore as well as in different cities of Punjab province. The researcher selected Specific Department, and bachelor's program students from different semesters and sections for a Research study.

The Researcher

The researcher worked as a visiting lecturer in the Special Education Department. During her time at the department, she observed numerous inappropriate behaviors in the classroom, unethical practices on the university premises, and a prevalent culture of cheating during exams. These issues were alarming and raised significant concerns. Motivated by these observations, the researcher embarked on an action research study to delve deeper into the underlying causes of such dishonest behavior and negative attitudes among students toward their academics. Although the rules and regulations

were clearly outlined at the time of admission, students often regarded them as mere pieces of paper, lacking serious consideration. This situation calls for an urgent need to conduct small-scale research projects to find solutions for this serious issue. These small research studies can guide us toward implementing proper solutions and guidelines.

The purpose of this study is to understand the current challenges faced by universities, particularly in relation to academic dishonesty. The research aims to investigate why students engage in cheating, plagiarism, inappropriate use of technology, bunking classes, forming cliques, displaying favoritism, and making false statements in front of teachers. Furthermore, the study seeks to explore strategies to minimize these violations and improve the academic environment.

This study holds significant importance as it has the potential to improve the education system for students. By identifying potential solutions and promoting self-confidence and a change in mindset, the study can help students overcome barriers to learning and achieve academic success. This research study is helpful for teachers to identify the needs of learners and create appropriate learning environments based on social needs, academic requirements, and practical approaches in the current educational landscape. It may contribute to improving the educational structure for learners who resort to inappropriate methods and shortcuts to prove themselves academically. It provides guidelines for the development of new strategies, practices, and the proper utilization of resources. Exploration of the underlying causes and reasons for such behaviors among students and provision of suggestions to overcome these phenomena for a better future. It may assist teachers in strengthening their teaching methodologies and academic structures to cater to the needs of their learners and foster a positive learning culture among students. It may raise awareness in society regarding the right approach to learning and its purpose.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the challenges faced by institutions regarding cheating and other inappropriate activities on university premises.
2. To identify potential solutions that can enhance the academic situation and promote effective learning.
3. To take initiatives aimed at reducing factors contributing to academic dishonesty.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. The study addressed the following critical questions: For Teachers
2. What challenges do teachers face during their teaching, and what strategies and methods can be employed to control dishonest behaviors in classrooms?
3. What initiatives and techniques do teachers use to create a positive and honest

learning environment among students in the university?

4. The study addressed the following critical questions: For Students

5. What are the reasons behind cheating, skipping classes, plagiarism, and all inappropriate behaviors on University Premises?

6. What steps can be taken to promote a culture of academic honesty and integrity among students, and to prevent academic misconduct and cheating in schools and universities?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study will utilize a Participatory action research approach to comprehensively understand the challenges faced by educational institutions. The researcher will gather data through surveys with students, interviews conducted with teachers, and focus group discussions with students. Overall, the data collection process in this study encompassed a multi-method approach, incorporating surveys, interviews with teachers, observations of student behavior, and focus group discussions with students. This comprehensive approach ensured a holistic understanding of academic dishonesty and provided valuable insights into the experiences and perspectives of both teachers and students.

Questionnaire on Academic Dishonesty

The questionnaire for university students was developed based on the researcher's personal experience, artifacts, and a comprehensive literature review. The instrument consists of two parts:

The first section collects demographic information, including gender and semester.

The second section comprises 27 questions/statements, using a five-point rating scale (never, rarely, sometimes, often, and always). The statements are categorized into four factors:

1. Dishonesty in Task
2. Dishonesty in Exams
3. Dishonesty in Student Behavior
4. Dishonesty in the Role of Teacher Student Perspective

The grouping of statements under these factors allows for a comprehensive assessment of the various aspects related to academic dishonesty and the role of teachers in promoting integrity. It is important to note that the methodology outlined above aims to gather data and insights that will contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges and potential solutions related to academic dishonesty in educational institutions.

Validity and reliability are crucial considerations in conducting effective research.

Validity ensures that the data collected accurately represents the phenomena or constructs being studied. This study carefully addressed the validity of the instrument used to measure academic dishonesty among university students. The questionnaire was developed based on the researcher's personal experience, artifacts, and an extensive review of relevant literature. Expert validation was sought to ensure the content validity of the questionnaire. By including a comprehensive set of statements related to different aspects of academic dishonesty and the role of teachers, the instrument aimed to capture the multidimensional nature of the phenomenon.

Additionally, reliability is an essential aspect of research, ensuring consistency and stability in the measurements. In this study, the reliability of the instrument was assessed. The reliability coefficient for the questionnaire, specifically in relation to academic dishonesty among university students, was found to be 0.76. This indicates a satisfactory level of reliability, suggesting that the instrument consistently measures the intended constructs and provides stable results.

By addressing validity and reliability, this study sought to enhance the robustness and trustworthiness of the research findings. Valid and reliable data are crucial for drawing meaningful conclusions and making informed decisions based on the research outcomes.

Interview of Teachers

The researcher selected 4 Teachers for Interviews from the same Department and the same area of students.

Focus Group Discussion with Students

The researcher applied a purposive technique and selected 8 students from 150 Students.

Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations are of paramount importance in any research study, and this study on academic dishonesty in educational institutions paid careful attention to ethical guidelines. In order to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the participants, the questionnaire used in the study did not collect any personal information or identities of the respondents in the demographic section. This approach aimed to create a safe and comfortable environment for the participants, ensuring that they felt at ease while providing their responses.

Furthermore, prior to data collection, the researcher explicitly informed all participants about the confidentiality of their information. Participants were assured that their responses would be treated with the utmost confidentiality and would only be used for

research purposes. In addition, during the interview process, the researcher obtained explicit permission from the participants for audio recording. This step was taken to ensure transparency and respect for the participants' autonomy. These ethical considerations were essential to uphold the principles of research integrity, respect for participants' rights, and the ethical guidelines established by relevant institutions. By maintaining confidentiality, seeking informed consent, and providing a secure research environment, this study aimed to uphold ethical standards and ensure the well-being and trust of the participants.

Data Collection

Phase 1: Responses of Students on Prevalence of Academic Dishonesty

Data collection is a crucial phase in any research study, and in this study on academic dishonesty, a comprehensive approach was adopted to gather data from multiple sources. The primary source of data collection was the students themselves, who were the target population of the study, specifically B.Ed. Hons students in selected semesters. The survey method was employed to collect data from the students, utilizing a questionnaire designed to explore various aspects of academic dishonesty.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis began by examining the frequency distributions of the demographic variables to gain a better understanding of the characteristics of the sample. This step provided insights into the composition of the 150 participants in terms of gender, semester, demographic factors, and 27 items of instrument.

Descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the data and summarize the main characteristics of the variables under investigation. Measures such as mean (average), standard deviation, minimum, and maximum values were calculated to provide a comprehensive description of the data set. The mean value allowed for assessing the average response or level of agreement/disagreement among the participants regarding various factors related to academic dishonesty.

S	Statements	Never	Rarely	Someti mes	Often	Always	M	SD
1.	I copy from others' notes/assignments	8.0	6.0	10.0	1.3	2.0	1.39	0.88
2.	I provide previous graded / senior student assignments	86.7	6.0	4.0	1.3	2.0	1.26	0.77
3.	assignment for	56.	19.	18.7	3.3	2.0	1.74	1.00

	someone to submit as their own work	7	3					
4.	give false excuses for missing / late submission of assignments	64.0	14.7	17.3	2.7	7	1.66	1.19
5.	Collaborate with friends on an assignment when the teacher asked for an individual task	29.3	22.7	28.7	7.3	12.0	2.5	1.34
6.	use technology negatively while completing assignments	59.3	17.3	14	4.7	4.0	1.82	1.34
7.	do copy-paste from the internet for assignments instead of self-writing.	26.7	22.0	28.7	15.3	7.3	2.54	1.24
	Total						12.91	1.84
8.	I help others cheat during exams.	31.3	19.3	33.3	9.3	6.7	2.40	1.21
9.	I keep relevant materials with me for cheating during exams.	93.3	2.0	1.3	1.3	2.0	1.16	.69
10.	I take an examination for someone else.	96.7	0	1.3	0	2.0	1.10	.60
11.	I arranged for someone to take exams for me.	99.3	7	0	0	0	1.0	.08
12.	I use my mobile phone during exams to cheat.	94.0	2.7	0	1.3	2.0	1.14	.66
13.	I give a false excuse for missing an examination.	76.0	8.7	11.3	2.7	1.3	1.14	.89
14.	Feel bad when others cheat.	18.7	13.3	21.3	10.0	36.7	3.32	1.5
	Total						1.62	
15.	I like to bunk classes just for the sake of fun.	50.0	14.7	28.0	3.3	4.0	1.96	1.13

16. I tend to bunk classes due to a lack of interest/ lack of commitment -	51.3	16.0	26.7	5.3	7	1.88	1.02
17. I give wrong favors to friends in the classroom like a proxy.	62.0	18.0	12.0	4.0	4.0	1.70	1.08
18. I write activity reports without conducting the assigned activity.	66.0	17.3	14.0	1.3	1.3	1.54	.87
19. I use social media/ applications inappropriately.	76.7	6.7	9.3	3.3	4.0	1.51	1.06
20. I support my Peers in criminal/bad activities in institute premises.	82.7	8.0	6.7	2.7	0	1.29	.70
21. I am involved in creating groups within the class based on my interests.	82.0	8.7	6.0	2.7	7	1.35	1.05
22. get favors from my teachers for the assigned task	84.7	6.7	6.0	0	2.7	1.29	.80
Total						1.56	
23. Support staff facilitates students in cheating.	73.3	13.3	8.7	2.0	2.7	1.47	.93
24. Teachers facilitate students in cheating.	76.7	10.0	6.0	4.0	3.3	1.47	1.00
25. students benefitted from the teacher's favoritism.	30.0	11.3	22.7	13.3	22.7	2.87	1.53
26. Some students already know the question paper.	41.3	16.7	26.0	8.7	7.3	2.24	1.27
27. Teachers give extra marks to some students on sympathetic grounds.	38.7	18.7	22.7	7.3	12.7	2.36	1.38
Total						8.52	

The first factor was Assignment Dishonesty and under this factor, the high mean 2.54

indicates that student prefers copy paste from the internet for assignments instead of self-writing. Second, 2.5 students get help from their friends in their own work. The second factor was Exams Dishonesty, under this factor mean of 3.32 shows that students felt bad when others do cheat. Secondly, a mean of 2.40 indicates that students help their class fellows in exams cheating and 1.16 shows that students kept cheating material in exams. The third factor was Student Dishonest Behavior and under this factor mean value of 1.96 shows that student bunk classes for the sake of fun Second value of 1.88 shows that they are less interested and less committed to their classes and the third was 1.70 shows that they gave wrong favors to their class-fellows like a proxy.

The fourth factor was the Role of the Teacher and under this factor, the mean value of 2.87 shows that students think teachers give favoritism to a few students and the 2.36 value shows that teachers give some extra marks to a few students on sympathetic grounds.

Phase 2– Teacher Interviews and Responses

Theme :1 Causes of Academic Dishonesty

Sub Theme: Plagiarism and Shortcuts

Nowadays, Plagiarism is a common way to do things in a short time and it became a major cause of academic dishonesty. Students waste their time on extra and unwanted activities and finally, they want some shortcuts to perform their assignments and academic tasks. During the Interview, Teacher A noted that when reviewing assignments, they often encounter instances where students have copied and pasted content without making any modifications. In response, the teacher takes the initiative to instruct students to rewrite the content in their own words and provides them with suggestions for necessary modifications. Additionally, the teacher highlights a significant misuse of software in creative writing assignments.

On the other hand, Teacher D also acknowledged that some students have a tendency to copy work from the internet or others. To address this, the teacher suggests providing practical tasks that require active engagement and conducting oral assessments as an effective solution. Such tasks promote critical thinking and discourage reliance on external sources.

Strategies and Solutions

According to the Teacher's perspective, there are some strategies that can reduce the issue of plagiarism. To foster originality, it is suggested that assigning topics that encourage independent thinking and creativity would be beneficial. Encourage students to switch their language or approach to enhance their understanding of the subject matter. Recognizing the diverse learning preferences of students, the teacher

can also provide individual tasks tailored to accommodate different learning styles. However, in cases where students prefer group assignments, topics are assigned to be divided among the group members, allowing each member to prepare their respective portions.

Teachers should focus on and emphasize the importance of assigning project-based assignments that necessitate practical work, which cannot be easily copied and pasted. By giving students tasks that require hands-on application of knowledge, the issue of plagiarism can be effectively minimized. Practical assignments not only enhance learning outcomes but also eliminate the temptation to engage in dishonest practices.

Sub Theme: Role of Individual Task

This is another kind of issue; few students take advantage of group assignments. The individual task is helpful to enhance students' own potential as well as an escape from unfair means.

Teacher A expressed concern over the significant percentage of students (around 20 to 30%) who do not complete their work independently and often resort to shortcuts, displaying a lack of enthusiasm for learning. To address this issue, the teacher adopts a strategy of providing minimal writing tasks that encourage active participation. It is disheartening for the teacher to witness that many students prioritize obtaining a degree rather than valuing education itself. Individual tasks not only enhance student potential it also improves individual-based assessment Teacher C discussed their approach to individual tasks by conducting (individual assessments) where each student is assigned a different topic. This ensures that the assessment is based on each student's individual efforts, even when assignments are conducted in a group setting. The teacher recognizes the need for proper guidance, especially since many university students rely on technology and e-learning for their studies. They also note that while there is a relatively low number of students using software for assignment preparation, there is a significant proportion of students who struggle to write properly structured statements.

Strategies and Solutions

To address this issue, the teacher should adopt a strategy of providing minimal writing tasks that encourage active participation. It is disheartening for the teacher to witness that many students prioritize obtaining a degree rather than valuing education itself. Teachers are the best source to inspire and boost the morale of students who are actively engaged in their studies. Additionally, even students who may be lagging academically should find motivation when they witness the dedication and progress of their peers. Teachers should emphasize the importance of encouraging independent study and work even in group or pair assignments. To achieve this, the teacher ensures

that different activities and topics are assigned to each student. By doing so, students are motivated to rely on their own abilities rather than solely depending on others.

Theme 2: Cheating in Exams

As we know, cheating is a major issue of Academic dishonesty all over the world and so much research has already been conducted. No one can deny that this issue is everywhere at every level of class during the Interview, Teacher C told to the researcher that she observed that some students engage in cheating during exams, and their facial expressions and body movements often give them away. They also noted that reporting incidents of cheating becomes a matter of concern for students in the university setting, indicating increased confidence in reporting such incidents.

The role of peers was also highlighted. It was noted that when classmates report someone for cheating, it may sometimes be perceived as an attempt to deflect attention from their own involvement in cheating. This suggests that peer dynamics and self-preservation can influence the reporting of cheating incidents. Teacher D also agreed and highlighted the potential overconfidence of university-level students in getting away with cheating or facing minimal consequences due to the semester system.

Strategies and Solutions

There is a great need for vigilance in checking students' papers before the examination. Many students prioritize obtaining a degree over valuing education, leading them to engage in unethical practices. Furthermore, this mindset often encourages students to encourage others to cheat. Interestingly, the teacher noted that students sometimes report instances of cheating by their peers because they themselves were not given a fair chance to cheat.

There should be an emphasis on the importance of maintaining an environment of integrity in their classroom, which has resulted in rare instances of cheating among students. Teachers address any disruptive behavior directly, ensuring that the class atmosphere is not compromised. By consistently maintaining discipline, the teacher believes that students will be discouraged from bringing cheating materials to the class. Vigilance and appropriate action play a crucial role in deterring such practices. The teacher should emphasize the importance of dealing strictly with such behavior by conducting pre-exam checks and expelling those caught cheating. This approach sends a strong message that cheating is not tolerated.

Theme3: Role of Student Behavior

Subthemes: Proxy Culture

In any Institution student is the person who represents his/her institution anywhere and basic part of making the institution's culture. Students can permute both positive and

negative aspects in their scenario. They can enhance good and positive acts if they stop their friends from doing unfair things, but their support plays a major role in encouraging them to do anything which they can't think of doing. Teacher A identifies marking attendance on behalf of absent classmates as a recurring issue. The teacher suggests that the best solution is for teachers to personally handle attendance records. By taking responsibility for attendance and cultivating an engaging classroom environment, teachers can motivate students to attend regularly.

On missed classes, Teacher B emphasized the importance of regular attendance in their class. If a student consistently misses classes, the teacher collaborates with other teachers to verify their status. If there is a valid reason for their absence, the matter is discussed with the Head of Department (HOD) to provide necessary accommodation. However, if there are no valid reasons, the teacher may consider dropping the student from the class to maintain the learning environment.

Strategies and Solutions

Teachers should take a proactive approach by personally taking attendance after each class, eliminating the possibility of proxy attendance. By personally handling attendance, the teacher ensures accuracy and accountability. Teachers also take personal responsibility for attendance by taking it after class and sharing it with the group. This practice helps to minimize issues related to proxy attendance and promotes a sense of transparency within the class.

Theme 4: Role of Teacher

Subtheme: Favoritism

From the student's perspective, they usually complain about this issue, Findings of the study also show that some students have this complaint. Teacher B acknowledges the concerns associated with favoritism and states that they have never practiced favoritism themselves. They emphasize the importance of fair and impartial practices, treating every student equally, and adhering to the rules and regulations set by the institution. Their stance reinforces the importance of creating a level playing field for all students. Teacher B also acknowledges the value placed on students who provide constructive feedback and demonstrate a strong commitment to their studies. In response, teachers may show favoritism by providing support and guidance to these students. This highlights the reciprocal nature of favoritism in this context, where students' dedication is rewarded with additional attention from teachers.

Strategies and Solutions

A teacher should give importance to fairness in evaluation, specifically mentioning the need to check papers before evaluation to ensure consistency for both male and female students. This highlights the teacher's commitment to providing objective and

unbiased assessments, promoting equality in the learning environment.

Teachers should teach students transparently and provide guidance before exams. However, they note that some students fail to take responsibility for their own learning and are unwilling to accept their mistakes or failures. This highlights the importance of students' active engagement and ownership of their education.

3) Focus Group Discussion with University Students

Focus group discussions were based on eight students from different semesters. The duration was around 60 minutes and the whole discussion was recorded with the student's permission.

Theme :1 *Causes of Academic Dishonesty*

Sub Theme: Plagiarism and Shortcuts

The researcher discussed these points on the basis of findings and after the teacher's perspective, it's an essential part to know students' perspective regarding plagiarism. Student says that: "When we search on Google, it provides us with all the assignments, MCQs, quizzes, and formats that many students use. Almost everyone uses them." "Everyone uses Google, but not everyone uses this particular software. I wasn't aware of this software. Students use it so that they can score higher without having to do much work. We engage in these practices because students tend to waste a lot of time on social media and TikTok with friends. When there isn't enough time left, they have to rely on these software tools."

Strategies and Solutions

The students' responses reveal a mixed perspective on the use of online resources for assignments. On one hand, some students mention that many of their peers rely on tools like Google to access pre-existing assignments, MCQs, quizzes, and formats. This suggests a widespread practice of utilizing readily available resources to achieve higher scores with minimal effort. On the other hand, another student mentions not being aware of such software and suggests that only a portion of the student population benefits from it. They imply that these tools enable students to excel without putting in significant work. Additionally, the use of these software tools is attributed to time constraints caused by excessive social media use. It highlights a tension between students' time management and their reliance on external resources.

Theme: Individual tasks or Group Assignments

Regarding individual tasks, there was a contrast in opinions among the students. One student asserted that students actively avoid group assignments, indicating a lack of motivation to collaborate. This viewpoint suggests a preference for individual work and implies a negative perception of group dynamics. Conversely, another student

points out that in group assignments, only a few members actively participate while others go missing, resulting in equal marks for all. This perspective highlights the issue of unequal distribution of effort within groups. Yet another student states that when uninterested students are assigned individual tasks, they either complete them half-heartedly or resort to copying, which undermines the overall learning experience. These opposing views emphasize the challenges and potential drawbacks associated with both individual and group tasks.

Strategies and Solutions

The teacher should assign project-based work. Individual assignments are better than group assignments. Teachers should leave their set patterns and topics because Many times, juniors ask for assignments from their seniors. The teacher themselves should inquire about tasks that are separate from the group.

Theme: Proxy/Class Bunks

The responses regarding proxy/class bunks also exhibit contrasting opinions. While one student suggests that students initially engage in bunking classes for enjoyment, it eventually becomes a habit, indicating a lack of seriousness toward attendance. Another student acknowledges the role of friends in supporting such activities, implying a sense of peer influence and camaraderie. However, some students expressed concerns about these practices. They describe how attempts to discourage or intervene are met with defensive reactions from the students involved. Moreover, there are suggestions for parental involvement and the impact of media on cheating. These divergent perspectives reflect a complex interplay of personal choices, peer pressure, and the influence of external factors on students' attitudes toward attendance and cheating.

Strategies and Solutions

Teachers should take a proactive approach by personally taking attendance rather than CR or GR etc. The teacher should eliminate the possibility of proxy attendance after the class. There must be stick implementation of the short attendance policy. Parents should also be given the student attendance report.

Theme: Cheating in Exams

The responses from the focus group discussion shed light on the multifaceted nature of cheating in exams among students. One prominent theme that emerges is the influence of media, as mentioned by Students, which is perceived to contribute to the prevalence of cheating and the wastage of time. Moreover, another Student reveals a shift in societal attitudes towards cheating, where it is no longer regarded with shame but rather shared proudly, leading to a divide between those who study and those who cheat, often resulting in mockery and ridicule.

“It’s distressing that we study while others who haven't studied much are scoring higher marks.” The role of teachers also emerges as an important factor, some teachers turn a blind eye, leading students to form groups and engage in mobile cheating. This observation further perpetuates a cycle of imitation, as other students feel compelled to follow suit. Students suggest that the examination environment itself fosters a sense of camaraderie, as students, irrespective of their friendships, unite within the examination room. The habit of cheating often begins before university and is not practiced by every student, indicating individual variation in engagement with such activities. Students point out that proper paper checking could help reduce cheating but reporting it to teachers may lead to conflicts. Lastly, they express the distress felt by those who diligently study yet witness others who have not put in as much effort to achieve higher marks through cheating. Overall, these responses provide a glimpse into the complex interplay of factors influencing cheating in exams, encompassing media influence, changing social attitudes, teacher leniency, peer influence, and the impact on hardworking students' emotional well-being.

Strategies and Solutions

People now consider cheating a good thing and proudly share it with others. The shame associated with it has vanished. The students who study also make fun of them. There should be proper events and workshops for counseling and training their minds in the right way.

Teachers should be strict in invigilation, it may not be possible, but some teachers turn a blind eye, and students plan, forming groups to engage in mobile cheating. Seeing this, other students say, 'We will do the same.' There should be proper arrangements for paper checking, this practice can be reduced.

Theme: Favoritism

Regarding favoritism, the students' responses present varying viewpoints. One student perceives favoritism when a teacher praises a high-performing student, suggesting a sense of resentment among other students. Another student suggests that teachers assign personal tasks to certain students, potentially involving favors or other undisclosed arrangements. This perspective implies an unfair advantage for specific individuals. However, a contrasting viewpoint arises from another student who mentions that some students get ahead of others based on their performance, which might lead to teachers assigning them additional tasks. This implies a recognition of merit and the potential influence of student performance on teachers' actions. These opposing ideas highlight the complex dynamics of favoritism and its perceived impact on student’s academic experiences.

It's important to note that these analyses reflect the diverse perspectives expressed by

the students and do not necessarily represent a unified consensus. The contradictions and oppositions in the responses showcase the range of opinions and experiences within the focus group, indicating the complexity of the discussed themes.

Strategies and Solutions

Teachers should be more conscious and straightforward with every student. It is hard to be equal with everyone, but few students perceive it differently. Teachers are free, so they should not consider any unfair request for any student, they should decide everything on merit.

Conclusion

The survey responses and analysis shed light on the challenges surrounding academic integrity and student engagement within our university. Through careful consideration of the findings, we developed a comprehensive recommendation policy aimed at addressing these issues. By implementing the proposed strategies, including promoting originality and critical thinking in assignments, enhancing individual and group tasks, mitigating proxy culture and improving attendance, strengthening measures against cheating in exams, and mitigating the influence of favoritism, we aspire to create a level playing field for all students and foster a culture of integrity and academic excellence. The success of these measures relies on the collaboration and commitment of students, faculty, and stakeholders. Through ongoing evaluation and adjustments, we can ensure the effectiveness and relevance of our policies, reaffirming our dedication to providing quality education and upholding the highest standards of academic integrity. Together, we can create an environment that nurtures intellectual growth, ethical conduct, and the holistic development of our students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The university recognizes the importance of fostering an environment that upholds academic integrity, promotes student engagement, and ensures fairness in evaluations. Considering the survey responses and analysis conducted with university students, the following recommendations are proposed to address the challenges associated with assignment plagiarism, individual tasks, proxy culture, cheating in exams, and favoritism. The implementation of these recommendations aims to create a level playing field for all students, enhance the learning experience, and promote a culture of integrity and academic excellence.

1. ***Promoting Originality and Critical Thinking in Assignments:***
 - a. Encourage independent thinking and creativity by assigning topics that require students to develop their ideas and perspectives.
 - b. Provide clear instructions on plagiarism and the importance of citing sources appropriately.

-
- c. Offer guidance on paraphrasing and rewriting content in students' own words.
 - d. Incorporate project-based assignments that necessitate practical work and hands-on application of knowledge, minimizing the temptation for plagiarism.
 - e. Utilize plagiarism detection software or tools to identify instances of copied content and take appropriate actions.
2. ***Enhancing Individual and Group Tasks:***
 - a. Strike a balance between individual and group assignments, taking into consideration students' preferences and learning styles.
 - b. Assign tasks that promote collaboration and equitable distribution of workload within groups.
 - c. Provide clear guidelines and expectations for individual tasks, ensuring that each student is accountable for their contribution.
 - d. Conduct regular checks on group assignments to monitor individual participation and identify any potential issues of unequal effort.
 - e. Encourage effective communication and cooperation within groups to maximize learning outcomes.
 3. ***Mitigating Proxy Culture and Improving Attendance:***
 - a. Enhance teacher responsibility by personally handling attendance records after each class, eliminating the possibility of proxy attendance.
 - b. Collaborate with other teachers and the Head of Department (HOD) to verify the status of students who consistently miss classes, ensuring appropriate accommodations or necessary actions.
 - c. Establish an open channel of communication with students to address concerns related to attendance, emphasizing the importance of regular attendance for academic success.
 - d. Involve parents by sharing students' attendance reports and seeking their support in reinforcing the significance of attending classes.
 4. ***Strengthening Measures Against Cheating in Exams:***
 - a. Maintain an atmosphere of integrity and discipline in examination halls through proactive invigilation and vigilant monitoring of students.
 - b. Conduct pre-exam checks to prevent the use of unauthorized materials, devices, or communication methods.
 - c. Implement a zero-tolerance policy for cheating, with strict consequences such as expulsion or disciplinary actions for students caught engaging in dishonest practices.
-

-
- d. Promote awareness among students about the negative consequences of cheating and the importance of academic honesty.
 - e. Encourage peer reporting of cheating incidents by ensuring a confidential and non-punitive reporting system that allows students to raise concerns without fear of retaliation.

5. *Mitigating the Influence of Favoritism:*

- a. Train and educate teachers on the importance of fair and impartial treatment of all students.
- b. Develop clear guidelines and policies regarding evaluation criteria, ensuring transparency and consistency in grading.
- c. Encourage teachers to provide constructive feedback and guidance to all students based on their performance and effort, fostering a positive learning environment.
- d. Establish mechanisms for students to provide feedback on teaching practices and evaluation processes, ensuring accountability and addressing concerns related to favoritism.
- e. Promote the role of teachers as positive role models by maintaining high standards, treating students equally, and involving parents in the education process.

Implementation and Evaluation:

1. Develop comprehensive guidelines and policies based on these recommendations, incorporating input from faculty, students, and relevant stakeholders.
2. Provide training and professional development opportunities for teachers to familiarize themselves with the policy and effective strategies for promoting academic integrity and student engagement.
3. Communicate the policy to all students, parents, and faculty members, emphasizing the shared responsibility of upholding the integrity of the academic community.
4. Monitor the implementation of the policy through regular assessments, surveys, and feedback from students and faculty.
5. Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the policy by analyzing data, identifying areas of improvement, and making necessary adjustments to ensure its relevance and impact.

By implementing this recommendation policy, the university aims to create a conducive learning environment where academic integrity is valued, student engagement is fostered, and equal opportunities are provided to all students. The collaboration of students, faculty, and stakeholders is crucial in upholding these

principles and maintaining the university's commitment to excellence in education.

REFERENCES

- Abu Bakar, N., Sulaiman, M. N., & Abdullah, N. A. (2018). The relationship between academic dishonesty and workplace dishonesty: A study among university students in Malaysia. *Journal of Applied Structural Equation Modeling*, 2(2), 30-44.
- Barnett, D. C., & Dalton, J. C. (1981). Why do college students cheat? *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 22, 545-551.
- Bukhari, M. H., Syed, J. H., & Ahmed, S. (2019). Prevalence and factors associated with academic dishonesty among undergraduate students in Pakistan. *Journal of Taibah University Medical Sciences*, 14(1), 15-19.
- Bulut, B. (2017). Factors influencing academic dishonesty among Turkish university students. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 15(2), 131-144.
- Chen, H., Sun, J., & Wang, Q. (2019). Predicting academic dishonesty among Chinese undergraduate students: A multi-factor perspective. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 1231.
- Cochran, J. K., Chamlin, M. B., Wood, P. B., & Sellers, C. S. (1999). Shame, embarrassment, and formal sanction threats: Extending the deterrence/rational choice model to academic dishonesty. *Sociological Inquiry*, 69, 91-105.
- Comas-Forgas, R., Sureda-Negre, J., & Oliver-Trobat, M. (2010). Explaining academic dishonesty among university students: A comparative analysis between native and international students. *Higher Education*, 60(1), 17-29.
- Comas-Forgas, R., Sureda-Negre, J., & Salva-Mut, F. (2010). Academic plagiarism prevalence among Spanish undergraduate students: An exploratory analysis. *Journal of Biochemical Education*, 20(3), 301-306.
- Coston, C. T. M., & Jenks, D. A. (1998). Exploring academic dishonesty among undergraduate criminal justice majors: A research note. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 22, 235-248.
- De Lambert, K., Ellen, N., & Taylor, L. (2006). Chalk face challenges: A study of academic dishonesty amongst students in New Zealand tertiary. *Assess Eval Higher Educ*, 31(5), 484-503.
- Debnath, S., & Thakur, S. (2019). Prevalence and pattern of academic dishonesty among undergraduate engineering students in India. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 17(3), 273-287.
- Erdogan, S., Kocoglu, B., & Tekinarslan, E. (2015). Prevalence and predictors of academic dishonesty among university students in Turkey. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 44, 85-96.
- Haines, V. J., Diekhoff, G. M., LaBeff, E. E., & Clark, R. E. (1986). College cheating: Immaturity, lack of commitment, and the neutralizing attitude. *Research in Higher Education*, 25, 342-354.
- Jasper Roe (2022). Reconceptualizing academic dishonesty as a struggle for intersubjective recognition: A new theoretical model. *Palgrave Communications*, 9(1), 1-7.
- Kari Trost (2009). Psst, have you ever cheated? A study of academic dishonesty in Sweden.
-

-
- Journal of Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 34(4), 367–376.
- Khan, A., & Soomro, Z. A. (2019). Exploring academic dishonesty among university students in Malaysia. *Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, 7(3), 1-12.
- Maramark, S., & Maline, M. B. (1993). Academic dishonesty among college students. *Issues in Education*, U.S. Department of Education, 1-14.
- McCabe, D. L., & Trevino, L. K. (1997). Individual and contextual influences on academic dishonesty: A multicampus investigation. *Research in Higher Education*, 38, 379-396.
- Rau, W., & Durand, A. (2000). Academic ethics and college grades: Does hard work help students to "make the grade"? *Sociology of Education*, 73, 19-38.
- Sarath Nonis & Cathy Owens Swift (2010). An examination of the relationship between academic dishonesty and workplace dishonesty: A multicampus investigation. *Journal of Education and Business*, 77(2), 69-77.
- Smith, W. L., & Pino, N. W. (2003). *Habits of the mind: In search of academic ethics among college students*. Unpublished manuscript. Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Georgia Southern University.
- Stem, E. B., & Havlicek, L. (1986). Academic misconduct: Results of faculty and undergraduate student surveys. *Journal of Allied Health*, 5, 129-142
- Thanoon, M. N., & Hasan, M. S. (2017). Factors influencing academic dishonesty among undergraduate students in Thailand. *International Education Studies*, 10(12), 22-31.
- Whitley Jr., B. E. (2017). Academic dishonesty in undergraduate students: A review of recent research. *Ethics & Behavior*, 27(4), 303-32