IJARSCT
International Journal of Advanced Research in Science, Communication and Technology
International Open-Access, Double-Blind, Peer-Reviewed, Refereed, Multidisciplinary Online Journal
ISSN: 2581-9429
Volume 6, Issue 7, October 2026
Impact Factor: 8.2

Prevalence of Academic Cheating and Measures to Limit Academic Dishonesty

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Abstract: *Academic Integrity is an expectation that should be upheld by everyone in the academic environment. When such expectations are violated, they are termed academic dishonesty. And cheating practice is one such form of dishonesty. This article highlights how cheating practices take place, what the reasons are that cause cheating practices, and how these practices can be restricted. Academic Integrity is the soul of the education system, and therefore, its maintenance would lead to qualitative and effective academic results for the students and ultimately for society as well. Hence, there is a need to build a system that makes the environment where ethical conduct is the foremost priority.*

Keywords: *Academic Integrity*

I. INTRODUCTION

Academic integrity is a subject of concern in the education system. Education itself is the subject of moral concepts. It is the inculcation of ethical behaviour. The core idea of education is imparting knowledge of various disciplines along with behavioural and ethical practices in the teaching-learning process. And when it is about assessment, whether formative or summative, it is needed to reach at the results of the entire teaching-learning process. Therefore, the examination of any kind should be free from any kind of cheating, bias, dishonesty and fabrication to reach at genuine results. It is important to highlight the issues and harm that cheating causes to academic quality. Various reasons lead to academic cheating; identifying them and addressing them will improve the quality and soundness of academic education. Thus, it will generate minds that think analytically by themselves rather than relying on fabrications, contributing to the overall growth of education.

II. DISCUSSION

Academic Integrity is harmed by various cheating practices that are prevalent in almost all academic institutions. Cheating practices include plagiarism- copying from someone's work, using AI for work that needs to be done by oneself, taking help from others in completing projects and assignments, and cheating in Exams by looking at others' copies or by copying unethically from hidden notes, etc. And when we talk about cheating in online exams, which can be submitted from anywhere, the cheating ratio is much higher than in offline exams. Students cheat from the internet without even understanding the questions asked. Cheating practices are making students very lazy; they think that at the time of assessment, project or assignment, they will perform using unfair means and practices. As a result, they do not invest time in studying the subjects; instead, they indulge in finding solid ways of cheating that they can't be caught. These practices are curbing the creativity and memory capacity of students. Thus, there should be a fruitful discussion on reducing such practices effectively.

Reasons why students cheat

Many reasons are responsible for academic cheating. First is pressure to get high marks; this pressure can be from parents, friends, or society. Second is fear of failure; students cheat to get at least passing marks so they can get their degree done; otherwise, the failure is unbearable in different aspects. Some students cheat because they are influenced by their peers. If their friends are cheating and getting good marks, then they will also follow the same pattern of

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studying. Some students cheat casually because they don't even know that cheating is an unethical practice; they take it very lightly because they were educated in an environment like this. Cheating also takes place due to a lack of observers and controllers at the time of examination; this results in students having opportunities for dishonest practices in the examination. Online examinations where nobody is observing students make them more reluctant to give answers genuinely.

Suggestions to limit cheating

Academic cheating not only harms students' futures and careers but also harms society in various ways. If the students were assessed genuinely, without any fabrication in their examinations, they would have contributed positively to society; therefore, to maintain academic integrity, cheating practices must be prohibited, and appropriate measures must be taken to abolish such academic dishonesty. The following are some measures that can be adopted-

Reduce pressure of high marks – The pressure of getting high marks should be reduced. This can be achieved by making parents aware of the importance of academic integrity. And making them believe that the quality of education will help their children grow rather than the scorecard.

Moral education- Students should be taught from the very first stage about the ethics and values in the education system so that they can comprehend ethical practices and unethical conduct. This will reduce cheating at the individual level to a very great extent.

Effective observation and control- Many students cheat in the examination hall through hidden notes or unethical means because there is a lack of observation. Hence, cheating can be minimised by imposing effective checking and observation practices in the examination centres.

Punishment- It is often seen that if somebody is punished for any unethical or wrong actions, then people avoid repeating the same actions. Hence, those who breach the rules of academic integrity must be punished accordingly; this will help to reduce fabrication and dishonesty in academic writing.

Plagiarism detection tool- There are many tools and software available that detect whether the work done by students or researchers is genuine or copied from someone else's work. These kinds of tools help to produce original work and discard dishonest and fabricated work or work done with the help of AI.

Interaction- Changing the pattern of assignment can also lead to less cheating; for example, instead of taking a written examination, some examinations can be kept interactive where candidates are interviewed about the respective subject, and hence the result is generated based on their response. In such conditions, students don't get a chance to fabricate answers. And the assessor would know the actual understanding of the candidate.

Redesigning the curriculum- Curriculum should be designed in such a way that students get understanding in the classroom only through practical examples, presentations, demonstrations, activities, practices, role-play, case studies, educational tours and visits and many more options, so there would be no room for cheating practices by students.

III. CONCLUSION

Academic Integrity is not only limited to academics or the mark-obtaining process, but it is more than that; it is about right practices, human values and moral science that are equally important along with academics. It is a deep concept that holds the essence of rooted human knowledge provided to students for their wholesome development. But when the knowledge does not reach its destination, it gets fabricated and thus becomes useless for the student and society. Cheating is not only an unethical conduct, but it is the slow poison that is deteriorating the creativity and thoughtfulness of the young minds. Therefore, there is a high need to restrict cheating practices by addressing the reasons. Collective action needs to be taken not only by academics but by teachers, parents, students and policymakers. Eliminating misconduct in schools, colleges. universities and research institutes is not a one-day process, but it is a concept that should be injected into the whole system eventually. So that our academic institutions can generate the knowledge that makes minds synthesise analytically.

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